



## **Guidelines for Best Practice in Admissions & Marketing**

**These Guidelines serve both families and schools by helping to ensure orderly, ethical, and professional admission practices. These Guidelines are to be made easily available and promoted to applicant families, as well as to a school's teachers, administrators, trustees, coaches, parents, and alumni.**

**The purpose of the admissions process is one of mutual discovery by families and schools, with a view to determining a setting that provides an appropriate "fit" for the student and family. All parties in the process are expected to work together in a manner that keeps the best interest of the student as the primary guiding priority. High standards of transparency and honesty, collaboration, confidentiality, and professional courtesy are demanded of all. In cases where adherence to the specific guidelines below causes question or conflict, resolution should be accomplished by first considering the best interest of the student. ADVIS schools will make every effort to cooperate with one another in serving the student and family during the admission process.**

### **1. Promoting Schools**

Each family interested in an independent school education for their child should choose a school appropriate to the child's needs. Each independent school in the greater Delaware Valley has its own character and unique mission. It is always sensible for a family to investigate several options before reaching a decision about an independent school. Therefore:

- a) Each school should make appropriate events and materials available to help parents choose a school.
- b) Inquiries from prospective parents and students should be directed to the Admissions Office.
- c) Members of a school community – including administrators, trustees, faculty, coaches, parents, alumni, and students – should speak accurately and positively about their own school and, if they speak of other schools, to do so in a courteous, positive manner. As they navigate the challenges and opportunities inherent in a competitive recruitment environment, ADVIS admission professionals should adhere to the highest standards of integrity, mutual support and respect among our community of schools.

## **2. Rights of the Family**

- a) ADVIS schools recognize the rights of students or families to visit and consider other schools. A family need not tell the child's present school of such visits until a transcript is requested, but clear communication between the family and current school is encouraged. Upon written request of the parents or guardian, and as promptly as possible, a school should send a transcript (or its equivalent) and other pertinent requested information to any other school to which a student has applied.
- b) Schools should provide clear and complete information in the enrollment contract about the financial obligations of parents, and the consequences of non-payment, including the possible withholding of records (if that is the school's policy). Families should recognize that an executed contract acknowledges financial responsibility. In addition, families should be aware of the conditions put forth in the contract and should communicate with the school if they plan to nullify the contract.
- c) Schools should not require a potential family to state a "first choice". Families have the right to make a decision about enrolling or reenrolling their children without undue influence or pressure from personnel at any of the schools involved in the admissions process.

## **3. School Admissions Policies**

- a) The Admissions Office, in conjunction with the Head of School, should see that the school's admissions criteria and processes are consistent with its mission, and make readily available to inquiring families the school's admissions policies, procedures, criteria, application and tuition costs, and calendar of dates. Other school personnel should be informed of such matters as appropriate.
- b) A school, in the administration of its admissions policies, will not discriminate, contrary to law, on the basis of race, color, or ethnic or national origin or any other category protected by law.

## **4. Truthful, Accurate, and Complete Information**

- a) The applicant and family, in response to a school's requests, is expected to provide truthful, accurate and complete information, including information about academic performance, conduct, reasons for seeking a change in schools, if applicable, and any other information and documentation the school may reasonably request in order to determine whether the student meets the school's admission requirements and whether the school would be an appropriate place for the student.
- b) As part of the admissions process, schools should provide to one another honest, accurate and professional information, which is to be held in strict confidence by all parties.
- c) If it occurs that a school was not provided with full and accurate information at any point prior to a student's matriculation, the school has the right to revoke its offer of admission.

## **5. Transcripts/Confidentiality**

- a) A school should take reasonable and lawful measures to maintain the confidentiality of reports and information received from another school concerning students and parents.
- b) A school should not offer admission to a student without first receiving an official transcript, or equivalent report of progress, directly from the student's current school.

## **6. Standards for Personal References**

- a) Any recommendation for an applicant should be based on a referrer's actual knowledge of the applicant.
- b) Members of a school community -- including trustees, administrators, parents and alumni leaders, coaches, advisers, and benefactors -- should not presume to influence an admissions committee decision, nor imply that they possess such powers of influence.

## **7. Notification and Response Dates**

- a) ADVIS represents a widely diverse group of schools – boarding schools, Catholic independent schools, schools in different member states, schools for special needs, different ages served, etc. Some schools elect to partner together in groups to coordinate admissions activity.
- b) The admissions calendar, including the dates when families are notified of and required to respond to an offer of admission, may vary from school to school and within groups of schools. Schools should counsel families to be aware of variations in admission cycle dates among the schools to which they are applying, and families should note those dates. Each school should make its planned timetable readily available to inquiring families, other ADVIS schools, and the general public, at a minimum by:
  - i. posting early and completely all relevant dates on the school website,
  - ii. participating in the annual ADVIS survey regarding admissions activity.
- c) March 1 is traditionally the first date observed by many ADVIS schools by which a family is required to respond to an offer of admission.
- d) Best practice is to offer families at least 30 days to make a fully informed enrollment decision, prior to March 1.
- e) Some schools practice “rolling” admissions throughout the admissions cycle, or after March 1; i.e. the admissions decision and notification is made shortly after the applicant's file is complete.

- f) Families may request an extension of their required response date while awaiting notification from another school, and Admissions Offices should extend every reasonable accommodation to families caught in such a conflict of observed dates between or amongst the ADVIS schools to which they have applied. In cases where adherence to this guideline causes question or conflict, schools should accomplish resolution by first considering the needs of students and families.
- g) It is in the best interest of applicants and their families when schools are able to simultaneously notify their admissions decisions to all applicants with completed files *from the same school*.

## **8. Financial Aid Policies and Practices**

- a) A school's financial aid program should be administered in a dignified and professional manner. A school should provide all families with full information about its procedures and policies with regard to tuition assistance, including the distinction between awards that are based on demonstrated financial need and those that are not, sometimes referred to as "merit" awards.
- b) Each applicant for financial aid must provide required documentation of family financial resources in order to be considered for an award. Full, timely, and truthful disclosure, in conformity with the school's stated policies, is a condition that each applicant family must meet. A school is not obligated to fulfill a promised aid award if it becomes clear that the award was based on incomplete or incorrect information. Schools may avail themselves of all legal remedies to recover losses stemming from such misrepresentations.
- c) Financial aid applicant families should be notified in writing of their award decision, no sooner than at the time of admission, and should not be required to make a decision earlier than the response date observed by the school for all families.
- d) A school should not require an enrollment deposit, whether refundable or not, from a family that has not received complete information about the terms of enrollment and costs of attendance, including the outcome of their application for financial aid.
- e) The amount of aid awarded is entirely subject to the school's discretion, consistent with its stated policies.

**This document is a companion piece to the NAIS Principles of Good Practice created by the National Association of Independent Schools: <http://www.nais.org/Series/Pages/Admissions.aspx> These guidelines are not intended to create any legally binding obligations or confer any legally binding rights upon schools, students or their families.**

*Adopted by ADVIS Board of Trustees, June, 2013*