

**Student must complete:**

o **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**

The FAFSA must be completed online at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov) or on paper and mailed to the federal processor. Priority deadline is March 1, 2012. If corrections are made on the Student Aid Report (SAR), the student must send the original to the federal processor and a processed copy to us at the above address. **Please encourage your students to apply and make corrections online at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov).**

o **Howard P. Rawlings Guaranteed Access (GA) Grant application**

The student must complete a GA Grant application online at <https://mdcaps.mhec.state.md.us>. Priority deadline is March 1, 2012. Students must submit a worksheet to the counselor that authorizes the counselor to provide an official high school transcript reporting grades earned from grade 9 through the first semester of grade 12. **Please encourage your students to complete the GA application online at <https://mdcaps.mhec.state.md.us>**

**Counselor must complete:**

o **High School Certification section on the High School Counselor Certification Form**

If a student has earned a minimum, cumulative, unweighted 2.5 grade point average (GPA) on a 4.0 scale, mark YES. The GPA must include grades earned from grade 9 through the first semester of grade 12. If a student does not have a 2.5 GPA, mark NO.

If a student will complete a college preparatory program, mark YES, if not, mark NO. We define college preparatory programs as those programs designed to prepare students for college level work.

o **Official Transcript**

The guidance counselor must submit an official high school transcript to our office to complete the student's GA Grant application. This transcript must record the results of grade 9 through the first semester of grade 12.

If a student graduated prior to the current academic year, they may be eligible to apply, even though they are not a current high school senior, if they have extenuating circumstances. Please complete the GA Grant Counselor Certification Form for the student as you would for any other applicant.

## Appeals:

Applicants for a GA Grant may appeal their eligibility for an award under the following circumstances:

### o **Failure to complete high school with a minimum, cumulative, unweighted 2.5 GPA**

Students must submit a “Less Than 2.5 GPA Appeal Form,” which is provided by OSFA. This form requires a letter of recommendation from the high school principal and documentation of serious illness, emotional difficulties, death of an immediate family member, or other serious personal circumstances that prevented the student from achieving a 2.5 GPA.

### o **Failure to meet the GA Grant income requirements**

The family income used to qualify a student for a GA Grant is the income earned for the 2011 calendar year. This income is the same as that reported on the FAFSA. If there has been a significant change in a student’s family income for 2012, the student may appeal their eligibility for a GA Grant by using a “Special Financial Circumstances Appeal Form,” provided by our office. Appeal circumstances are limited to the death of a parent causing loss of income, parental divorce or separation, a ten-week period of **involuntary** unemployment that would cause the estimated income for the current year to fall within the income requirements, or the loss of untaxed income, such as termination of child support for the student. **All such circumstances must begin on or after January 1, 2012.**

### o **Failure to begin college within one year of high school graduation**

Applicants who fail to meet this requirement must provide satisfactory evidence to OSFA of extenuating circumstances. Documentation must include 1) an appeal form, 2) a letter from the student explaining why the student did not begin college within a year of high school graduation and why the student now chooses to begin higher education, and 3) a letter of reference from an employer, teacher, or organization the applicant is affiliated with describing the applicant’s commitment to attending college and earning a degree.