



HELP YOUR CLIENTS PAY FOR COLLEGE AND RETIREMENT

The relationships you've already established in your practice provide the perfect opportunity to add college financial planning to your retirement planning portfolio.

There are millions of American families who are concerned about the overwhelming costs of college. Can they help provide financial assistance to their children during the college years while still holding out hope for a financially sound retirement for themselves? The cost of college has increased by two to three times current inflation over the past two decades. Coupled with the economic challenges that have hit most families over the past decade, this has made paying for college a very real financial challenge.

Unfortunately, there are simply not enough financial professionals trained in the financial aspects of college planning to be able to help the tens of thousands of families who need guidance. Mistakes made in the process of paying for college can unknowingly and unnecessarily cost a family thousands of dollars in debt. It doesn't have to be this way.

Very often families rely on the

schools and guidance counselors to provide them with college information. While it's true that they can provide a lot of valuable information regarding the academic components of college planning, they're simply not trained to provide much-needed financial advice to families.

This is why there is a huge opportunity for financial professionals who are trained in college planning. They can partner with schools and guidance departments to help them educate parents on how to more effectively pay for college without jeopardizing their own retirement. Financial professionals, such as individuals working in the 403(b) market with schools, have such an untapped opportunity to deepen their relationships with the schools and their employees by offering college planning.

Families who are interested in college planning are typically upper-middle-class families with substantial income and assets. The

reality is that college is going to cost tens of thousands of dollars (and in many cases six figures!) and even those who have the means are interested in finding ways to reduce this burdensome expense. There are many ways by which a family can greatly reduce their out-of-pocket cost, including need- and merit-based aid; proper college selection to maximize financial offers and reduce the length of time to a degree; athletic scholarships; as well as many other strategies.

THE MYSTERIES OF FAFSA

Helping a family understand the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is an important step in this process. Offering an educational 45-minute workshop on the basics of the FAFSA is a great way to meet families. When done properly, more than half of your audience will be interested in meeting with you to discuss their financial situation.

This meeting will involve them



sharing their full financial picture with you. As a financial professional, you find yourself in front of qualified families with identifiable problems you're able to assist with. Additionally, because they're running out of time to solve the college funding problem, they're motivated to act. Purely from a sales perspective, the opportunity doesn't get much better than this.

Most families faced with paying for college in the very near future are also dealing with other financial challenges. Their retirement accounts are much smaller than they envisioned they'd be when they reached this stage of life. Many believed they'd have sufficient equity in their homes to handle college expenses but the recent crash of the residential real estate market squelched that plan for most.

Others are recognizing that they're half way through their working careers and if the second half goes like the first, financially speaking, they're going to be in

trouble! They're coming to the realization that all of these items must be addressed at the time they put their college plan together if they have any hope of correcting these financial problems. They also recognize that the importance of accomplishing these things is simply too important to do it alone.

BUILT-IN RELATIONSHIPS

Tremendous opportunities exist for financial professionals to be able to lead these families through the financial challenges associated with college. Doing so will lead to lifetime clients who are extremely grateful for the assistance they received from you. They'll trust you now to help them with all their financial needs and they'll be willing to share this with their friends who have the very same concerns.

Becoming a college planner doesn't require financial professionals to stop what they are doing. In fact, those working in the schools and

hospitals already have the relationships with the organizations; all that needs to be done is some basic training. Motivated individuals can become knowledgeable within a couple of weeks, spending a couple of hours per day acclimating themselves to the college planning process. Finding a reputable organization to provide training and presentation materials will greatly reduce the time it will take to get up to speed and start helping families.

You may want to give college planning serious consideration if you're working in schools and hospitals. You've developed good relationships with those institutions, and this is a complimentary way to expand your business to new markets.

Scott Moffitt is the president and co-founder of College Planning Relief®, the nation's premier college planning training and marketing program for financial professionals. Scott is also the author of the book College and Retirement, You Can Do Both. For information on CPR and Scott Moffitt, go to www.collegeplanningrelief.com.