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SAF/DPHHS to Host “A Step Ahead” - Career and Life Readiness Summit for Youth in Foster Care at Carroll College June 17-21

(HELENA) More than 20 youth in foster care from across Montana will arrive at Carroll College Monday, June 17 to participate in “A Step Ahead”– Career and Life Readiness Summit.

“A Step Ahead”– Career and Life Readiness Summit is a free, five-day camp geared toward providing youth in foster care, ages 16-18, an opportunity to gain career and life skills, along with experience college life firsthand.

The first two days of the summit focus on developing life skills. Youth stay in the dorms and receive classroom instruction in subject areas including money management, relationship building, finding and maintaining housing, and nutrition and physical activity.

The following three days focus on preparing the youth to pursue postsecondary education. Areas of instruction include scholarship searches and applications, computer skills, and campus tours. Plus, camp participants learn the purpose of Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) for youth in foster care and how to properly complete the application forms. Finally, each of the campers receives a laptop to use as they embark on the path of higher education.

“We try to pack as much information and experiences as possible into those five days,” said Student Assistance Foundation’s Rhonda Safford, one of the camp coordinators. “And now that we are offering this camp in cooperation with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS), we are able to provide the campers with even more information to help them succeed in their plans for the future.”

DPHHS Director Richard Opper said the camp gives youth a jumpstart as they begin this next chapter in their life.

“The collaboration between DPHHS and SAF has culminated in an exciting new opportunity for youth in foster care,” Opper said. “Without traditional family support systems these youth can encounter more obstacles when they transition into adulthood. This event, in combination with other support services available to youth in foster care, serves as a fun and engaging strategy to provide valuable life skills and a positive plan for the future.”

For more information, contact Rhonda Safford at rsafford@safmt.org or (406) 495-7750, or Erin Kintop at ekintop@mt.gov or (406) 841-2421.

Student Assistance Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit Montana corporation that provides students with knowledge and tools to finance and pursue their postsecondary education. Funds generated by SAF are returned to Montanans in the form of education grants and public benefit programs - to date more than \$27 million. For more information, visit www.safmt.org or www.SmartAboutCollege.org.

The mission of the Child and Family Services Division (CFSD) is: Keeping Children Safe and Families Strong. CFSD works three hundred and sixty five days a year, twenty-four hours a day, to fulfill its mission. CFSD is responsible for ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of children who have been victims of, or are at substantial risk of being victims of, child maltreatment.