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Student Assistance Foundation: It's time for students and parents to get FAFSA PINs

Students and parents can't complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) until Jan. 1, but they don't need to wait to get their federal student aid personal identification number, or PIN.

Individuals need a PIN to sign documents, like the FAFSA, online, according to Student Assistance Foundation's Rhonda Safford, statewide coordinator of College Goal Montana. In addition, it is used to access websites including FAFSA on the Web (fafsa.gov), National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS – nslds.ed.gov), and more.

Here's how to get one:

- Students, and one parent or guardian (for dependent students), will each need to get a PIN at pin.ed.gov prior to completing the FAFSA. Go to pin.ed.gov to get started. For purposes of the FAFSA, students are generally considered to be dependent until age 24.
- Individuals will need information including name, date of birth, Social Security number, and address.
- The PIN website can automatically — and immediately — create a PIN for students and parents. Or, they will be given the option of choosing their own using a process that involves receiving an email that will provide the link to a site where that PIN can be accessed.

Parents and students will use the same PINs to complete the FAFSA annually, along with access student aid records, so they should be stored in an accessible location. However, individuals should not share their PIN with anyone — it is personal information and could be used in identity theft. Keep it safe!

College Goal Montana is an annual campaign to encourage FAFSA awareness and to help students and families complete the important form. 2015 will mark the 10th year that SAF has organized the effort for Montana.

For more information about the FAFSA or College Goal Montana, visit www.SmartAboutCollege.org and click on the "College Goal Montana" banner.

Student Assistance Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit Montana corporation that provides students with knowledge and tools to pursue and fund 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 \$29.6 million. For more information, visit www.safmt.org or www.SmartAboutCollege.org.