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Student Assistance Foundation: It's time for students and parents to get FSA IDs

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for the 2016-17 academic year may not be available until Jan. 1, but students and parents don't need to wait to get their Federal Student Aid IDs in preparation for completing this important form.

The FSA ID replaces the FAFSA PIN — the number parents and students previously used 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 like the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS – nsls.ed.gov).

Here's how to get one:

- Students, and one parent or guardian (for dependent students), will each need to get a FSA ID at fsaid.ed.gov prior to completing the FAFSA. 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, mailing address, and email address.
- New FSA IDs can be used immediately to complete, sign and submit a new FAFSA.

Here's how to link an existing FAFSA PIN to a new FSA ID:

- Visit fsaid.ed.gov and fill out the online form to create a FSA ID.
- Enter your FAFSA PIN when asked whether you want to link an existing FAFSA PIN to your new FSA ID.
- If you don't remember your FAFSA PIN, answer the PIN challenge question when completing the form. If you don't remember your answer, just create your FSA ID without associating it to your PIN.

Parents and students will use the same FSA IDs 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 IDs with anyone — it is personal information and could be used in identity theft.

College Goal Montana is an annual campaign to encourage FAFSA awareness and to help students and families complete the important form. 2016 will mark the 11th 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 “College Goal Montana.”

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 \$30 million. For more information, visit www.safmt.org or www.SmartAboutCollege.org.