



## College Preparation Toolkit

# FAFSA

## (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)

***The FAFSA, or FREE Application for Federal Student Aid, is the form that students fill out to apply for federal financial aid.*** In order to award grants, such as the Pell grant, and federal student loans, the government assesses the information that is included on the FAFSA form. If you are under age 24 years of age, you are pretty much required to include the financial information of one or both parents.

***The FAFSA form can be completed on line, free of charge. Pin numbers will be needed to login to the FAFSA website.*** If a child is considered as a “dependent”, then both the parent and the students will need to file for a PIN number. You may obtain your pin number by going to the following website:

**[www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov)**

The step by step process for completing the FAFSA can be followed easily by going to the following website:

**[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)**

### ***When should the FAFSA form be completed?***

The FAFSA form should be completed **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE** after January 1<sup>st</sup> of the year for which you are requesting financial aid. Financial aid is awarded on a FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED basis. Therefore, it is crucial to submit the FAFSA in a timely manner. Many priority deadlines are as early as March 1<sup>st</sup>. If you don't file early, you may miss out on possible aid such as money awarded directly from the institution. Many schools offer their own financial aid and use the FAFSA as the basis for awards

## FAFSA WORKSHOPS

Be sure to watch for FAFSA workshops being offered in your community. Most high schools, colleges and universities offer a workshop and Capital Area CAN works in partnership with schools.

### **What if your parents refuse to complete the financial portion of the FAFSA?**

Even though you can now file the FAFSA form without your parent's financial information (**which you should absolutely try to avoid doing if at all possible**), you can do it alone. You will need the help of a college financial officer where you plan to attend. This means that under these circumstances you will pretty much need to pick the college you are going to attend BEFORE you even fill out your financial aid paperwork. This is a big decision! If your parents refuse to fill out the financial aid form, you are going to need to befriend the financial aid officer at the college you plan to attend! Get to know him/her personally!

If your parents refuse to provide their financial information, you will need them to provide a written and signed statement confirming their refusal to provide their financial information. If your parents won't sign this statement, you'll need the signature of a third party such as a teacher, counselor, or the court. Then, the financial aid officer at the college can then look at your situation and then decide as to whether to award you unsubsidized Stafford loans, or not.

This process certainly requires the assistance of the financial aid officer at the college. It is still best if you can get your parents to provide all of the financial information required by the FAFSA. You will still be eligible for those Stafford loans no matter how much money your parents have. So it can only help if you have their information. It may help to remind your parents that it does NOT put them under any legal obligation to financially support you, or for them to have to pay a single dime toward your education. In some situations knowing this may help coax them to cooperate.

One last thing to consider is whether you truly are considered a dependent! If you aren't, you can fill out the FAFSA as an independent student, and you won't need parent information at all to get the full aid you qualify for. The FAFSA website provides a form to determine whether you are a dependent or not. If you are married or are a member of the military, then you are automatically considered "independent."

As you look for FAFSA information online, be aware that there are a number of sites that will "SELL" their services to help you complete the FAFSA. Do know that you can complete the FAFSA at *no charge* by visiting the Department of Education website at:

**[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)**

#### ***Things you will need to complete the FAFSA form include:***

- You will need your PIN number and your parents' will also need a PIN number if you are a dependent
- Student's driver's license and social security card
- Income tax returns or as close an estimate as possible
- W-2 forms and other records of money earned
- Current bank statements & current Mortgage Information
- Records and documentation of other untaxed income received such as welfare benefits, Social Security income, veteran's benefits, AFDC, or military or clergy allowances
- Records of stocks, bonds, mutual funds, and other investments Business or farm records (if applicable)