

ARE YOU READY FOR FAFSA TIME?

Each year families prepare for the annual ritual of applying for federal financial aid. If you've never experienced "FAFSA Time", it's time to get ready. Completing the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) has never been easier, if you are prepared.

The FAFSA is used to apply for state, federal and college specific financial aid that includes grants, scholarships, campus work, and loans. The application process begins in January when you start gathering the required information. You will need the following for *you and your parent(s)*:

- most recent W-2s
- driver's license and social security number
- records of untaxed income received during the previous tax year
- value and debt of business and/or farm (excluding a farm on which you live)
- value of investments, excluding retirement accounts and home equity
- completed tax returns
- a PIN (you each need one) - go to www.pin.ed.gov to get the PIN that will act as your electronic signatures
- if you choose to file a paper FAFSA, get a copy from your high school counselor or from a college/university near you

Some sources of financial aid are deadline driven, so you should annually complete the FAFSA by March 1*. You can do that by going to www.fafsa.ed.gov and submitting your information online. Paper FAFSA's are sent to the federal processor. *Eligible students who complete their financial aid file after April 1 usually receive less in need-based grant aid.*

You can file your FAFSA using information on your tax returns without actually filing your taxes until the due date. If you do not have your taxes prepared, use estimated figures. Remember you need to go back and make necessary changes to your FAFSA once your tax returns are complete.

* Check with the schools where you are sending FAFSA results to determine their specific application deadlines/priority dates requirements.