



## News

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### Urgent Guidance on FAFSA Filing for College Advisors

By **MorraLee Keller**, Director of Technical Assistance

NCAN has heard from several of our members this week that filing the FAFSA by priority deadline dates has been more challenging this year than in the past. Successfully establishing an FSA ID for the student and/or parent is often cited as the difficult stumbling block in the filing process. A student submitting the FAFSA by priority deadline dates is often critical for receiving the maximum amount of federal, state and institutional aid available. We offer some guidance for students to get their FAFSA submitted in a timely fashion.

#### **Scenarios for First-Time FAFSA Filers**

\* For students and parents (if needed) who have **successfully** established FSA IDs, we recommend they file the FAFSA electronically by the student's earliest priority deadline date.

\* For students and parents (if needed) who have not attempted to set up the FSA ID and are close to a priority deadline date, we recommend setting up the FSA ID at the same time of electronically filing the FAFSA so that those newly established IDs can be used that day to sign the FAFSA for submission by deadline dates. If there are any match issues with the Social Security Administration, students need to address them quickly upon notification of a problem.

\* For students who have **successfully** set up their FSA ID but are having issues getting the ID established for a parent, or the parent is not eligible to secure an FSA ID (perhaps an undocumented parent), we recommend printing the signature page to submit the parent signature prior to hitting the "Submit My FAFSA" button on the electronic version. The form should be signed and immediately mailed to the address on the signature form.

\* For students and parents who having issues getting their FSA IDs established and have 3 to 5 business days until the priority deadline, we recommend they print the paper PDF of the FAFSA and complete it, sign it, and mail it immediately in order to meet the priority deadline. This method should be the last resort but may be necessary to get the FAFSA submitted on time. Once the FAFSA is mailed, the students and parents should pursue getting their FSA IDs established or resolving any issues they encountered as a result of attempting to set up the FSA ID. Students and parents can refer to the information available on the Department of Education website, <https://fsaid.ed.gov/npas/pub/faq.htm>, or call **1-800-433-3243** and speak with an FSA ID specialist.

#### **Students Who Need to File a Renewal FAFSA**

\* Students who have a current 2015-2016 FAFSA on file and wish to renew it for the 2016-2017 year also need to secure an FSA ID. These students will be prompted to set it up when they enter the FAFSA.gov site to file their new form. Students who enter their current PIN or retrieve their current PIN and provide it during the process of setting up the FSA ID will have the ID immediately verified and it can be used for submission at that time.

\* Students renewing their FAFSA who do not provide an accurate PIN during the process of establishing their FSA ID will be subjected to the 3-day waiting period for verification through the Social Security Administration. We strongly

recommend that current college students use their PIN in establishing their FSA ID so that it can be authenticated immediately and does not delay the submission of filing the FAFSA prior to a priority deadline.

\* For returning students who have successfully established their FSA ID, we recommend they file electronically prior to their priority deadline dates. Please see the recommendations above for when parents have not succeeded in establishing a FSA ID.

### **General Recommendations**

\* Parents and students should each set up their own FSA IDs. Parents and students should write down all the information used in establishing the ID--email address, username, password, challenge questions and answers, email verification codes, etc.--and keep this critical information in a secure place to prevent delays in the future.

\* Students and/or parents who have attempted to establish their own FSA ID and have been notified of issues with matches to the Social Security Administration or other federal databases should immediately attempt to resolve those issues to avoid delay the FAFSA processing and/or the awarding of financial aid. If the student's priority deadline date is rapidly approaching, filing the paper version of the FAFSA may be a student's best last resort.

NCAN appreciates the feedback we are receiving from members so that we can advocate for as smooth filing process as possible. Please continue to share your filing issues and resolutions with Carrie Warick at [warickc@collegeaccess.org](mailto:warickc@collegeaccess.org).

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