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## **FAFSA Day Offers Free Help Applying for Financial Aid**

BOSTON – Every family applying for college financial aid needs to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and send it to their prospective colleges and universities. Students already enrolled at a college or university must complete the FAFSA each year to remain eligible for many types of financial aid. Free help in completing the FAFSA will be available statewide to Massachusetts families on January 30th at the 7th Annual FAFSA Day, a College Goal Sunday program.

New this year, a FAFSA will be required as part of the application for a Federal PLUS Loan, which is a college loan program for parents. Previously, a FAFSA was only required for a Federal Stafford Loan for students, a non-credit based loan featuring a low fixed interest rate.

At FAFSA Day, volunteer financial aid and higher education experts will help families complete the FAFSA and offer one-on-one assistance. Each college and university requires the FAFSA but deadlines differ from college to college. Parents and students should ask about deadlines; many deadlines are as early as February 1.

FAFSA Day is held at 27 locations across Massachusetts. For families who are unable to attend on Sunday, January 30<sup>th</sup> some locations will host evening FAFSA Day sessions. Locations, dates and times are listed at [www.FAFSAday.org](http://www.FAFSAday.org). Families are encouraged to register for a specific location and to arrive early.

The services are free and available to anyone entering college in 2011, and low-income, first-generation students are especially encouraged to attend. Assistance is also available for adult students preparing to enroll in college in 2011.

“We want to increase the amount of financial aid provided to Massachusetts students, and the first step is helping families successfully complete the financial aid application,” said Julie Shields-Rutyna, FAFSA Day tri-chair.

The FAFSA is required to be eligible for federal student aid programs, such as Pell grants, Stafford, Perkins and PLUS loans, and federal work-study programs. Also, states and colleges use FAFSA information to award financial aid packages.

"For first-time families, figuring out how to pay for college and apply for financial aid may be intimidating, and that is why this group of volunteers come together every year to offer free help," said Susan Sullivan, FAFSA Day tri-chair.

"Every family sending a child to college should file a FAFSA and see how much financial aid they might be eligible for. Many families who think they are not eligible are sometimes surprised by the answer," said Beth Feinberg Keenan, FAFSA Day tri-chair.

Prior to completing a FAFSA, parents should obtain a FAFSA personal identification number (PIN) at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov). The PIN serves as an electronic signature, and filing electronically speeds up processing over submitting a paper application.

Parents and students are encouraged to bring as much of the following information as possible in order to complete the FAFSA:

- A FAFSA Personal Identification Number, available at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov), to be used to electronically file the form.
- Most recent tax returns (If you don't yet have 2010, bring 2009)
- Social Security number
- Driver's license
- 2010 W-2 forms or year-end pay stubs
- 2010 untaxed income records
- Current bank statements
- 2010 business and investment records
- Alien registration card for non-U.S. citizens

FAFSA Day is a volunteer-driven effort sponsored by Massachusetts Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, MEFA, American Student Assistance, and the YMCA. College Goal Sunday was founded by the Indiana Student Financial Aid Administrators.

To register or find more information on FAFSA DAY, please visit [www.FAFSADay.org](http://www.FAFSADay.org). For questions or additional information, call 877-424-7627.

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