

2017–18 FAFSA® Talking Points

Messages for Counselors & College Access Mentors to Use With Colleagues, Students, and Parents

The messaging below can be used when discussing the 2017–18 FAFSA changes with your colleagues or with students or parents. We've provided a general message along with variations tailored to different audiences.

General Message (for organizations to use with their members/colleagues)

The 2017–18 *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®) season will begin earlier than previous FAFSA application cycles. Beginning on Oct. 1, 2016, your students will be able to fill out the FAFSA for the 2017–18 school year. (In the past, they had to wait until January 1). In addition, applicants will no longer need to estimate income and tax information and will be able to retrieve their data directly from the IRS, right from the first day the FAFSA is available. Students also will have information about their Expected Family Contributions earlier, helping them as they're going through the college application and selection process.

Parents (who have been through the process before)

You might hear about some changes to the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®). But don't worry; these changes were put in place to make the FAFSA process easier. Starting with the 2017–18 FAFSA (this is the application your child will fill out if he or she plans to go to school between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2018), there will be two major changes:

1. **Your child will be able to submit his or her FAFSA® earlier.** Students can file the 2017–18 FAFSA as early as Oct. 1, 2016, rather than beginning on Jan. 1, 2017. The earlier submission date will be a permanent change, enabling students to complete and submit a FAFSA as early as October 1 every year. If your child files the FAFSA earlier, he or she will have an earlier indication of how much your family is expected to contribute toward your child's college costs, which will help with budgeting for the upcoming school year. Note: Because of the change in the FAFSA launch date, you'll want to make sure that your child's school and state deadlines have not changed, and plan accordingly. School deadlines are on the school's website; and state deadlines are available at fafsa.gov and/or from the school's financial aid office.
2. **You and your child will be required to use earlier income and tax information.** Beginning with the 2017–18 FAFSA, students will report income and tax information from an earlier tax year. For example, on the 2017–18 FAFSA, applicants—and their parents, as appropriate—will report 2015 income and tax information, rather than 2016 income and tax information. This change will make the FAFSA easier because you will already have done your taxes by the time your child fills out the FAFSA, and you may be able to automatically import your tax information into your child's FAFSA. (If your child files his or her own taxes, then your child may be able to import his or her tax information too.)

College Students

You might hear about some changes to the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®). But don't worry; these changes were put in place to make the FAFSA process easier. Starting with the 2017–18 FAFSA, there will be two major changes:

1. **You'll be able to submit your FAFSA® earlier.** You can file your 2017–18 FAFSA as early as Oct. 1, 2016, rather than beginning on Jan. 1, 2017. The earlier submission date will be a permanent change, enabling you to complete and submit a FAFSA as early as October 1 every year. If you file the FAFSA earlier, you'll have an earlier indication of how much your family is expected to contribute, which will help with budgeting for the upcoming school year. Note: Because of the change in the FAFSA launch date, you'll want to make sure that your school and state deadlines have not changed, and plan accordingly. School deadlines are on your school's website; and state deadlines are available at fafsa.gov and/or from your school's financial aid office.
2. **You'll use earlier income and tax information.** Beginning with the 2017–18 FAFSA, students will be required to report income and tax information from an earlier tax year. For example, on the 2017–18 FAFSA, you—and your parent(s), as appropriate—will report your 2015 income and tax information, rather than your 2016 income and tax information. This change will make the FAFSA easier because you'll already have done your taxes by the time you fill out your FAFSA, and you may be able to automatically import your tax information into your FAFSA.

First-time Filers

Did you know that you might be eligible for financial aid to help pay for college? Start the process by filling out the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®). The FAFSA will be available this October 1 for students who plan to attend college between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2018.

You might have heard your friends or siblings talk about the FAFSA being available on January 1. The FAFSA is now available earlier, on October 1, to give you more time to make an informed decision about where to go to school and how to pay.

The FAFSA asks for information such as your name and Social Security number, as well as information about your financial situation. After you fill out the FAFSA, watch for offers of financial aid from colleges you've applied to and have listed on the FAFSA. Make sure you compare the aid offers to see which school offers the best combination of net cost and "fit" for your academic needs. Once you're enrolled in college, your school's financial aid office will pay out the financial aid funds.

This summer, get ready for the FAFSA by creating an FSA ID, a username and password combination that you'll use to sign the FAFSA and access certain websites related to your federal student aid.

Visit StudentAid.gov/fafsa to find out how to fill out the FAFSA and create your FSA ID, what information is needed for the FAFSA, what the deadlines are, and what happens after the FAFSA.

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