JBAY JOHN BURTON Advocates for Youth

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5 Things You Can Do Before the FAFSA & CADAA Open in Dec 2023

If you are a student experiencing homelessness or are on your own and at risk of homelessness, here are five things you can do to get ready for college while you wait for the FAFSA or CADAA to open:

Typically, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and California Dream Act Application (CADAA) are released on October 1 for the following academic year, but in 2023, these applications won't be available until December 2023.

1 Create your FSA ID

Create your FSA ID at studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account/. You, and anyone contributing to the FAFSA (like a parent) will need an FSA ID. You'll need a Social Security Number, and a mobile phone number and/or email address. Make sure the name and social security number you enter in the FSA ID application exactly matches your Social Security Card. You should create an FSA ID before you fill out the FAFSA, since it takes a few days to process. Starting this year, parents and legal guardians without Social Security Numbers will also be able to obtain an FSA ID.

2 Obtain Documentation

Gather information you need to complete the FAFSA, including documentation of your homelessness status. If you are unaccompanied (not living with your parents), and homeless or at risk of homelessness, reach out to your high school homeless liaison and request a "determination letter" to qualify for independent status on the FAFSA/CADAA. If you're not sure if you qualify, visit this LINK. If you do not qualify as independent, both you and your parent(s) will need to report any income.

3 Get Connected to Support

Ask for help with applying to college; you don't have to do this alone. There are lots of people who can help you, such as a high school counselor, the homeless liaison at your school district, or the homeless student liaison or basic needs coordinator at your college.

4 Research and Apply to Colleges

Work with your school counselor to help you explore colleges that are a good match for you and your goals. Deadlines to apply to college vary depending on whether you are applying to a community college or 4-year college

5 Apply for Private Scholarships

Scholarships are money to help students pay for college that don't need to be paid back. Scholarship searches and applications take time, so get a head start now. To visit a list of scholarship search websites and application tips, visit this link HERE.