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## Time to line up money for college

**March 1 is deadline to apply in Michigan, March 10 in Indiana.**

**By MARGARET FOSMOE** *Tribune Staff Writer*

In the midst of a tough economy, it's never too early for parents and children to plan how they'll pay for college.

January marks the start of the big push to remind families that March 10 is the deadline for Hoosiers to fill out and file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The FAFSA form is mandatory for a student to be considered for financial aid for college.

For Michigan residents, the filing deadline is March 1.

It is not necessary for a family's 2008 tax return to be completed to file a FAFSA, said Elizabeth Crouch, a spokeswoman for Learn More Indiana, a coalition that helps families prepare for and finance college.

"Families can estimate their taxes (for the form), then update it later when the tax returns are done," Crouch said Tuesday during a visit to South Bend. She also reminds families there is no need to pay anyone to help fill out the FAFSA or for information about college scholarships. Such help and information is available for free.

For area families, here are some important dates to remember:

-Feb. 8, which is College Goal Sunday in Michigan. From 2 to 4 p.m. that day, financial aid professionals will be available to provide free help to Michigan families in filling out and filing the FAFSA. In southwestern Michigan, the location is Pappas Student Services Center at Lake Michigan College, Benton Harbor.

-Feb. 15, which is College Goal Sunday in Indiana. From 2 to 4 p.m., financial aid professionals will be available at 36 sites in Indiana to provide free help to families in filling out and filing the FAFSA. There will be sites in South Bend, Elkhart, Goshen, Plymouth, Warsaw and Michigan City. For a complete list of locations, see: [www.collegegoalsunday.org](http://www.collegegoalsunday.org).

-Feb. 27: FAFSA Friday, a new event designed for families that couldn't attend College Goal Sunday. College financial aid advisers will host a live online "webinar" and conduct online chats with students and their families from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 6 to 9 p.m. Starting this year, sixth-graders may enroll in Indiana's 21st Century Scholars program, which provides low-income Hoosiers tuition to attend a participating Indiana college or university if they practice good citizenship, maintain at least a 2.0 grade-point average, and apply on time for state and federal financial aid. Enrollment previously was limited to seventh- and eighth-graders.

**For more information, call (800) 992-2076 or see: [www.learnmoreindiana.org](http://www.learnmoreindiana.org). Michigan residents, see: [www.micollegegoal.org](http://www.micollegegoal.org).**

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