

Communicating With Students from Families with Mixed Immigration Statuses About Completing the FAFSA

Note: This webpage is focused on how the federal government uses FAFSA information. States, schools, and other organizations are able to access FAFSA data for different purposes.

Amidst ongoing concerns about the security of financial aid information, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) affirms our support for all students seeking to access higher education. Financial aid is a key component of postsecondary education decision-making, and we are committed to ensuring that all students have access to the information they need to pursue their academic goals.

This resource is designed to help financial aid administrators communicate clearly and confidently about the security of FAFSA information, so they can support students through the financial aid process.

Key Points to Know About FAFSA Data Security

What the FAFSA Collects

The FAFSA asks for students' personal information, including their name, birth date, social security number (SSN) and mailing address. The FAFSA collects similar information from students' "contributors," such as their parents (if they are dependents) or spouses (if they are married). Contributors who have a SSN are required to provide it, but a contributor does not need to have an SSN to complete their portion of the FAFSA. On the online form, contributors without SSNs will check a box saying "I do not have an SSN." On the paper FAFSA, contributors without SSNs should enter zeroes in the SSN field. Families can provide a mailing address, such as a PO box, instead of a residential address. Make sure families choose an address where they will be able to receive important mail for the next year.

How FAFSA Information is Protected

FAFSA data is protected by laws like the Privacy Act of 1974 (<https://www.justice.gov/opcl/privacy-act-1974>) and the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

(<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/ferpa>). These laws help ensure that FAFSA information is used to determine if a student is eligible for financial aid and govern use of FAFSA data. You can read more about them [here](https://studentaid.gov/notices/privacy) (<https://studentaid.gov/notices/privacy>). The same privacy policies and laws apply to the paper and online FAFSAs.

Concerns About Future FAFSA Data Use

While the information provided on the FAFSA has not been used for immigration purposes in the past, there is a possibility that future administrations could attempt to use this data for immigration enforcement. As far as we know, no parent or other contributor has been targeted as a result of filing a FAFSA. Currently, we don't have any specific information about proposed or actual plans to do this, but we'll keep you updated if anything changes.

Which Students are Most at Risk

If a student has filled out the FAFSA in the past, filling it out again will not put them at additional risk since their data is already on file at the Department of Education. In addition, students whose parents, siblings, or spouse already filed a FAFSA are probably not putting their families at additional risk.

Tips for Conversations with Students and Families

When talking to students and families with mixed immigration status about completing the FAFSA, it is important to avoid speculation so they can make informed decisions based on their individual circumstances. Here are some tips to help you provide accurate, clear and supportive guidance:

1. Reassure students about their eligibility for federal financial aid.

- Let students know that every U.S. citizen and **eligible non-citizen** (<https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/non-us-citizens>) has the right to apply for and receive federal financial aid. A parent or spouse's citizenship status does not affect the student's eligibility for financial aid.
- Make clear that completing the FAFSA is required to access federal financial aid and may be required to access other forms of financial aid, such as state, institutional, or private aid.

2. Listen to and address security concerns.

- Some students may feel nervous about submitting their FAFSA because they are concerned about the safety of their personal information or that of their family

members.

- Watch for signs that a student is unsure about submitting their FAFSA. Students may say they feel they "can't go to college" or that they are worried about sharing their parents' or spouse's information. Some students might not directly say why they are concerned, so be aware of these signals.
- Students' feelings are valid. They want to protect their family members. They don't know what will happen with their information under future presidential administrations, and may have received inaccurate or alarming information from some other source.

3. Respect privacy and avoid directly asking about immigration status.

- If a student is hesitant to talk about their family's immigration status, do not ask about it directly.

4. Talk through the pros and cons of alternative aid sources.

- For students or families who feel uncomfortable filling out the FAFSA, be prepared to explain that *there is no alternative route to accessing federal financial aid*.
- Some options to access other forms of financial aid depend on students' individual situations and would most likely result in far less financial aid than what they would get through filing the FAFSA. Talk to them about alternative options for paying for college, such as:
 - State financial aid (if available in your state)
 - Private loans and scholarships
 - More affordable pathways, such as starting at a community college before transferring to a four-year institution

For answers to additional questions, we encourage you to visit the resources below.

- FAFSA Hub for Mixed-Status Families (<https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/fafsa-hub>)
- Data Protections for FAFSA Information (https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/effective_practice/data-protections-for-fafsa-information/)
- How to Get an FSA ID Without a Social Security Number (PDF) (/uploads/documents/FSA_ID_without_SSN.pdf)
- NCAN's 2025-2026 FAFSA Resource Hub (<https://www.ncan.org/page/fafsa>)
- EdTrust FAFSA Hub (<https://edtrust.org/rti/navigating-the-better-fafsa/>)
- NASFAA FAFSA Simplification Web Center (/fafsa_simplification)

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