
This “Visual Guide” is intended to compliment Part 3 of the Financial Aid Guide for California Foster Youth, found within pages 6-10, with screen shots of the actual FAFSA application and detailed instructions.

November 2017
Disclaimer

- While we have made every effort to be accurate in this guide, financial aid programs change. Be sure to get current information.
- **This guide is intended for foster youth in California who qualify for “Independent Status” on the FAFSA (ex. a student who was in foster care on or after their 13th birthday or in legal guardianship).** If you do not qualify for “Independent Status”, you will need to complete the Parental Demographics section and provide financial information about you and your parent(s). Information about this process is not included in this guide.
- **If you are an undocumented student,** remember to fill out the CA Dream Act Application (CADAA) at www.dream.csac.ca.gov instead of the FAFSA. If you are a CA undocumented student, you should apply even if you were a DACA recipient and granted a temporary social security number. Most of the questions in the CADAA mirror the questions in the FAFSA; this guide can still be a helpful tool.
How to apply for Financial Aid?
### Where to Apply for Financial Aid? (FAFSA or CADAA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you are a U.S. citizen, a permanent resident or other eligible non-citizen</th>
<th>If you are an undocumented immigrant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)</td>
<td>Complete the CA Dream Act Application (CADAA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fasfa.ed.gov</td>
<td>dream.csac.ca.gov</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What is an eligible non-citizen?**  
Examples include a U.S. permanent resident who has a green card (Permanent Resident Card), a conditional permanent resident with a conditional Green Card, or a “refugee.” You can find the complete list on the FAFSA.

**California Dream Act Application (CADAA) allows undocumented and nonresident documented students who meet certain eligibility requirements to apply for state financial aid and allows qualified students to pay state resident fees (instead of higher out-of-state fees) at California’s public colleges and universities.**

*Paper applications are also available for the FAFSA and CADAA. Ask a counselor or other adult mentor for help completing the application. Most students say that they find the online application easier.*
STEP 1: BEGIN A NEW FAFSA AT WWW.FAFSA.ED.GOV (Pg. 7)

New to the FAFSA: Click “Start A New FAFSA”

Returning User: Click “Login”

TIP Remember, this is a free application! Avoid websites that ask you to pay money for help in completing the FAFSA.
The FAFSA must be completed every year.

If you have done the FAFSA before, you can sign in as a returning user and then click on “FAFSA Renewal.” This allows you to pre-fill the current year’s FAFSA with some data from last year’s application.
Create an “FSA ID”

*Federal Student Aid Identification (FSA ID)*
When you “Start a New FAFSA,” there are two log-in options.

→ Choose the option that says: “Enter your (the student’s) FSA ID”
→ Then click the blue link that says “Create an FSA ID”

This takes you to the FSA ID website at fsaid.ed.gov.

Your FSA ID will serve as your legal signature and you will need it to sign your FAFSA electronically before you submit the FAFSA.
You will be taken to a new page to create your FSA ID
→ Enter an email address that you check often so that you can get help if you get locked out or forget your username or password.
→ It is not recommended that you use a high school email address, since those often expire. Create or use an email address that you can use throughout college, such as Gmail, Yahoo or Outlook.
→ Create a Username and Password that can be easily remembered but should not be easy for someone else to figure out (Ex., do not use your name, date of birth, or the word “password”).
STEP 2: CREATE AN “FSA ID” (FEDERAL STUDENT AID IDENTIFICATION) (Pg. 7)

→ Enter your name and Social Security number exactly as they appear on your Social Security Card.

** If you don’t know your Social Security Number, you can call your county’s child welfare department or Independent Living Program (ILP) for assistance. You will need the physical card for employment, even for a work-study job.
STEP 2: CREATE AN “FSA ID” (FEDERAL STUDENT AID IDENTIFICATION) (Pg. 7)

→ Enter your mailing address, phone number, and choose a preferred language.

→ Enter a mobile phone number so that you can get help if you get locked out or forget your username or password. Having a mobile phone number helps you unlock the FSA ID because the FAFSA processor can text unlock codes to this number. A regular (land line) phone number is less useful.
Choose “Challenge Questions and Answers” that can easily be remembered in case you forget your FSA ID username or password.

→ Question 5 is optional.
STEP 2: CREATE AN “FSA ID” (FEDERAL STUDENT AID IDENTIFICATION) (Pg. 7)

→ Review that all the information is correct.

→ Click the box to certify that all the information you provided is correct, and that you accept the terms & conditions.
Write down these items somewhere safe so you don’t forget:

- FSA ID Username
- FSA ID Password
- Email Address & Password
You’re now ready to start your online FAFSA!

Log-In with your new FSA ID & begin the FAFSA
Once your FSA ID is created, you can immediately log into the FAFSA at fafsa.ed.gov and start your application.

→ Click “Enter your (the student’s) FSA ID”

→ Enter your FSA ID Username or Verified Email Address & FSA ID Password.
• First, read the Disclaimer and Click “Accept”
Select the school year that you plan to attend college.
Remember that the school year begins in the Fall Term. If you are applying for a summer session, that usually is part of the prior academic year.
The Introduction Page includes general information about the FAFSA

→ Click “Next”
PART 3. HOW DO I APPLY FOR FINANCIAL AID?

- Follow the directions to create a “Save Key” in case you need to save your application and finish it later.
- You can return within 45 days to complete and submit the FAFSA.
TIP (pg. 8)

Make sure to write down your Save Key somewhere safe so you don’t forget:

- FSA ID Username
- FSA ID Password
- Email Address & Password
- Save Key
• Complete the seven sections listed as tabs at the top of the screen. The website will take you through each section.
• When you complete a section, be sure to click “Save and Continue.” Then, click “Next” at the bottom of the page to go to the next section.
• Note that if you didn’t respond to all of the required questions, the system will alert you to complete the questions before you can move on to the next section.
• The FAFSA has detailed instructions and information about each question in the “Help & Hints” bar.
Student Demographics Section

Part I: Student Demographics Information
Part II: Student Eligibility
• **Student Name:** Make sure that your name matches exactly as it appears on your Social Security Card. This is your legal name, not a nickname.

• **Social Security Number:** Make sure that your name Social Security Number matches exactly as it appears on your Social Security Card.

• **Permanent Mailing Address:** This should be the same address you use on official government documents such as tax returns and voter registration cards. This is an address where the student can receive postal mail, such as a PO Box. If you don’t have a permanent mailing address, ask your college’s financial aid administrator for help.

• **State of Legal Residence:** If you select that you have lived in CA for at least 5 years, a textbox will appear on the screen saying that you are eligible for the California State student aid application (the Cal Grant). A separate application is not required, but you need to make sure that your high school has automatically submitted your verified GPA. Learn more in Part 4 “After the FAFSA” of the Financial Aid Guide.
• **Telephone Number:** A telephone number is not required to complete the FAFSA. If you do provide a number, it should be one that a college financial aid office can call and reach you at.

• **Email Address:** Double-check the email address to make sure there are no typos. The US Department of Education and the colleges that you apply for financial aid will send FAFSA reminders, status updates and financial aid application results to this email address.

• **Marital Status:** Your legal status is “single” if you are not married, even if you live with or have a boyfriend, girlfriend or significant other. Note that this question is only asking about your marital status.

• **Driver’s License:** A driver’s license is not required to complete the application, but can help prevent identity theft. The student’s driving record and parking tickets do not affect eligibility for financial aid.
FAFSA SECTION 1: STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS (PG. 8)

PART II: STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

- **Are you a US Citizen?** The three options are:
  - Yes, I am a U.S. Citizen (or U.S. national)
  - No, but I am an eligible noncitizen
- If you select “No, but I am an eligible noncitizen,” you will be asked to provide your Alien Registration Number.
  - No, I am not a citizen or eligible noncitizen

- **Selective Service:** Males are required to register with the Selective Service System to complete their FAFSA.
  - If you haven’t registered yet, you will be able to click “Register Me” to automatically register within the FAFSA.
  - Federal law requires that most male U.S. citizens and male immigrants residing in the U.S. (permanent resident aliens), age 18-25, register with the Selective Service.
  - Transgender students must comply with the Selective Service registration requirement based on the student’s gender at birth as listed on the student’s birth certificate.
PART II: STUDENT ELIGIBILITY
continued

What will your college grade level be when you begin the 2018-2018 school year?
→ If you took college courses while in high school, and were dually enrolled, you are still considered a first-time college student and can select the option: “Attended college before/1st yr.”

What degree or certification will you be working on when you begin the school year?
Select the option that best fits your educational goal.

→ It is important to NOT select “other/undecided” as it may limit the grants you can receive
→ If you are uncertain if you will attend a 2-year or 4-year college, select 4-year college
→ It is important to not select “2nd bachelor’s degree” if you don’t already have a bachelor’s degree, as it may limit the grants you can receive
• Are you interested in being considered for work-study? Federal work study allows students with financial need to earn a portion of their financial aid award money through part-time employment on or off-campus. You can decline it later if you change your mind. Answering “Yes” also not not guarantee that you will receive a Federal Work-study job.

• You will be asked: “Are you a foster youth or were you at any time in the foster care system?” → Answering yes may give you access to more support to help you in college. Answer YES to this question, even if you were only in foster care one day.

• Foster youth can select “Other/unknown” for “Highest School Completed by Parent.” → Parent does not refer to a legal guardian or foster parent. → How you answer does not affect your eligibility for federal student aid.
• If this is not your first year of college, you will be asked if you have ever received federal student aid.

• If yes, you will be asked if you have been convicted for the possession or sale of illegal drugs for an offence that occurred while receiving federal student aid (grants, work-study, and/or loans).

• If yes, you will be provided a worksheet to help you determine whether your conviction affects your eligibility for federal student aid.

• If your eligibility for federal student aid has been suspended due to a drug conviction, you can regain eligibility early by completing an approved drug rehabilitation program or by passing two unannounced drug tests administered by an approved drug rehabilitation program.
PART II: STUDENT ELIGIBILITY continued

• If you indicated that you completed your high school diploma on the prior screen, when you click “Next”, you will see this screen asking you to provide the name, city and state of that high school.

• You will not be prompted to answer this question if you indicated that you received a GED certificate or state-authorized high school equivalent certificate on the prior screen.
School Selection Section
Part I: School Selection
Part II: School Selection Summary
Search for and select up to 10 colleges that you may want to attend. Information from the FAFSA will be sent to the schools you have selected.

You can update or change school selections later if your plans change or you’re just not sure yet. You must select at least one college to continue with the FAFSA.
You can search by city or school name, if known.

→ Click “Search” to populate search results.
Click “ADD” to select up to 10 schools.

Be careful when selecting your colleges. Some college names are very similar and it's easy to get them confused.

Costs vary by college type. State colleges and universities are generally the most affordable; private trade schools can be costly. Ask for help if needed to make selections.

Be sure to list each UC or CSU campus to which you are applying for admission separately in this section.
This page asks you to indicate your housing plans for each campus. Most four-year universities or colleges offer on-campus housing, but only a few community colleges in California offer on-campus housing.

Do NOT select “With Parent” as your housing plan if you plan to live with a foster parent, relative caregiver or legal guardian. Instead, select “Off-Campus.” This is crucial for getting all the money that is available to your to pay for your living expenses.

Note that the order in which you list the colleges does not make a different in California.
Dependency Status Section

Dependency Determination
Dependency Determination

-These questions appear one by one until a question is answered “Yes.” If you can answer “Yes” to any of the questions in this section, you qualify for and are considered as “Independent Status” for the purposes of the FAFSA.

“Independent Status” means that you do not have to provide any information, including income information, about biological, adoptive or foster parents (including relative or non-relative caregivers) or legal guardians in the Parent Demographics section.
Current or former foster youth may qualify for “Independent Status” on the FAFSA if they can answer “Yes” to any part of either of these two questions:

“At any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care, or were you a dependent or ward of the court?”

OR

“Does someone other than your parents or stepparent have legal guardianship of you, as determined by a court in your state of legal residence?”
NOT SURE IF YOU QUALIFY?

• Neither legal guardians nor foster parents are considered parents when completing the FAFSA. If you are in legal guardianship, you can qualify for “Independent Status” on the FAFSA.
• Even if you were in foster care, or were a dependent or ward of the court, for just one day after you turned 13, you qualify.
• If you were a dependent or ward of the court, but remained in the legal custody of your parents, you are not considered a ward of the court for the purposes of the FAFSA and therefore do not qualify for “Independent Status” as a foster youth.

TIP If you exited foster care before the age of 13, you will most likely need to provide information about your parents’ income. You can request an exemption, however, for unusual circumstances. Consult with the financial aid office at your college for more information.

Dependent or Ward of the Court? The term “ward” is used to mean “dependent” of the court. You are a ward of the court (regardless of whether this status is determined by the county or state) if the court has assumed custody of you, even for just one day. Court-ordered documents exist that designate you as a ward of the court.

HOW TO PROVIDE VERIFICATION OF YOUR FOSTER YOUTH STATUS

• Your college may require documentation to verify your “Independent Status.” You will not receive your financial aid unless you provide any requested verification forms to your college.

➢ Current foster youth: Contact your county social worker or Independent Living Program (ILP) Coordinator for your Court Dependency Letter.

➢ Former foster youth: Contact your county child welfare agency, local ILP program or the State Foster Care Ombudsman’s Office: 877-846-1602.

SAVE A COPY FOR YOURSELF!
YOU MIGHT NEED IT AGAIN.
Household Size: You will be asked your number of family members or “household size.” If you were in foster care on or after your 13th birthday, include only yourself and a spouse and/or children who you support in “household size.” Don’t include your siblings, other relatives, family of origin, foster family, people living in your group home or others who live with you.

Number in College: Enter “1” for number of family members and number in college if you are single and do not have children.

Even if you are determined to be “Independent Status”, you will be asked if you want to answer questions about your parents. **You can answer “No” to skip these questions. Answering “No” will not prevent you from getting financial aid.**
Parent Demographics Section
If you were determined to be “Independent” in the previous Dependency Determination section, you will not be required to complete this section. You will automatically proceed to the next section and only need to provide financial information for yourself.
Financial Information Section

These instructions are for students with “Independent Status.” Dependent students will need to also provide parent information.

Option a). If you select “Already Completed” IRS Income Tax Return
Option b). If you select “Not Going to File” IRS Income Tax Return
Option c). If you select “Will File” IRS Income Tax Return
Pay careful attention to which year’s income, tax and financial information you have to report in this section. FAFSA uses information from what they call the “prior-prior” year.

You will be asked if you completed your IRS income tax return for the appropriate year. You must select one of three options:

- Already completed
- Will file
- Not going to
Option a).
If you select “Already Completed” IRS Income Tax Return
If you filed taxes for the requested year, select this option.
FAFSA SECTION 5: FINANCIAL INFORMATION (PG. 10)

If you select “Already Completed”:

Select “Link to IRS” to transfer your federal income tax return information directly into the FAFSA from the IRS using their “Data Retrieval Tool” (DRT).

• To protect security of tax information, you will not be able to see the actual information that is being transmitted.

• If you have difficulty with the DRT or it’s not working, you can manually enter the information from your federal income tax return.

• If you don’t have a copy of your tax return, you can download a transcript at irs.gov/transcript or request a federal income tax return transcript by filing IRS Form 4506-T, which can be found at www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f4506t.pdf
**FAFSA SECTION 5: FINANCIAL INFORMATION (PG. 10)**

- Leaving *FAFSA on the Web* will display when going to the IRS Web site.
- It will inform you that your IRS tax information will not display, for your protection.
- Click “PROCEED TO IRS SITE” or “SKIP IRS TRANSFER” if you would like to enter the information manually.
Next, you will be taken to the IRS Data Retrieval Tool Site

- A warning text appears as the IRS Data Retrieval Tool site is displayed.
- Click “Ok”
**FAFSA SECTION 5: FINANCIAL INFORMATION (PG. 10)**

2018-19 IRS Data Retrieval Tool, page 1:

The fields at the top are pre-filled based on FAFSA responses. The Social Security Number cannot be updated.

Provide the address that matches your Federal Income Tax Return for the requested year.

![Image of IRS Data Retrieval Tool](image.png)
2018-19 IRS Data Retrieval Tool, page 1, continued:

- Click "Submit" to retrieve IRS data, or "Return to FAFSA" to discontinue use of the IRS DRT and return to your FAFSA.
2018-19 IRS Data Retrieval Tool, page 2:

- Check the “Transfer My Tax Information...” box and click “Transfer Now” to carry this data back into your FAFSA OR
- Check the “Do Not Transfer...” box and click “Do Not Transfer” to discontinue use of the IRS DRT

You are again notified on this page that the information will not display on the IRS page or on the fafsa.gov site.
2018-19 “Student Financial Information” page.

An alert message will indicate that the IRS Data was successfully transferred and will be identified as “Transferred from the IRS”.

This data cannot be changed or viewed.
Here is the top half of the 2018-19 “Student Financial Information continued” page.

The bottom half of the page is continued on the next slide.

The entry boxes that contain IRS Data have been replaced with the “Transferred from the IRS” label. This data cannot be changed.
Here is the bottom half of the page.

- The entry boxes that contain IRS Data have been replaced with the “Transferred from the IRS” label. This data cannot be changed.
- Click “Yes” to skip questions about your assets.
Option b). If you select “Not Going to File” IRS Income Tax Return

If you did not have to file taxes, select this option. You will still be asked questions about any income you may have earned or received.
Select “Not going to file” if, for example, you did not work or did not make enough money that requires you to file taxes for the requested year.

If you are not going to file taxes, you may be required to submit an IRS Verification of Nonfiling Letter. This can be requested at irs.gov/transcript. See your college financial aid department for assistance.

TIP

Unsure if you made enough money to file taxes? Each year the income requirement is different. For example, in 2016 if you were single, under the age of 65 and your gross income was at least $10,350, then you need to file a tax return.

Gross income = total income paid to you before any deductions or taxes were taken out.
You will be asked to report how much money you made from working. If you did not work, enter zero.

If you received federal work-study, you must enter the information twice in the FAFSA so that it is not included when determining your total income. First, include the amount in the total provided when asked “How much did you earn from working?” and then again in the Additional Financial Information Section by selecting the box that says, “Taxable earnings from Work-Study, Assistantships or Fellowships.”

If you are unsure if you are a dislocated worker, click and see the “Help & Hints” bar for a full definition.

Note: If you answer Yes, the financial aid administrator at your college may require proof that you or your spouse is a dislocated worker.
“Additional Financial Information”: The purpose of this section of the FAFSA is to collect financial information that must be subtracted when calculating your Total Income.

You DO NOT have to report the following information as income earned from working, or in the “Additional Financial Information” or “Untaxed Income” section:

→ Extended Foster Care (AB 12) benefits—including SILP payments or payment from a THP-Plus FC program. Even if your SILP payment is sent directly to you, you DO NOT need to report this as income. This also includes the infant supplement.
→ Welfare (CalWORKs) payments
→ Untaxed Social Security benefits
→ Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

*There are other less common types of untaxed income that do not need to be reported. Check the “Help & Hints” bar to see the complete list when you click the field to enter the income within “Other Untaxed Income”
If any of the boxes are selected, you will be asked to provide the dollar amount.

If the FAFSA determines that you have a high income, you will be asked to report any assets over $1. Otherwise, you can skip questions about assets.
Option c). If you select “Will File” IRS Income Tax Return

Very few people will need to select this option. If you were required to file taxes, but missed the deadline, select this option.
If you select “Will file” a tax return, indicate what your filing status will be when you do file.
A message will appear to confirm that you have missed the deadline to file taxes, but still plan to file an income tax return.

Click “Ok” if this is true.
**Student Financial Information:**

Either use the prior year’s taxes if the information is similar to provide estimates, or click “Income Estimator” for assistance estimating the adjusted gross income, and answer the remaining questions about income as accurately as possible.

**Gross income =** total income paid to you before any deductions or taxes were taken out.
**If you received federal work-study,** you must enter the information twice in the FAFSA so that it is not included when determining your total income. First, include the amount in the total provided when asked “How much did you earn from working?” and then again in the Additional Financial Information Section by selecting the box that says, “Taxable earnings from Work-Study, Assistantships or Fellowships.”

Depending on the amount of income you report, you may be asked if you received any federal benefits. These federal benefits often have different names locally:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal Benefit Name</th>
<th>Local California Benefit Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medicaid</td>
<td>Medi-Cal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)</td>
<td>Cal Fresh (i.e. “food stamps”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)</td>
<td>CalWorks</td>
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If any of the boxes are selected, you will be asked to provide the dollar amount.

If the FAFSA determines that you have a high income, you will be asked to report any assets over $1. Otherwise, you can skip questions about assets.
Sign & Submit Section
The final section of the FAFSA!
Read and check the box indicating agreement with the statement.

Click “SIGN” and then “SUBMIT MY FAFSA NOW”

Since you entered your FSA ID to login to the FAFSA, you don’t have to enter it again.
This is your Confirmation Page to show that your FAFSA is submitted!

- If possible, print or save a copy of this page for your records.
- A copy will also be sent to you via email.
- If you need to make any changes, you must wait until you receive your Student Aid Report (SAR) or Student Aid Acknowledgement. This may take a few days to a few weeks after filing your FAFSA.
After the FAFSA
Once your FAFSA is processed within a few days, it will be indicated when you log back into FAFSA.

You can make a correction by choosing “Make FAFSA Corrections,” or click to “View or Print your Student Aid Report (SAR).”