

Questions and Answers Recommended for Students on Information Collected for StudentAid.gov Account Creation and Filling-Out the FAFSA

U.S. Department of Education
January 17, 2025

Why do I/my parents/spouse have to provide identifiable information to complete the FAFSA?

You and any of your contributor(s) must provide this information in order for the Department to determine if you are eligible for federal student aid and which type (e.g., Pell Grant, subsidized or unsubsidized loans) and amount of aid you might be eligible to receive. In addition, many states and colleges use your FAFSA information to determine your eligibility for state and school aid.

What information do I/my parents/spouse have to provide?

When creating a StudentAid.gov account, you and any contributor(s) must provide information such as name, Social Security number (SSN) (or the fact that you/they do not have an SSN), date of birth, address, phone number (optional), and email address. If you or your contributor(s) do not have an SSN, you/they may be required to answer identity questions from TransUnion (such as which of the following is a recent previous address) in order for the Department to fully establish your/their StudentAid.gov account.

When completing the FAFSA form, you will be required to confirm all personal contact information (populated into the FAFSA from your StudentAid.gov account) and enter information such as gender, race/ethnicity, and citizenship status; parent education level; student high school information; financial information including income taxes and whether you or a family member has received other federal benefits such as Medicaid; and what college(s) you would like to receive your FAFSA information.

Who else can access this information?

The Department will share your information with the college(s) you select on your FAFSA form, as well as the state grant agency that is in the state you live in or in which the college(s) you selected is located. This is done to help you get access to any federal, state, or college aid you are entitled to receive.

The Department will also match your information with other federal agencies to help determine your eligibility for benefits (e.g., with the Social Security Administration (SSA) to verify your SSN and citizenship or with Department of Homeland Security to verify if you are an eligible non-citizen) and with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to obtain your tax information to populate the FAFSA system. If you have a contributor(s) with an SSN, the Department will share their information with the SSA to verify their SSN and with the IRS to obtain their tax information to populate the FAFSA system.

How long is this information held?

The Department must keep this information for the length of your relationship with the Department. For example, if you receive a loan, the Department will keep your information for

the full life of the loan (including all the years you are in repayment) and a period of time thereafter to ensure full closure of your loan and to meet various legal and regulatory requirements. If you receive a Pell Grant, the Department will keep your information to track how much you received in Pell Grants so you do not exceed lifetime limits set by law over the recipient's lifetime.

Can my or my contributor's information be used for immigration enforcement?

The Department is permitted by law to share information with other federal agencies for both civil and criminal law enforcement purposes. For example, if under one scenario a federal agency follows required processes to request information from the Department (such as providing the request in writing from the head of the agency, specifying the information being requested, and specifying the law enforcement purpose for the request), the Department may provide the information. The Department reviews any such request to ensure it complies with all legal requirements.

While we cannot speak to changes that another administration might make, the Biden Administration has prioritized protecting the privacy and data of those that create a StudentAid.gov account or fill out the FAFSA form, and we have not provided information for immigration enforcement purposes.

Should I fill out the FAFSA?

Whether or not you should fill out a FAFSA form is a decision that you should make with your family. It is important to note that, to the extent that you or a contributor has already provided the Department with information when creating a StudentAid.gov account or previously filling out the FAFSA form, the Department likely still has that information. In such an instance, the Department would only be adding updated information to the Department's systems (e.g., income information, change in address) were you to submit a new FAFSA form. Moreover, any future changes to how the Department's data are used or shared could apply to data already in its possession, as well as data it collects after the changes.