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Tips for Filing the 2022-23 FAFSA

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Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the key to unlocking financial aid for college. FAFSA completion is **strongly associated (https://www.ncan.org/news/456025/Survey-Data-Strengthen-Association-Between-FAFSA-Completion-and-Enrollment.htm)** with postsecondary enrollment: 92% of seniors who completed the FAFSA enrolled by the November following graduation vs. 51% who did not complete a FAFSA.

If you help students and families with the FAFSA, here's what you need to know about working through the 2022-23 form.

New Financial Aid Estimator Tool

Federal Student Aid (FSA) discontinued the FAFSA4Caster tool in September 2021. In its place, FSA released a new tool to help families determine their financial aid eligibility: the Federal Student Aid Estimator (https://studentaid.gov/aid-estimator/ (https://studentaid.gov/aid-estimator/)). You may wish to share this tool with younger students and their families you are working with to help them explore the FAFSA/financial aid process before the students' senior year.

FAFSA Website

You can still access the FAFSA by going to www.FAFSA.gov (www.FAFSA.gov). This URL will redirect you to a page that is now part of the overall Federal Student Aid website, which contains all information related to student aid.

The direct link to the FAFSA is now: **https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa** (https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa). You may wish to begin sharing the full website address in your work.

FSA ID

We strongly encourage you to have students and parents secure their FSA IDs several days prior to filing the FAFSA. We have received numerous reports from our members this year that those who created an FSA ID at the same time as completing the FAFSA received error messages when they reached the signature process in the form.

FSA is now aware of this issue and has made some modifications to try and keep this from happening.

Completing the FSA ID process well ahead of working through the FAFSA should help ensure a smooth signature process.

Selective Service and Drug Conviction Questions

The Department of Education **announced (https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/federal-registers/2021-06-17/removal-selective-service-and-drug-conviction-requirements-title-iv-eligibility)** in June 2021 that answers to the selective service and drug conviction questions on the FAFSA will no longer affect a student's eligibility for federal student aid. Postsecondary institutions have been advised that these questions are to be disregarded when determining eligibility for federal aid.

Due to the timing of the announcement, the questions remain on the 2021-22 FAFSA and also appear on the 2022-23 FAFSA. Advise your student to answer the questions truthfully but make them aware the answers will have no impact on their aid eligibility. If students assigned male gender at birth want to use the FAFSA to register for the Selective Service System, that option is still available this year. The questions will not appear on the FAFSA next year (the 2023-24 form).

Please Note: Registering for the Selective Service System is still a law in this country and therefore must be adhered to by students assigned male gender at birth. This may also be critical if state aid programs require registration or if state public colleges require it to receive in-state tuition.

Schedule 1 Question

The Schedule 1 question on the FAFSA is one of the determinants for whether an applicant may qualify for the Simplified Needs Test (SNT). As a result of the pandemic, many more families received unemployment benefits during 2020 and would have had to complete a Schedule 1 when filing federal taxes. Per the FAFSA instructions, there are some exemptions when filing this schedule that will still allow the student/parents to answer "No" to the question and perhaps then qualify for the SNT. Unemployment is one of those exemptions. Therefore, if a family filed a Schedule 1 for the sole purpose of receiving unemployment compensation, they may answer "No" to the Schedule 1 question on the FAFSA.

Receiving Unemployment Compensation in 2020 – Filing Exemption

The American Rescue Plan Act enacted on March 11, 2021, included an **exemption (https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/new-exclusion-of-up-to-10200-of-unemployment-compensation)** for federal tax filing that allowed filers who earned less than $150,000 in 2020 to exclude up to $10,200 in unemployment compensation on their taxes. Treatment of this exemption was recently addressed in an **electronic announcement (https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/electronic-announcements/2021-09-30/impact-american-rescue-plan-change-tax-treatment-unemployment-benefits-student-aid-eligibility-cycle-2022-23-updated-oct-15-2021)** from FSA. If you are working with families who may have filed their taxes prior to the exemption and therefore included their eligible unemployment compensation, you must file the FAFSA with the information on their tax form. Families in this situation should contact the college(s) listed on their FAFSAs and request that financial aid administrators "make a correction" to their adjusted gross income for the exempted unemployment compensation that was included on their tax forms.

If families amended their tax form after this exemption became available, use the income amount from the adjusted form when filing the FAFSA. The electronic announcement also clarifies that the exempted amount **does not** need to be claimed as untaxed income on the FAFSA. Exclusion of this unemployment compensation may result in a lower EFC for the student.

Signature Process

As students and/or parents select their role when logging into the FAFSA, they will encounter a streamlined signature process. The person logged in will be able to directly provide their electronic signature and not have to go to the Signature View screen to choose which signature they are about to provide. If the role of "preparer" has not been selected by a user when logging in, that signature option will not appear.

Those without an FSA ID are still able to use the printable signature page option.

Transferring Parent Data to Another FAFSA

Some families will need to complete multiple FAFSAs in one year – one for each sibling in the family. The FAFSA confirmation page from previous years included a clickable option for users to transfer parent data from one FAFSA to another. Modifications to the 2022-23 FAFSA platform have made this helpful feature harder to access.

When logging into the FAFSA, users now have to select a role: student, parent, or preparer. This change is the reason why many families are not seeing the transfer option on the FAFSA confirmation page.

We have learned from FSA that in order for the transfer option to display on the confirmation page, the user must be logged in under the parent role when they hit the submit button. This will allow a "parent" to transfer their parent data to another FAFSA. If a user is logged into the FAFSA under the "student" role and hits the submit button, the transfer option will not display. The FSA rationale is that the system is designed for specific roles, and therefore parents are the only ones allowed to access the function to transfer their information.

If you are working with a family that has multiple children and wants to complete multiple FAFSAs in one sitting, please make sure the parent is logged into the form before hitting the submit button so the transfer option will be available.

Adding Colleges After the FAFSA is Filed

When logging into the processed FAFSA, students will now have an option to "Update School Information," which is separate from making corrections on the FAFSA. Students can add colleges and/or change housing plans when they select the update option. This will not require a signature as the correction process does.

Viewing the Student Aid Report

When logging into the processed FAFSA, students can select "View Student Aid Report" to access the SAR. Students will experience a new display that depicts all the information about their Student Aid Report. The printed version of the SAR will reflect the common version we are most familiar with.

Do you have helpful FAFSA filing tips? Send your suggestions to MorraLee Keller, NCAN's director of technical assistance, at kellerm@ncan.org (mailto:kellerm@ncan.org).

Read More:

- NCAN FAFSA Resource Library (https://www.ncan.org/page/FAFSA_Resource_Library)
- Subscribe to monthly FAFSA email reminders from NCAN (https://www.ncan.org/page/SubscribeFAFSAReminders)
- 5 Key Components of State FAFSA Challenges (https://www.ncan.org/news/584584/5-Key-Components-of-State-FAFSA-Challenges.htm)

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