

FAFSA Information for Students from Families of Mixed Immigration Statuses

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.

This resource is designed to help students from families of mixed immigration statuses understand eligibility for federal financial aid and how information from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is used.

Key Points About FAFSA Data Security

What the FAFSA Collects

The FAFSA asks for personal details, like your name, birth date, Social Security Number (SSN), and mailing address. It also collects similar information from your “contributors,” like parents (if you’re a dependent) or spouse (if you’re married). If your contributor has an SSN, they need to provide it, but they do not need to have an SSN to fill out their portion of the FAFSA. If a contributor does not have an SSN, they check a box saying “I do not have an SSN” on the online form, or enter all zeros on the paper FAFSA. Families can use a PO box for the mailing address if needed; just ensure it’s an address where they can reliably receive important documents throughout the year.

How FAFSA Information Is Protected

Your FAFSA data is protected by laws like the Privacy Act of 1974 and the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). These laws ensure your information is only used to assess financial aid eligibility and govern how FAFSA data can be used. This applies to both paper and online FAFSAs. You can read more about these laws here: <https://studentaid.gov/notices/privacy>.

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 current or future administrations could attempt to use this data for immigration enforcement. Currently, we don’t have any specific information about proposed or actual plans to do this, and we are not aware of any cases where a parent or contributor has faced immigration enforcement due to FAFSA submission.

Which Students Are Most at Risk

If you’ve filled out the FAFSA before, reapplying won’t put you at any more risk since your data is already with the Department of Education. Similarly, if your family members—parents, siblings, or spouse—have filled out the FAFSA in the past, you are probably not putting your family at any additional risk.

Questions about FAFSA and Financial Aid

1. Does my family member’s citizenship status impact my eligibility for federal financial aid?

No! Every U.S. citizen and eligible non-citizen can apply for federal financial aid, no matter your parent or spouse’s citizenship status. Completing the FAFSA is essential to qualify for federal financial aid, and it may also be required to access state, institutional, or private scholarships.

2. What if I’m worried about my personal or family information being shared?

It’s completely normal to feel concerned about your privacy. Some students worry about sharing personal or family information due to safety concerns or uncertainty about how their data will be used. Your feelings are valid, and it’s okay to be cautious. Remember, while FAFSA data could potentially be used for immigration enforcement, we are unaware of any proposed or actual plans to do this.

3. Are there other financial aid options if I’m not comfortable filling out the FAFSA?

The FAFSA is the only way to access federal financial aid, but there are other ways to fund your education. You may qualify for state, institutional, or private financial aid. Make sure to ask your school’s financial aid office about your options.

Conclusion

If your family has mixed immigration status, you still have the right to apply for federal financial aid to help fund your college education. If you’re unsure about any part of the FAFSA process, don’t hesitate to reach out to your high school counselor or your college’s financial aid office. They are there to help guide you through the process and assist with any challenges you might face.