

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for Nevada Students Who Have Experienced Foster Care

What is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)?

The **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** is the official application form completed by current and prospective postsecondary education students who are U.S. citizens, permanent residents, or eligible non-citizens—to determine their eligibility for [Federal Student Aid](#). The FAFSA is for both undergraduate- and graduate-level students, including those pursuing professional degrees.

- **FINANCIAL AID (or STUDENT AID) = FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR STUDENTS, for school-specific and living expenses** (most often used to refer to financial assistance for postsecondary education/college)
- **FEE WAIVERS, VOUCHERS, GRANTS, and SCHOLARSHIPS = “GIFT AID”**
⇒ **FINANCIAL AID that does NOT need to be repaid (i.e. it is a “gift”)**, as long as you are maintaining sufficient attendance in your classes and meeting all financial aid regulations (unlike LOANS, which need to be repaid, with interest!)
- **FAFSA = FEDERAL STUDENT AID APPLICATION FORM** (the FAFSA, itself, is NOT a form of financial aid)

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- If you are ever asked to PAY to complete your FAFSA, either by paying to complete the form itself or paying someone to help you complete the form, STOP immediately and ask for help. **Completing the FAFSA should always be FREE**—as the name indicates—and any claims to the contrary are SCAMS. The [FAFSA](#) has its own website for completing the application. You can find out more about [what the FAFSA is](#) on the Federal Student Aid website.
- **If you are a student with undocumented status:** [Students with undocumented status, including DACA recipients, are ineligible for federal student aid](#), but you may still be eligible for aid offered through the state, your college/university, or private organizations. **You may need/want to complete your school’s alternative need financial aid application instead of the FAFSA.** Check with your college/university’s financial aid office and/or utilize the links and contact information at the bottom of this page for more information.

Why is the FAFSA so important?

Nearly all forms of financial aid for postsecondary education-related expenses require annual FAFSA completion/submission before consideration—even aid that is not directly tied to FAFSA submission. The FAFSA provides access to the largest source of financial aid, including all forms of [Federal Student Aid](#)—federal grants ([Federal Pell Grant](#) and [Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant](#)), [Federal Work-Study](#), and [U.S. Department of Education loans](#). Additionally, many schools use your FAFSA information to determine your eligibility for state-funded and/or school-specific aid; and your FAFSA may be used to determine your eligibility for some [scholarships](#), depending on the provider ([SOURCE](#)). Annual FAFSA completion/submission is also required in order to be considered for the [NSHE Foster Youth Fee Waiver](#), the foster care-specific [Chafee Education\(al\) and Training Voucher \(ETV\)](#) that is administered by the federal child welfare system, and a number of scholarships and grants administered by states, colleges/universities, and private organizations.



How do I complete and submit my FAFSA?

- Complete/submit your FAFSA at [fafsa.gov](#).
⇒ **The FAFSA opens on October 1st each year, for the following academic year.**
⇒ **SUBMIT YOUR FAFSA AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE, BEFORE THE PRIORITY DEADLINE for your college/university, prior to every academic year in which you plan to enroll in college courses.**

IMPORTANT NOTE: If you were in foster care (adjudicated “ward of the court” status) at and/or after age 13, you will want to ensure that you accurately indicate that on your FAFSA, every year. If this applies to you, you will be deemed “financially independent” for financial aid determination purposes, as long as you can provide documentation that verifies that you were in foster care at and/or after age 13. This means that **you do NOT need to (and SHOULD NOT) enter any caregiver income information into your FAFSA, even if someone is claiming you on their taxes.** You will skip that section entirely.

What if I need more information and/or assistance?

- **Federal Financial Aid/FAFSA Information:** [Federal Student Aid Help Center](#)
- **Financial Aid Information for Nevada Students Who Have Experienced Foster Care:** [Foster Care-Specific Financial Aid Fact Sheet](#); [Nevada Fostering Success Financial Aid and FAFSA Guide](#); [Nevada Fostering Success Financial Aid Toolkit](#)
- **Financial Aid Information for Students with Undocumented Status (including DACA recipients):** [Federal Student Aid Eligibility Info for Non-U.S. Citizens](#); [Federal Student Aid’s Financial Aid and Undocumented Students Fact Sheet](#); [Resources for Nevada System of Higher Education \(NSHE\) DACA and Undocumented Students](#)
- **Questions?** Contact Laura Obrist, statewide contact for the [NSHE Fostering Success Initiative](#).
→ Email Address: lobrist@nshe.nevada.edu; Phone Number (call or text): [702-522-7035](tel:702-522-7035)

