

Completing the FAFSA

- Student must be a US citizen or eligible noncitizen (i.e. US permanent resident) to be eligible for federal aid via the FAFSA

Please note: If the student is **not** an eligible noncitizen or is transgender but disqualified for failure to register for selective service, they may qualify to fill out the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial aid to be considered for the MAP grant as a result of the RISE Act:

<https://studentportal.isac.org/en/alternativeapp>. Please see page 3 of this document.

- Make sure the student and parent are completing the correct section of the FAFSA; on top left side of the screen, it will indicate if it is the student section or parent section
- After the FAFSA is submitted, both confirmation page and SAR (Student Aid Report) will only show federal financial aid programs; MAP will not be listed but will show up on award letters from colleges in Illinois if eligible for MPA.

STUDENT SECTION

- **Make sure the Social Security Number is correct. It is the hardest item to edit on the FAFSA.**
- If the full name does not fit, write out the full name until you reach the maximum limit of characters. Include dash, space, Jr., etc. exactly as is on Social Security Card. Do not abbreviate.
- Students should use an e-mail that they check frequently and that is not going to expire (avoid using school E-mail address). Keep it professional since colleges will see it.
- A student can only list 10 schools on the FAFSA when they first submit the form. If they would like to add more, they will have to log in later after the FAFSA has been processed and replace previously entered colleges with the additional colleges (i.e. college #11, #12, etc.).
- Encourage students to mark “Yes” for work study. They can decide later if they want to look for a work study job on campus.
- Q: Male students only (assigned male at birth): “Are you registered with the Selected Service System?”
 - If student is unsure if they are registered, just have them select “no” and then select “register me.” If students select “no,” then it will prompt them to choose “register me.” Students must register with Selective Service to be eligible to receive federal aid.
- Q. “What will your College grade level be when you begin the 2021-2022 school year?”
 - A. For high school seniors, they should select “Never attended college and 1st year undergraduate.” Select this option even if the student has taken college credit coursework while in high school.
- Q. “As of today, what is the net worth of your (i.e. student) investments, including real estate”
 - A. If the parent(s) opened an UGMA/UTMA account for the student or if the student has a trust fund, this information will be reported here as a student asset.
 - Assets in the student’s name are reported even if they will not have access to them until a certain age.

- Q. “Student’s Untaxed Income”: “Money received, or paid on your behalf . . .”
 - If a student received money in 2019 from someone other than the parent(s) whose information is being reported on the FAFSA, for bills that are in the student’s name, school, etc. and it is not part of a legal child support agreement, the student needs to indicate the amount here.

PARENT SECTION

- The **ONLY** people who can fill out the Parent Section of the FAFSA are:
 - A biological parent
 - An adoptive parent
 - A step-parent if married to a biological/adoptive parent
- Q: “As of today, what is the marital status of your parents?”
 - If parents are separated/divorce, enter the info for the parent:
 - With whom the student has lived the longest in the last 12 months.
 - If lived equally with both, enter the info for the parent that provided the most financial support in last 12 months.
 - It does **not** matter which parent claimed the student on the tax return.
- Q: “Social Security Number”
 - **If a parent does not have a Social Security Number, parent needs to enter all zeros.** A parent with an ITIN (which typically begins with a “9”) also needs to put all zeros in this section. The FAFSA will say that there is an error; continue to keep pressing “accept” or “keep checking for errors” until the FAFSA doesn’t recognize the error. It may take a few times.
 - If a parent does not have an SSN, they will not be able to sign the FAFSA with an FSA ID. They will need to print out a signature page and mail to the address listed in the middle of the signature page.
- Q: “As of today, is either of your parents a dislocated worker?”
 - A person may be considered a dislocated worker if he or she:
 - Is receiving unemployment benefits due to being laid off or losing a job and is unlikely to return to a previous occupation
 - Was self-employed but is now unemployed due to economic conditions or natural disaster
 - Is the spouse of an active duty member of the Armed Forces and has experienced a loss of employment because of relocating due to a permanent change in duty station.
 - Is the spouse of an active duty member of the Armed Forces and is unemployed or underemployed and is experiencing difficulty in obtaining or upgrading employment.
 - Is a displaced homemaker. A displaced homemaker is generally a person who previously provided unpaid services to the family (ex. A stay-at-home mom or dad) and is no longer supported by the spouse, is unemployed or underemployed, and is having trouble finding or upgrading employment.

- Q: “How much did Parent 1 earn from working in 2019? How much did Parent 2 earn from working in 2019?”
 - If parents filed jointly, there will not be a breakdown of how much each parent made separately on the 1040 return. This will be indicated on a person’s W-2. If parents do not have their W-2 forms, they will have to estimate how much each one made separately.
 - If parents filed jointly but are now divorced/separated, report amount only of the parent whose information is being reported on the FAFSA
- Q: “As of today, what is the net worth of your parents’ investments, including real estate?”
 - A parent must report ALL college savings/529 plans owned by the parent(s) and student as parental assets. This includes other 529 plans owned by the parent(s) where the beneficiary is someone other than the student completing the FAFSA.
 - Do **NOT** include the following:
 - Value of IRAs/401K/Pension plans
 - The home in which you live (i.e. primary residence)
 - Family-owned and operated business with 100 or fewer full-time employees

Completing the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid

Who qualifies to fill out the Alternative Application?

- **Undocumented Students** – Undocumented students may be eligible to apply for ISAC’s programs if they meet all of these criteria, which are based on Illinois statute regarding in-state tuition eligibility:
 - the individual resided with his or her parent or guardian while attending an Illinois public or private high school;
 - the individual graduated from a public or private high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma in Illinois;
 - the individual attended school in Illinois (K-12) for at least 3 years as of the date the individual graduated from high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma;
 - the individual provides an affidavit stating that the individual will file an application to become a permanent resident of the United States at the earliest opportunity the individual is eligible to do so; and
 - the individual has not established a residence outside of Illinois.
- **Transgender Students** – Transgender students are also included in those eligible to apply for financial aid under the RISE Act. The RISE Act provides an application process for state financial aid consideration other than using the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which is used to qualify for both federal and state aid. Transgender students may choose the application process that best suits their individual situation.

Filling out the application

- The majority of questions on the Alternative Application will mirror the questions on the FAFSA; please reference the student and parent sections above
- The Alternative Application does not currently have skip logic; therefore, questions that are not applicable should be skipped
- Don't use a phone to open the application
- First-time users select the Start button in "First-Time Applicants" badge
- Do not use an email address that will expire (i.e. don't use a high school email address that will deactivate at graduation); keep it professional since colleges will often communicate via email with the student
- The parent and student cannot use the same email address
- Make a note of your ISAC ID Number that is generated by the Alternative Application
- If the student did not file taxes, skip the questions that reference the IRS tax form, since the Alternative Application does **not** have skip logic currently; you will be unable to uncheck them if they are inadvertently checked/answered
- Student must enter any income earned in 2019 if the student worked even if a tax return was not filed
- A PIN will be used (instead of an FSA ID) by the student to sign the Alternative Application.
 - If reporting parental information, the parent will have their own unique PIN to sign the Alternative Application.
- The Submit button is only on the Certification/Affidavit screen
 - It is only enabled after Alternative Application is signed by the student (and the parent if reporting parental information).
 - After student has signed, press the "previous" screen to go back to Certification/Affidavit screen and select "submit" button