

Filling Out the Online FAFSA Form: A reference guide for DACA recipients



Coalition of Advocates for Student Opportunities | In support of
undocumented students seeking to attend a college or university

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A REFERENCE GUIDE FOR DACA RECIPIENTS

Introduction:

CASO has been working with advocates and government agencies to ensure that students who have been granted Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA recipients) are able to access all forms of financial aid for which they are eligible. As part of that process, we have received clarification from the Department of Education regarding DACA recipients' ability to use the FAFSA application form in order to receive an assessment of recipients' financial need.

We have also received information from local colleges and universities in Rhode Island that they will use the FAFSA application form to assess students' needs who apply to state colleges in Rhode Island.

It is important to note that DACA recipients are still *ineligible* for federal financial aid at this time. Students' ability to receive a needs assessment from FAFSA does not in any way impact their eligibility for different kinds of student aid. It merely allows students to access aid for which they are *already* eligible.

General information, such as that provided below, does not constitute individual legal advice nor is it meant to take the place of individualized legal advice. The information provided below is merely general information about the steps that must be taken to fill out the FAFSA application form.

We strongly encourage all Rhode Island school counselors and college advisors to encourage and assist DACA recipient students to use the FAFSA application.

A REFERENCE GUIDE ON FILLING OUT THE FAFSA FORM FOR DACA RECIPIENTS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ's)

QUESTION: How can I use my DACA to fill out the FAFSA application?

ANSWER: Students who have been granted DACA can now use their Social Security Number (SSN) to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. DACA-mented students are *NOT* eligible for federal financial aid, but completing the FAFSA form allows DACA students to receive a Student Aid Report (SAR). The SAR is an important tool that can be used to demonstrate need and can be used to apply for institutional aid and other scholarships.

QUESTION: What is the Student Aid Report (SAR)?

ANSWER: The SAR is a report that analyzes your family's financial need. This report is often required by scholarships and institutions in order to grant money to students based on need. It is important to note that getting the SAR does NOT automatically grant you institutional aid or scholarships. You must still apply to scholarships. Receiving a SAR only opens the doors to more options.

QUESTION: Does this mean DACA recipients can access federal financial aid?

ANSWER: No, DACA recipients cannot access federal financial aid, grants, or loans by completing the FAFSA form. However, getting a Student Aid Report (SAR) can open many doors to access private and other institutional funding!

QUESTION: I am undocumented but I do not have DACA, does this mean that I still cannot fill out the FAFSA?

ANSWER: Yes, unfortunately all undocumented students who have not been granted DACA cannot use the FAFSA form to get a SAR because they do not have a valid SSN. This also means that all undocumented students still cannot access federal financial aid.

QUESTION: My parents are concerned about providing their information because of their citizenship status. What should I do?

ANSWER: The FAFSA doesn't ask about your parents' status. If your parent does not have a social security number, you may enter all zeroes for him or her on the FAFSA where it asks for that information (see below for more details).

NOTE: If a student that is a citizen or eligible non-citizen is applying to FAFSA, their parents' citizenship status does *not* affect their eligibility for federal student aid.

STEPS TO COMPLETING THE FAFSA: TAKING A CLOSE LOOK WHEN FILLING OUT THE FAFSA

DACA recipients should pay close attention to the following aspects of the FAFSA application process when filling out the FAFSA form in order to get their student Aid Report (SAR).

- A. Like all applicants, DACA recipients' first step in filling out the FAFSA form should be to create a PIN at <https://pin.ed.gov/PINWebApp/pinindex.jsp>. A pin number functions like your electronic signature.

- B. There are 6 sections on the FAFSA form: Student Demographics (which includes student eligibility), School Selection, Dependency Status, Parent Demographics, Financial Information and Sign & Submit Section.
 - a. The two sections that are most confusing for DACA recipients are the Student Demographic section (particularly, the student eligibility questions) and the Parent Information section (if parents are undocumented).
 - b. Below is an overview of the FAFSA form application process. We will point out some sections of the process that you as a DACA recipient need to pay special attention to. For further detail on how to fill out the FAFSA, we encourage you to look at:
 - i. Federal Student Aid Websites- <https://fafsa.ed.gov/> & <http://studentaid.ed.gov/fafsa/filling-out#documents>

- C. Section 1: The Student Demographic section:**
 - a. Here you will fill out your personal information, including your SSN.
 - b. How do I answer the Citizenship / legal status question?
 - i. For DACA recipients, it is important that you DO NOT misrepresent your status. On the question that asks "Are you a U.S. citizen?" DACA students should select "*No, I am not a citizen or eligible non-citizen.*" Students will be able to complete the FAFSA despite selecting this answer. See picture below.

The image shows a screenshot of the FAFSA website. At the top, it says "Federal Student Aid" and "FAFSA™ Free Application for Federal Student Aid". Below this is a navigation bar with tabs for "Student Demographics", "School Selection", "Dependency Status", "Parent Demographics", "Financial Information", "Sign & Submit", and "Confirmation". The "Student Demographics" tab is selected, and the "Student Eligibility" section is visible. The questions in this section are:

- Are you a U.S. citizen? (Dropdown menu: No, I am not a citizen or eligible noncitizen)
- When you begin college in the 2014-2015 school year, what will be your high school completion status? (Dropdown menu: High school diploma)
- When you begin the 2014-2015 school year, what will be your grade level? (Dropdown menu: Select)
- When you begin the 2014-2015 school year, what degree or certificate will you be working on? (Dropdown menu: Select)
- Are you interested in being considered for work-study? (Dropdown menu: Select)
- Will you have your first bachelor's degree before July 1, 2014? (Radio buttons: Yes, No)
- Highest school completed by Parent 1

Overlaid on the right side of the screenshot is a Google Chrome browser window titled "Are you a U.S. citizen? - Google Chrome". The address bar shows "https://fafsa.ed.gov/fotw1415/help/fotw14a.htm". The page content includes:

- Text: "Select **Neither citizen nor eligible noncitizen** if you are in the U.S. on:"
- Bulleted list:
 - A F1 or F2 student visa
 - A J1 or J2 exchange visitor visa
 - A G series visa (pertaining to international organizations)
 - Other categories not included under U.S. citizen and eligible noncitizen
- Text: "If you are neither a citizen nor an eligible noncitizen, you are not eligible for federal student aid. If you have a Social Security Number but are not a citizen or an eligible noncitizen, you should still complete the FAFSA because you may be eligible for state or college aid. You should check with your college's financial aid office to see what kind of financial aid you may be eligible to receive"
- Buttons: "HELP" and "PRINT"

- c. For DACA recipients who are filling out the FAFSA online it is important to pay close attention to the question that asks for the student's city and state (and country, if not U.S.)
- i. Once a student has filled out the state and city that they live in, he or she will be asked the following questions if he or she responds that he or she not lived in that state for more than 5 years :
 1. What is your state of legal residence?
 2. Did you become a legal resident of _____ before January 1, 2009?
 3. When did you become a legal resident? Enter the month and year.
 - ii. For the above questions the term "legal residence" causes the confusion for the residency questions, but that is not the intent. Families should understand that these questions are not intended to identify whether a person is legally or illegally present in the state, but are instead intended to get at the question of where a person currently resides. Those questions may be used by states to determine eligibility for state aid programs based on residency requirements of state aid programs. However, a student must not accept such aid if he or she is ineligible due to his or her status.
 - iii. Answer the questions based on where the student currently resides.
 - iv. If the student is filling out the FAFSA via paper the questions on where the student lives will look like the following:
 1. Question 18-What is your state of legal residence?

2. Question 19- Did you become a legal resident of this state before January 1, 2009?
3. Question 20-If the answer to question 19 is “No,” give month and year you became a legal resident.
 - a. Again, for the above questions the term “legal residence” causes the confusion for the residency questions, but that is not the intent. Families should view those questions not from any sort of “legal vs illegal” perspective, but simply from the “where do you currently reside” perspective. That is the intent. Those questions are used by states to determine eligibility for state aid programs based on residency requirements of state aid programs.
 - b. Please answer the questions based on where the student currently resides.

D. Section 2: School Selection

- a. Choose all the universities / colleges that you have applied or will apply to. This will be schools that will receive your SAR.

E. Section 3: Dependency Status

- a. The FAFSA asks a series of questions that determine whether you are a dependent or independent student for purposes of applying for federal student aid.
- b. If you are a dependent student, you must report parent information, as well as your own information, on your FAFSA form.
- c. If you’re an independent student, you will report only your own information (and, if you’re married, your spouse’s).
- d. For more information on finding out your dependency status visit:
<http://studentaid.ed.gov/fafsa/filling-out/dependency>

F. Section 4: Parent Demographics: What info do I need to provide on my parents?


- a. Your parents’ citizenship status does not affect your ability to complete the FAFSA form. In fact, the FAFSA form doesn’t even ask about your parents’ status, but it does ask your parent’s social security number.
- b. If you have DACA and your parents are undocumented and do not have a Social Security Number, they must not misrepresent themselves on the FAFSA application.
- c. An undocumented parent can complete the FAFSA form using “000-00-0000” for SSN
- d. If your parents have and use an Individual Taxpayer identification Number (ITIN) to file taxes, DO NOT place the ITIN in place of a social security number.

G. Section 5: Financial Information


- a. Parents Financial Information
 - i. You are required to provide your parents financial info regardless if they



file taxes or not.

1. If your parents file taxes, use the information on your parent's tax documents and w-2s and follow the instructions on the page.
 2. If your parents do not file taxes, that is fine, your parents do not need to file taxes for you to be able to fill out the FAFSA form.
 - a. Choose "Not going to file" and follow the instructions on the income estimator.
 - ii. If your parents do not have a social security number, parent's income info must entered manually. Do not try to use the IRS Data Retrieval tool.
- b. Student Financial Information
- i. Students can enter their income information manually or through the IRS retrieval tool if they filed taxes.
 - ii. For more instructions on providing financial info visit:
<http://studentaid.ed.gov/fafsa/filling-out#financial-info>
- c. NOTE: Upon completing the financial information section, you may encounter an error message, see the graphic below
- d. This error automatically comes up for people who put in their parents social as all 0's and put in tax information. You don't have to change anything, simply keep selecting continue and it should work. If still doesn't work, try changing tax filing option to "not yet completed" and then manually input the info found on a parents W-2. Do not select that your parents have filed a foreign tax return if they have not.

 **The following error(s) have occurred:**

- You reported that the Parent 2 (Father's/Mother's/Stepparent's) Social Security Number (SSN) is all zeroes (000-00-0000), and the Parent 1 (Father's/Mother's/Stepparent's) SSN is blank or all zeroes. You also reported that the parents' tax return status is filed or will file, and the tax return type is not a foreign tax return.

 Review the answers to the questions on this page and make corrections or updates as needed. Once you are done, click **Check For Errors** to continue.

FAFSA Question	Current Response
What is your Parent 1 (father's/mother's/stepparent's) Social Security Number?	<input type="text" value="000-00-0000"/> 
What is your Parent 2 (father's/mother's/stepparent's) Social Security Number?	<input type="text" value="000-00-0000"/> 
For 2013, have your parents completed their IRS income tax return or another tax return?	<input type="text" value="Already completed"/> ▼
What type of income tax return did your parents file for 2013?	<input type="text" value="IRS 1040"/> ▼

CHECK FOR ERRORS

Help and Hints

Parents' Type of 2013 Tax Form Used
Question 81

If your parent uses the IRS Data Retrieval Tool and transfers his / her information from the IRS into your FAFSA, the answer to this question will be pre-filled and identified as "Transferred from the IRS."

If the answer to this question is not pre-filled, you must select the income tax return that your parents filed or will file for 2013:

- IRS 1040
- IRS 1040A or 1040EZ
- A foreign tax return
- A tax return for a U.S. territory or a Freely

H. Section 6: Sign and Submit:

- a. Student Signature: On the signature/submission pages, students can sign with their PIN.
- b. Parent Signature: If parents don't have a SSN, they cannot create a PIN number and cannot electronically sign. Therefore, parents must print, sign by hand, and mail in signature page. There is a bar code on the signature page that will match your parent's signature to your specific application once the signature page is mailed into the FAFSA office listed on the signature page. There is no need to print the entire application. Just send in the signature page.
 - i. For 2014-2015-July 1st 2014- June 30th 2015 it is as follows:
 - ii. Federal Student Aid Programs
P.O. Box 7006
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864-0076
- l. Students will be able to check the status of your FAFSA online via fafsa.ed.gov with the same password and PIN number created when they filed the FAFSA. Once the parent signature page is processed, they will be able to view their EFC (expected family contribution) which is the number that demonstrates your need. This information is important for need based scholarships.
- J. Please keep in mind that you will receive a rejection letter for federal and state financial aid based on error Code C (citizenship status). This error code does not affect your ability to receive need based scholarships like those offered by the Hispanic Scholarship Fund, The Dream.US and perhaps your own college/university.

CAUTION:

- You should not have to pay to fill out the FAFSA (either online or via someone helping you) Filling out the FAFSA is free! You and or your high school or college counselor should be able to help you fill it out by following online instructions and by using this sheet
- If you inadvertently make a mistake on your FAFSA application, you can correct your application following the instructions provided by the Department of Education on its website, available here: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/fafsa/next-steps/correct-update>.
- If you receive an offer for financial aid despite being ineligible for such aid, you must reject the aid for which you know you are ineligible. Details on accepting and rejecting aid offers can be found on the Department of Education's website, available here: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/fafsa/next-steps/accept-aid>
- If you intentionally misrepresent your eligibility for federal financial aid in order to claim a benefit for which you are ineligible, and accept aid that was awarded to you improperly, you may face criminal and immigration consequences.

RESOURCES:

- Link to FAFSA web page- <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>
- Link to where FAFSA addresses that DACA recipients can fill out the FAFSA (FAQ's) <http://studentaid.ed.gov/eligibility/non-us-citizens#daca>
- Link to FAFSA tutorial: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL23B9A23CD8DD82DD&feature=plcp>
- Link to 2014-2015 FAFSA (PDF) <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2014-15-fafsa.pdf>
- Link to Dream Educational Empowerment Program (DEEP) <http://unitedwedream.org/about/projects/education-deep/>
- Link to Dream University (Life After DACA) <http://unitedwedream.org/dream-university/daca-toolbox-central/fafsa/>
- Link to United We Dream webinar recording “I have DACA and I can use the FAFSA? Say what!” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHfOu_I9fWw#t=40
- Link to College Board CSS Profile <http://css.collegeboard.org/>



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