

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

There are very few changes to this year's FAFSA, except for formatting and grammar. No questions were added or deleted.

The 2012-2013 FAFSA colors are **blue** for student information and **purple** for parent information (if needed). The "Notes" or instruction and worksheet pages are numbered 1, 2, 9 and 10. (Page 9 answers status questions for youth who have been part of the child welfare systems.)

Applicants should only mail pages 3 through 8 of the FAFSA for processing if they use the paper version.

Youth in or formerly in out-of-home care or those who are homeless should note the following questions on the 2012-2013 FAFSA:

1. **Question 52** – At any time since you turned age 13, were both of your parents deceased, were you in foster care or were you a dependent or ward of the court?
2. **Question 53** – Are you or were you an emancipated minor as determined by a court in your legal state of residence?
3. **Question 54** – Are you or were you in legal guardianship as determined by a court in your state of legal residence?
4. **Question 55** – At any time on or after July 1, 2009, did your high school or school district homeless liaison determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless?
5. **Question 56** – At any time on or after July 1, 2009, did the director of an emergency shelter program, funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless?
6. **Question 57** – At any time on or after July 1, 2009, did the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?
7. Students who wish to include additional post-secondary institutions to receive their FAFSA information should call the federal government's helpline at 1.800.4.FED.AID (1.800.433.3243).



Tips to Avoid Financial Aid Application Errors

- The FAFSA on the Web (FOTW) includes information about a demonstration site on how to complete the FAFSA. This is a great **free** tool for first time applicants and those who assist them. The website is: <http://fafsademotest.ed.gov>. The user name is **eddemo** and the password is **fafsatest**.
- If you would like to see an estimate of your Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and your federal Pell Grant amount, you can use the U.S. Department of Education's free financial aid forecast website: www.fafsa.gov. Students who use this site can opt to have their information transferred to the actual FAFSA application.
- Deadlines are critical – **apply early!** *The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education and the University of Pittsburgh have a priority deadline for financial aid applications of March 1, 2012. Penn State's priority deadline is February 28, 2012.*
- If your information changes, make sure that you notify your college or university and the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA). PHEAA needs to know so that consideration and processing for your state grant and your Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG) will not be affected.
- Obtain your PIN number before you start the process or make sure that you have the correct number from prior year applications.
- Use your correct Social Security Number.
- Be sure that you understand the intent of the question and what is being asked. Wrong answers can affect eligibility.
- Do not insert words in spaces where figures must be reported. If the answer is "zero", write "0," not N/A, not applicable or dashes. Only skip an item if instructions specifically tell you that you should.
- Do not report cents – round figures to the nearest dollar.
- Do not report taxes withheld, but rather taxes paid.
- Do not write in margins or outside answer boxes or spaces.
- Do not send photocopies or attach other documents to your application unless specifically requested to do so.
- Make sure all required signatures are on the FAFSA if you are using the paper version. Mail pages 3 through 8 of the FAFSA only.
- **Avoid the following websites:** www.fafsa.com and www.edify.com as they will charge you a fee to complete the FAFSA, which should be free to file.
- IF IN DOUBT – ASK QUESTIONS FIRST!

Renewal Applicants

Renewal applicants should receive a reminder to complete the FAFSA via e-mail or regular mail (if they did not provide an e-mail address) in January or February 2010. When renewal applicants go to the FAFSA on the Web (FOTW) website to complete their applications for 2011-2012, they will have the option to include pre-filled information from last year and to correct any questions that need to be changed and to provide new information as needed.

FAFSA Completion Events

There will be a number of FAFSA completion events sponsored throughout the state in February. Most events are held on college campuses or at other locations in communities. Participants should bring their completed tax returns (if needed) and other information to complete the FAFSA. For locations in your area, go to: www.pheaa.org for more information.

Final Note: If you have any questions regarding completion of the FAFSA or the changes to this year's application, please contact your IL caseworker, the financial aid office where you plan to enroll or the PHEAA Higher Education Access Partner for your county.