

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

There are a number of changes to this year's FAFSA. To help prevent confusion when students complete the FAFSA, especially for renewal applicants, please note the following changes and revisions:

The 2009-2010 FAFSA colors are **green** for student information and **purple** for parent information (if needed). The "Notes" or instruction and worksheet pages are numbered one to four.

Applicants should only mail pages 5-10 of the FAFSA for processing if they use the paper version.

Changes to the 2009-2010 FAFSA:

1. **Question 23** – Have you been convicted for the possession or sale of illegal drugs for an offense that occurred while you were receiving federal student aid? **Moved from Question 31 on last year's FAFSA.** Students who answer "yes" should still file the FAFSA and a worksheet will be sent to them by the federal processor.
2. **Question 50** – As of today are you married? (Married students are considered "independent" for financial aid purposes. Students who marry after their application is completed remain a dependent student if parent information is otherwise required for the entire school year.)
3. **Question 56** – When you were age 13 or older, were both your parents deceased, were you a person in foster care or were you a dependent or ward of the court? **(New)**
4. **Question 57** – As of today, has it been decided by a court in the state you reported in Question 18 that you are an emancipated minor? **(New)**
5. **Question 58** – As of today has it been decided by a court in the state that reported in Question 18 that you are in a legal guardianship? **(New)**
6. **Question 59** – At any time on or after July 1, 2008, did your high school or school district homeless liaison determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless? **(New)**
7. **Question 60** – At any time on or after July 1, 2008, 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? **(New)**
8. **Question 61**— At any time on or after July 1, 2008, 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? **(New)**
9. 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. <http://fafsademotest.ed.gov>. The user name is **eddemo** and the password is **fafsatest**.
- If you'd 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.fafsa4caster.ed.gov. Students who use this site can opt to have their information transferred to the actual FAFSA application.
- Deadlines are critical – **apply early!** 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 5-10 of the FAFSA only.
- **Avoid the following websites:** www.fafsa.com; www.fafsa.gov and www.edify.com as they will charge you a fee to complete the FAFSA, which should be free to file.

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 2009. When renewal applicants go to the FAFSA on the Web (FOTW) website to complete their applications for 2009-2010, 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 January and 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 Project Specialist, the financial aid office where you plan to enroll or the PHEAA regional director for your area.