

**Note:** This document is focused on how the **federal government** uses FAFSA information. **States, schools, and other institutions** are able to access FAFSA data for different purposes. Guidance on this use of FAFSA data will be included in a forthcoming resource.

## FAFSA Messaging Template

Amidst ongoing concerns about the security of financial aid information, we affirm our support for all current and prospective students seeking to access higher education. Financial aid is a key component of postsecondary decision-making, and we are committed to ensuring that all students have access to the information they need to pursue their academic goals.

This document is designed to help educators and school staff communicate clearly and confidently about the security of FAFSA information. We want to make sure everyone has accurate information to share and that educators feel prepared to support students through the financial aid process.

### Key Points to Know About FAFSA Data Security

**What FAFSA collects:** FAFSA asks for students' personal information, including their name, birthdate, social security number (SSN) and mailing address. FAFSA collects similar information from students' "contributors," such as their parents (if they are dependents) or spouses (if they are married). Contributors do not need to provide an SSN to complete their portion of the FAFSA. On the online form, contributors will check off a box saying "I do not have an SSN." On the paper FAFSA, contributors should enter zeroes in the SSN field.

**How FAFSA information is protected:** FAFSA data is protected by laws like the [Privacy Act of 1974](#) and the [Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#). These laws help ensure that FAFSA information is used to determine if a student is eligible for financial aid and govern institutions' use of FAFSA data. You can read more about them [here](#). The paper FAFSA is protected by the same policies that apply to the online FAFSA and is neither more nor less secure.

**Concerns about future FAFSA data use:** While the information provided on the FAFSA has not been used for immigration purposes in the past, there is a possibility that future administrations could attempt to use this data for immigration enforcement. As far as we know, a parent or other contributor has not been targeted as a result of filing a FAFSA. Currently, we don't have any specific information about proposed or actual plans to do this, but we'll keep you updated if anything changes.

**Which students are most at risk:** If a student has filled out the FAFSA in the past, the Department already has access to the PII they submitted with their past application(s). Continuing students who filled out the FAFSA in prior years can go ahead and renew their applications for aid if they choose. In addition, students whose parents or siblings filed a FAFSA should be aware that some family information may already be in Departmental databases. The information in [this guide](#) is most relevant to first-time FAFSA filers whose family members have not filed a FAFSA in the past.



## Tips for Conversations with Students and Families

When talking to families about FAFSA, it is important to avoid speculation and provide students with all the information they need to make informed decisions based on their individual circumstances. Here are some tips to help you provide accurate, clear, and supportive guidance:

### 1. Reassure students about their eligibility for federal financial aid.



- Let students know that every U.S. citizen and [eligible non-citizen](#) has the right to apply for federal financial aid. A parents' citizenship status does not affect the student's eligibility for financial aid.
- Emphasize that otherwise eligible students are entitled to financial support for college, regardless of their parents' immigration status.
- Make it clear that students must complete the FAFSA to access federal financial aid.

### 2. Listen to and address security concerns.

- Some students may feel nervous about submitting their FAFSA because they are concerned about the safety of their personal information or that of their family members.
- Watch for signs that a student is unsure about submitting their FAFSA. Students may say they feel they “can't go to college” or that they are worried about sharing their parents' information. Some students might not directly say why they are concerned, so be attuned to these signals.
- Students' feelings are valid. They want to protect their family members. They don't know what will happen with the information under future administrations. They also worked really hard to get to this point and need financial support. Listening, being a sounding board, and staying up to date on the latest on FAFSA is greatly appreciated.



### 3. Respect privacy and avoid directly asking about immigration status.

If a student is hesitant to talk about their family's immigration status, do not ask about it directly. Instead, focus on the fact that the FAFSA is for everyone eligible for federal aid and talk to students about their concerns.

### 4. Answer questions and consult experts when appropriate.

Students may wonder about other options for submitting the FAFSA or providing less information to Federal Student Aid (FSA). There are resources available to help you answer these questions (see below). If you are unsure, consult with experts and communicate with students what we do and do not know at this stage.



## 5. Talk through the pros and cons of alternative aid sources.

- For students or families who feel uncomfortable filling out the FAFSA, be prepared to explain that there is no alternative route to accessing federal financial aid.
- Some options to access other forms of financial aid are dependent on students' individual situations and would most likely result in far less financial aid than what they would get through FAFSA. Talk to them about alternative options for paying for college, such as:



- State financial aid (if available in your state through an alternative form)
- Private loans and scholarships
- More affordable pathways, such as starting at a community college before transferring to a B.A.-granting institution
- Applying for unsubsidized loans only

Thank you for all the support you provide to students and families as they navigate their postsecondary options. The FAFSA is an essential tool in helping students access higher education, and your guidance makes a big difference. We will keep you updated on any new information related to FAFSA or financial aid so that you're able to provide the best support possible.

For answers to additional questions, we encourage you to visit the resources below.

- [FAFSA Hub for Mixed-Status Families](#)
- [Data Protections for FAFSA Information](#)
- [Talking Points for Media Inquiries on the FAFSA](#)
- [EdTrust FAFSA Site](#)
- [Understanding FAFSA: How to Get an FSA ID Without a Social Security Number](#)
- [NCAN's 2025-2026 FAFSA Resource Hub](#)
- [EdTrust FAFSA Hub](#)

