

2026-27 Financial Aid Applications For Staff – Part 1

DISCLAIMER

The information provided in this presentation is current as of 10/21/2025. However, federal and state student aid programs are subject to change.

Changes to federal law may impact eligibility, loan terms, repayment options and grant eligibility. We recommend regularly checking [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov) and <https://wsac.wa.gov/> or consulting with financial aid staff for the most up-to-date information.

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

Purpose: Equip educators and counselors with the knowledge and tools to guide students through financial aid applications completion and financial aid readiness.

You'll learn:

- Key financial aid application changes for 2026–27
- How to support families with the new process
- How to determine financial need and necessary appeals
- Resources
- Next steps

2026–27 OVERVIEW

- Both FAFSA and WASFA opened October 1, 2025
- Streamlined form with fewer questions
- New terminology: Contributors & Student Aid Index (SAI)
- IRS data automatically transferred for most students, but not all
- Simpler, faster, fewer issues

WHO NEEDS TO FILE

- **All students** pursuing postsecondary education
- **FAFSA: U.S. citizens and eligible noncitizens**
 - determines eligibility for federal, state, and institutional aid
- **WASFA: Undocumented students, including those with DACA (or students who do not wish to complete a federal application); those who have privacy concerns, have federal loans in default, owe a repayment on federal grants.**
 - determines eligibility for state, and institutional aid

CONTRIBUTORS

- **All contributors need individual accounts**
- **Only the owner of the account should create it (i.e., student creates their own; parent(s) create(s) their own**
- **Cell phone number and personal email address**
 - Login
 - Retrieve username and reset password
 - Unlock account

FAFSA: CONTRIBUTORS & ACCOUNTS

Contributors include:

- The student
- Parent(s) or step-parent(s): only biological or adoptive (nobody else's information should be reported)
- Spouse (if applicable)

Steps:

1. Create an account at StudentAid.gov
2. Verify identity (multi-factor authentication)
 - Text
 - Email
3. Use personal email

Tip: No need to setup account ahead of a Financial Aid night. Identity match with Social Security Administration (SSA) will be completed when SSN is provided. This is immediate. If parent doesn't have a SSN, they'll be able to check a box stating "I do not have a Social Security Number"

WASFA: CONTRIBUTORS & ACCOUNTS

Contributors include:

- The student
- Parent(s) or step-parent(s): only biological or adoptive (nobody else's information should be reported)
- Spouse (if applicable)

Steps:

1. Create an account
 - Email authentication
2. Complete eligibility questionnaire
3. Use personal email

BEFORE YOU APPLY

Documents needed:

- **2024 tax returns and W-2s**
- **Social Security numbers (if applicable)**
- **Bank/investment statements (as of the day you file)**
 - Includes 529 account owned by parent(s) or student
- **Untaxed income records**
- **Total child support from the most recently completed year**
- **List of benefits**
- **List of colleges**

No longer reportable:

- Value of family-owned business of 100 or fewer fulltime employees, farms in which family resides, and family-owned fisheries

Not an asset:

- Value of primary residence, personal property, retirement accounts, and life insurance policies

STEP-BY-STEP FAFSA PROCESS

1. Student logs in and completes student section of FAFSA
2. Adds up to 20 colleges
3. Invites contributors via email (can also use an invitation code)
4. Contributors complete their section
5. **Everyone consents to IRS data transfer (mandatory)**
 - sometimes it doesn't work if marital status doesn't match prior prior year IRS tax status; if married but filed as head of household; filed a Puerto Rican or foreign tax return
6. **Submit and sign electronically**

STEP-BY-STEP WASFA PROCESS

1. Student logs in and completes student section of WASFA
2. Adds up to 20 colleges
3. Verifies WA state residency status/Affidavit
4. Contributors complete their section (there's parent invitation)
5. Student and parent complete consent
6. Student submits and signs electronically
7. Parent receives invitation via email (link expires in 72 hours)
8. Parent creates account
9. Reviews form for accuracy and completeness
10. Parent signs and submits form

DEPENDENCY & SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

A series of student questions determine if parental contributor data is required

- **Dependent:** include parental data
- **Provisional Independent:** If they cannot provide parent info: may be considered as a **Provisionally Independent** student and would need to work with the financial aid office to certify. This only needs to be done their first year of attendance (assuming they don't transfer to another school). Examples: Parental abandonment, unsafe homes, homelessness
- **Independent: just student data** -- includes Foster care, guardianship, or emancipated

Tip: Identify, document, and connect students to aid offices

UNDERSTANDING FINANCIAL NEED

Formula: COA – SAI – Other Aid = Financial Need

Example:

School	COA	SAI	Grants	Need
A	\$25,000	\$3,000	\$10,000	\$12,000
B	\$40,000	\$3,000	\$15,000	\$22,000

UNDERSTANDING FINANCIAL NEED

Student Aid Index (SAI replaces EFC)

- The Student Aid Index **remains the same** no matter which school the student attends
- **Primarily income-driven**
- **Major factors for dependent students:**
 - Parent income and assets
 - Student income and assets
 - Family size
 - Age of older parent

PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT & APPEALS

Special Circumstances:

- Loss of income, divorce, death, medical bills

Unusual Circumstances:

- Dependency overrides, homelessness

Tips:

- Help students document changes
- Encourage early outreach to financial aid offices

FINANCIAL AID COMPLETION & SUPPORT

Strategies:

- Promote Financial Aid completion events
- Offer one-on-one support
- Encourage completion by December (**remember** deadlines vary by state and institution)

CSF Resources:

- FAFSA/WASFA Workshops
- Counselor Toolkit
- Outreach handouts

APPENDIX: **FAFSA** RESOURCES

Free publications for secondary and postsecondary students are available for download in Spanish and English at:

- **FinancialAidToolkit.ed.gov**
 - Searchable database of outreach resources
 - FSA's YouTube Channel has helpful videos exploring different types of financial aid
- **Federal Contact Assistance**
 - StudentAid.gov
 - Email or chat
 - Phone: 1-800-433-3243
- **FAFSA Support in other languages**
 - <https://studentaid.gov/apply-for-aid/fafsa/filling-out/other-languages>
- **FAFSA Prototype**
 - <https://financialaidtoolkit.ed.gov/tk/announcement-detail.jsp?id=fafsa-prototype>

APPENDIX: **WASFA** RESOURCES

Free publications for secondary and postsecondary students are available for download at:

- <https://wsac.wa.gov/wasfa>
 - Application (English & Spanish)
 - Application guide (English & Spanish)

PREPARE FOR NEXT STEPS

1. Review Submission Summary

- Within 3 days, the student's financial aid application will be processed
- Encourage students to :
 - Review answers for accuracy
 - Make corrections if necessary
 - Provide missing signatures if necessary

2. Contact their financial aid office

- There may be additional paperwork they need to complete
- Check email and student portal regularly. Respond promptly to any requests.
- Prepare petitions and gather documentation if the student fall under any of the scenarios we discussed in the previous slide.
- Consider appealing if your student has special or unusual circumstances.

3. Reapply every year on October 1

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS? HELP?



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