

FAFSA Graduation Requirement

Beginning with the 2020-21 school year, in addition to all other graduation requirements, a student must meet one of the following requirements to receive a public high school diploma (*Public Act 101-0180*):

1. File a FAFSA Application; or
2. File the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid; or
3. File a waiver/opt out with the school district.

The following FAQ Section will provide detailed information, to allow you and your family to learn all your options to complete this graduation requirement.

What is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)?

Why would I want to complete it?

The [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) is the online application that allows a student to apply simultaneously for federal student aid (including the Pell Grant, work-study opportunities, and federal student loans), and the Illinois Monetary Award Program (MAP) grant. Many colleges and universities use this to determine their institution-specific aid programs, too.

The FAFSA application opens on **October 1st** of each year for the following school year. A student in the Class of 2021 would wait until October 1st of their senior year to begin the FAFSA. When completing the FAFSA, a student in the Class of 2021 would complete the **2021- 22 Year FAFSA**, the year they are applying to receive federal financial aid.

What is the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid?

Why would I want to complete it?

The [Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid](#) is a financial aid application that provides a path for some students who do not qualify for federal aid to apply for state and school-funded assistance.

Undocumented students (who cannot complete the FAFSA) and transgender students (who are unable to complete the selective service requirement for FAFSA), are eligible to receive state-based aid through the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid.

What is the Waiver/Opt-Out Form? Why would I want to complete it?

The [FAFSA Nonparticipation Form](#) or [Spanish FAFSA Nonparticipation Form](#) allows parents/guardians and students over the age of 18 to opt-out of completing the FAFSA application. The form must be completed in its entirety, and turned in (via mail or email) to your school counselor.

The FAFSA Nonparticipation Form also includes an FAQ on Page 2 regarding the FAFSA application, which details why a student may want to reconsider completing the FAFSA Application. Please make sure you read over both pages of this form, before completing and turning it into your school counselor.

Which option should I choose to complete?

This is entirely a personal & family decision. Regardless of which option you choose, students must complete one of the three options from above to fulfill their state graduation requirement. Not completing one of these options is **not** the same as completing the FAFSA Nonparticipation Form. A student and their parent/guardian must complete either 1) the FAFSA; 2) the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid form; or 3) the FAFSA Nonparticipation Form.

If I submit the FAFSA Nonparticipation Form, can I complete the FAFSA at a later date?

Yes! Completing the FAFSA Nonparticipation Form will **not** prevent a student from completing the FAFSA / Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid form at a later date. The student/parent does not need to notify the school – just complete the FAFSA / Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid form as soon as possible.

What if I still have questions regarding the FAFSA / Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid / FAFSA Nonparticipation Form?

There are multiple people you can reach out to with questions. Those include your school counselor. You can also reach out to the **Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC)** through their **FREE** texting [Q&A service](#)!