

FAFSA & WASFA FAQ's for Treehouse Youth & Young Adults

Why should I apply for FAFSA or WASFA? What if I'm undecided about college?

If you are even *thinking* about going to a college, apprenticeship, or career training program next school year, fill it out. It's free, you aren't obligated to do anything by applying, and it will keep your options open for getting funding to pay for expenses related to college and career training. You do not need to know which college you are attending, and you can list up to 20 possible colleges on your application.

What is the FAFSA and WASFA? Do I complete the FAFSA or WASFA?

The FAFSA is the form you need to fill out to get any financial aid from the federal government to help pay for college. The Washington Application for State Financial Aid (**WASFA**) is only for people who aren't eligible to file a federal FAFSA application. If you have completed the FAFSA, you have already applied for federal and state financial aid and do not need to complete the WASFA unless your college asks you to.

A person should complete the WASFA if they are undocumented or do not qualify for federal financial aid because of their immigration status. The WASFA can also be used in limited circumstances by [other select applicants](#) who cannot or choose not to file a FAFSA. If you are unsure if you should complete a FAFSA or a WASFA, complete the [WASFA Eligibility Questionnaire](#).

When is the FAFSA or WASFA due?

File the FAFSA or WASFA as soon as possible after the application opens! The 2025-26 FAFSA opens on **December 1, 2024**. You must **file every year** you are planning to attend school in the next school year.

Each college you apply to has their own financial aid priority deadline. Visit the school's website or contact its financial aid office. 4-year college financial aid deadlines are usually early in the year (January-March), while 2-year college deadlines are usually a little later. Most colleges will accept the FAFSA or WASFA and financial aid paperwork after this priority deadline, but earlier is best to be eligible for the most funding.

Where do I complete a FAFSA/WASFA?

- [Click here for FAFSA](#) (2025-26 application opens December 1, 2024)
 - If you haven't filed FAFSA before: [start here ASAP by getting your StudentAid.gov account](#) and **save this information**. You need this to log-in and it can take a few days for approval.
- [Click here for WASFA](#) (2025-26 application opens December 2024)

What information do I need to fill out the FAFSA or WASFA?

The questions on the FAFSA and WASFA ask for information about you (name, date of birth, address, etc.) and about your financial situation. You won't need to send any documents in, but you might need to look up previous tax information (if you filed taxes previously). The new FAFSA has made this process easier. You can always save your FAFSA or WASFA and go back if you run into a question you need help with.

Where can I find help filling out FAFSA/WAFSA?

The Department of Education offers free help by calling [1.800.433.3243](#) or by visiting a [contact center](#).

The College Success Foundation offers free one-on-one [FAFSA support](#) in multiple languages.

Or ask your Treehouse staff, Independent Living Provider, case worker, foster parent, teacher or mentor.

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What do I need to do on the application as a current or former foster youth?

Both the FAFSA and WASFA ask, "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?" If the answer is "Yes" then you will file as an **independent student**. **Neither legal guardians nor foster parents are considered parents when completing the FAFSA/WASFA.** Independent students do not list their parent's income or household size information. [Here's how to answer a few more FAFSA questions as a foster youth.](#)

The college you attend may later ask for documentation that you were in foster care, and they will give you instructions on how to provide that. Usually a letter from your case worker or attorney is what's needed.

Do Extended Foster Care (EFC) payments count as income on the FAFSA/WASFA?

No! The payments that EFC participants receive for being in Extended Foster Care DO NOT need to be included as income on their FAFSA or WASFA. Click [here](#) for more info.

What happens after I file the FAFSA/WASFA?

You may see a Student Aid Index (SAI) number at the end. The SAI is often -1500 for independent students, but anything between -1500 and 0 is typical and means you will qualify for aid. School financial aid offices use this SAI number to determine how much funding you can receive.

Be ready for next steps by saving your account information, checking your email regularly (don't forget the Junk folder!), and communicating with the schools you choose to apply to.

What other financial resources are available for my education?

In addition to financial aid you qualify for through the FAFSA/WASFA, you can apply for these resources:

- [ETV Voucher program](#) offers financial assistance to youth who are in foster care, extended foster care or aging out of the foster care system, up to \$5000 per academic year
- [Passport to College/ Passport to Careers](#) program helps current and former foster youth prepare for college, apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships with scholarships and support services
- [Washington State Governor's Scholarship for Foster Youth](#) provides scholarships for former or current foster youth. The 2024 application closes on **November 30, 2024**.
- Other scholarships! There are a lot out there, but a great place to search is [Scholarship Junkies](#), a Washington State scholarship search engine or see our [Treehouse College/Career Resources](#) page.

Additional Links:

[Federal Student Aid's Guide to Preparing for College](#)

[FAFSA Simplification Act](#)

[FAFSA 2024-25 Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and Foster Youth](#)

[Tips for Students in Unique Situations](#)

[FAFSA Questions for Foster Youth](#)

[How to Report Financial Aid Money on a Federal Tax Return](#)