

TRANS STUDENT TIPS FOR COMPLETING THE FAFSA

NAME & GENDER MARKER CHANGES

It is best to complete the FAFSA using the name (usually your legal name) and gender marker on file with the Social Security Administration (SSA). A mismatch between the SSA and FAFSA can complicate your financial aid application or trigger a rejection. Changing your name and gender marker may take longer than you expect, so start early if you can!

If you change your name or gender marker with the SSA after submitting the FAFSA but before your loans are finalized, you can:

- Electronically update your gender marker on the FAFSA;
- Change your name in writing, in a Student Aid Report – ask the financial aid office at the school to which you are applying to help with this.

SELECTIVE SERVICE REGISTRATION

Most people assigned male at birth need to have registered with the Selective Service to be eligible for federal student loans. This requirement applies to both U.S. citizens and to most immigrants. However, some applicants **do not** need to register:

- If you submit the FAFSA **before you turn 18**, you do not need to have registered for the Selective Service in order to be eligible for aid that year, regardless of what gender marker you indicate. (You may be expected to register in a following year.)
- If you are a trans man or are listing your gender as “male” but **were not assigned male at birth**, you do not need to register. However, you may need to submit a Status Information Letter to prove that you are exempt. You can request a Status Information Letter from the Selective Service. You’ll need to include a copy of either your original birth certificate or a new birth certificate with documentation of the change, as well as a copy of a name change order if you have one. Even though the request form asks for information about your gender identity, the Status Information Letter itself will not disclose this information.

APPLYING AS AN INDEPENDENT STUDENT

In most circumstances, you need to include parental information (including income) on the FAFSA – even if your parents are not planning to help you pay for college.

However, there are a few exceptions that allow people to apply as **independent students**. If you are an independent student, you do not have to include parental information or signatures, and you might be eligible for more aid.

Among other reasons, you may be able to apply as an independent student if...

- You are experiencing **homelessness or unstable housing** apart from your parents. This may include living in a shelter, your car, or a motel, or living temporarily with a friend because you have nowhere else to go. You will need someone to verify your housing status. People who can do this are: the “McKinney-Vento Liaison” at your school district (the person responsible for supporting students experiencing homelessness); some shelters, transitional living centers, and programs for youth experiencing homelessness; and college financial aid administrators.
- You have been in **foster care** after you turned 13 or were **emancipated** as a minor.
- Someone other than your parent or stepparent has **legal guardianship** over you or had it immediately before you turned 18. This is not the same thing as “custody” or living with a caretaker, unless they had a court order establishing guardianship.

If you need help with this, try talking to a school guidance counselor, a teacher you feel comfortable with, or another trusted adult. You can also call the Federal Student Aid Information Center or your college’s financial aid office.

If you can’t apply as an independent student, but your parent won’t help you complete the FAFSA, you can talk to the college financial aid office about a “**dependency override**.” This is a special exception that colleges sometimes make for students in unusual circumstances, such as an abusive family situation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Selective Service Registration

- Status Information Letter Request: <https://www.sss.gov/verify/sil/>
- National Center for Transgender Equality:
<https://transequality.org/issues/resources/selective-service-and-transgender-people>

Federal Student Aid Information Center

- Visit <https://studentaidhelp.ed.gov/> or call 1-800-433-3243

Resources for Students Experiencing Homelessness

- The National Center for Homeless Education Helpline: 1-800-308-2145 or homeless@serve.org
- FAFSA Tips for Unaccompanied Youth Without Stable Housing:
<https://naehcy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/fafsa-tips-uhy2017-18.Dec2017.pdf>
- The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children & Youth:
<https://naehcy.org/higher-education/>

General Financial Aid Information

- FAFSA How-To Guide: <http://www.understandingfafsa.org/>
- Information on LGBTQ scholarships: <https://www.hrc.org/resources/scholarship-database>