



Chicago Public Schools

SCHOOL COUNSELING AND POSTSECONDARY ADVISING

Summary of 2026-27 Financial Aid Changes and Resources

The release date of both the FAFSA and Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid will be October 1. **Update: The FAFSA was fully released September 24, 2025**

After two consecutive years of delayed availability, both the FAFSA and Alternative App are scheduled to be available at the historical October 1 date. The ISBE Non-Participation Form, intended for students unable to complete a financial aid application, is available the same day as the Alternative App. The CSS Profile, an additional financial aid application required by some colleges but NOT the state of Illinois, will also be available October 1.

Dependent students must only provide their parent's email address to invite them as a "Contributor" to their FAFSA

Beginning with the 2023-2024 aid year, dependent students were required to invite parent(s) to add required information to the FAFSA as "Contributors". This process required the student to know specific personal information about the contributor, including SSN and birthdate. Additionally, students had to write all parent information exactly as it appeared in the parent's studentaid.gov account or else the parent would not have access to the application. Beginning this year, the only information students will need in order to invite their parents as contributors will be an email address. Parents will subsequently receive a code they can use to access their student's FAFSA.

The parent contributor invitation has moved to the end of the student section.

In previous years, dependent students could not even start their section of the FAFSA without first successfully inviting a parent contributor. In addition to the invitation being simplified, it has also been moved to the end of the student portion of the FAFSA, which means a student can complete virtually the entire application without parent involvement.



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Studentaid.gov accounts are immediately verified and usable.

Prior to this year, when a student or parent created a studentaid.gov account, or an “FSA ID”, it would take 1-3 days for that account to be verified. Unverified accounts could not be used to sign the FAFSA, which in some cases delayed completion of the form. Beginning this year, newly created accounts will be instantly verified, which should facilitate the completion of most applications in one sitting.

Students must now choose one of two options for “Sex” instead of “Gender”

In previous years, students had four options to choose from when identifying their gender identity, including “non-binary” and “prefer not to answer”. As a result of a February 14 executive order, all federal forms, including the FAFSA, will only ask about the respondent’s “Sex”, and provide two options: Male and Female. While the expressed intention is for respondents to provide their sex assigned at birth, it is unclear at this time the potential implications of students selecting the sex with which they most closely identify if not assigned at birth.

Resources for Staff, Students & Families:

[Letter to Guardians and Students Regarding Financial Aid - Folder of Translations](#)

[2026-2027 FINANCIAL AID PROCESS KEY QUESTIONS](#) - [Translations Available Here](#) (SY25)

[Post-Election Support for Immigrant Youth and Families in Illinois](#)

[Ladder Up Tax Assistance Program](#)

[Summary of 2026-2027 FAFSA Changes](#)

[2026-27 FAFSA Prototype](#)

[CSS Profile List](#)