# Guide to Getting Started

## Applying for Financial Aid as a Mixed-Status Family in California

### Reach For Your Dreams!

Immigrant families are resilient trailblazers who continue to pave the way for a better future for themselves and their communities. As a mixed-status family student in California, the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) encourages you to reach for your dreams and continue working towards your college education. CSAC also understands some of the concerns you may have in applying for federal student aid as a mixed-status student with parents or a spouse who do not have a Social Security number (non-SSN FAFSA contributor). This is a decision that you and your family will need to make and CSAC is here to help.

CSAC wants to let you know that we are here to help and to inform you of the choices you have in applying for financial aid. We want you to know that in California, CSAC and many partners are working to provide state-protected ways for you to apply for financial aid and enroll in college.

### Yes, you can apply for financial aid!

- **Assess your risk** *(read more below)*. Reach out to [free legal services](#)[1] and get information about the risks for you and your family.

- **Decide on an application** *(read more below)*. Compare the risks and benefits of applying for federal, state, and institutional aid with the FAFSA, or only state and institutional aid with the California Dream Act Application (CADAA).

- **Apply for aid**. Complete the FAFSA or CADAA by March 3, 2025.

### What happens to information I share with the U.S. Department of Education?

Students, parents, and spouses must create a StudentAid.gov account to complete FAFSA. The account creation process will ask if you have a Social Security number (SSN). The U.S. Department of Education keeps identifying information submitted by all users, including for undocumented parents and spouses.

- If you are completing a FAFSA for the first time, the U.S. Department of Education may not have data on your family member. However, it is unknown whether providing this data for the first time will increase your family's risk.

- If you have completed FAFSA in a previous year and/or your family member already has a StudentAid.gov account, their information is already in the US Department of Education system.

While the U.S. Department of Education does not currently share parent information with any other federal agency, these rules could change. In California, there are [state laws that protect student data and privacy at CSAC and your college or university](#)[2], but these laws do not cover information collected by the U.S. Department of Education.

## If I don't want to complete FAFSA, what can I do?

CSAC is ready to help you reach your dreams. We have expanded the [California Dream Act Application (CADAA)](#) [3] to FAFSA-eligible students if you are concerned about providing a family member's information to the U.S. Department of Education. **CADAA is an application for state and campus based financial aid only**, such as Cal Grant and Middle Class Scholarship. If you don't complete a FAFSA, you **cannot** receive any federal student aid, including Pell Grant (up to $7,395 per year), work study, or federal student loans. You can complete FAFSA later even if you choose to do CADAA now.

## California protects your data!

Data provided through the CADAA is not shared with any federal agency or used for immigration enforcement. The information shared through the CADAA is also protected by federal and state law.

## CSAC is here to help you make informed choices & apply for aid

We know that applying for financial aid right now could feel overwhelming and there's a lot of information to consider. That's why CSAC and our community partners across California are here to help you access resources to understand your situation and decide which application is right for you.

You can find more on [our website for Mixed-Status Families](#)[4]. CSAC offers free [Cash for College workshops](#)[5], in-person or online, to get free help applying for financial aid, with whichever application is right for you. You can also contact CSAC's Student Support Center at [studentsupport@csac.ca.gov](mailto:studentsupport@csac.ca.gov) or by calling 888-224-7268. Telephone assistance is available in more than 70 languages.

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[1] https://www.ilrc.org/findyourally
[2] https://www.csac.ca.gov/cadaa-information-safety
[3] https://dream.csac.ca.gov
[4] https://www.csac.ca.gov/cadaa-msf
[5] https://www.csac.ca.gov/cash-college