



## State of Illinois Financial Aid Graduation Requirement FAQ

In addition to all other graduation requirements, a student must meet one of the following requirements to receive a public school diploma (*Public Act 101-0180*):

1. File a FAFSA Application; or
2. File an Application for State 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 make the best decision in completing this graduation requirement.

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### **What is the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)? 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 for the Class of 2026 (the 2026-27 FAFSA) will open later this fall. We will notify students & families when it does open.**

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### **What is the Application for State Financial Aid? Why would I want to complete it?**

The [Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid](#) is a similar application that provides a path for some students who do not qualify for federal aid to apply for state and school-funded assistance. **This application is anticipated to open around the same time as the FAFSA.**

Undocumented students (who cannot complete the FAFSA) are eligible to receive state-based aid through the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid.

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

The [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 submitted electronically.**

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**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.

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**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.

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

There are a number of resources available to families to assist in completing the FAFSA. Once the FAFSA opens, we will update this section, and notify students & families of upcoming opportunities throughout this school year to assist with FAFSA completion.

We hope this information helps you & your family through the financial aid process.