Completing the California Dream Act Application (CADAA):

A Visual Guide For Youth with Experience in Foster Care or Homelessness

JBAY
JOHN BURTON Advocates for Youth

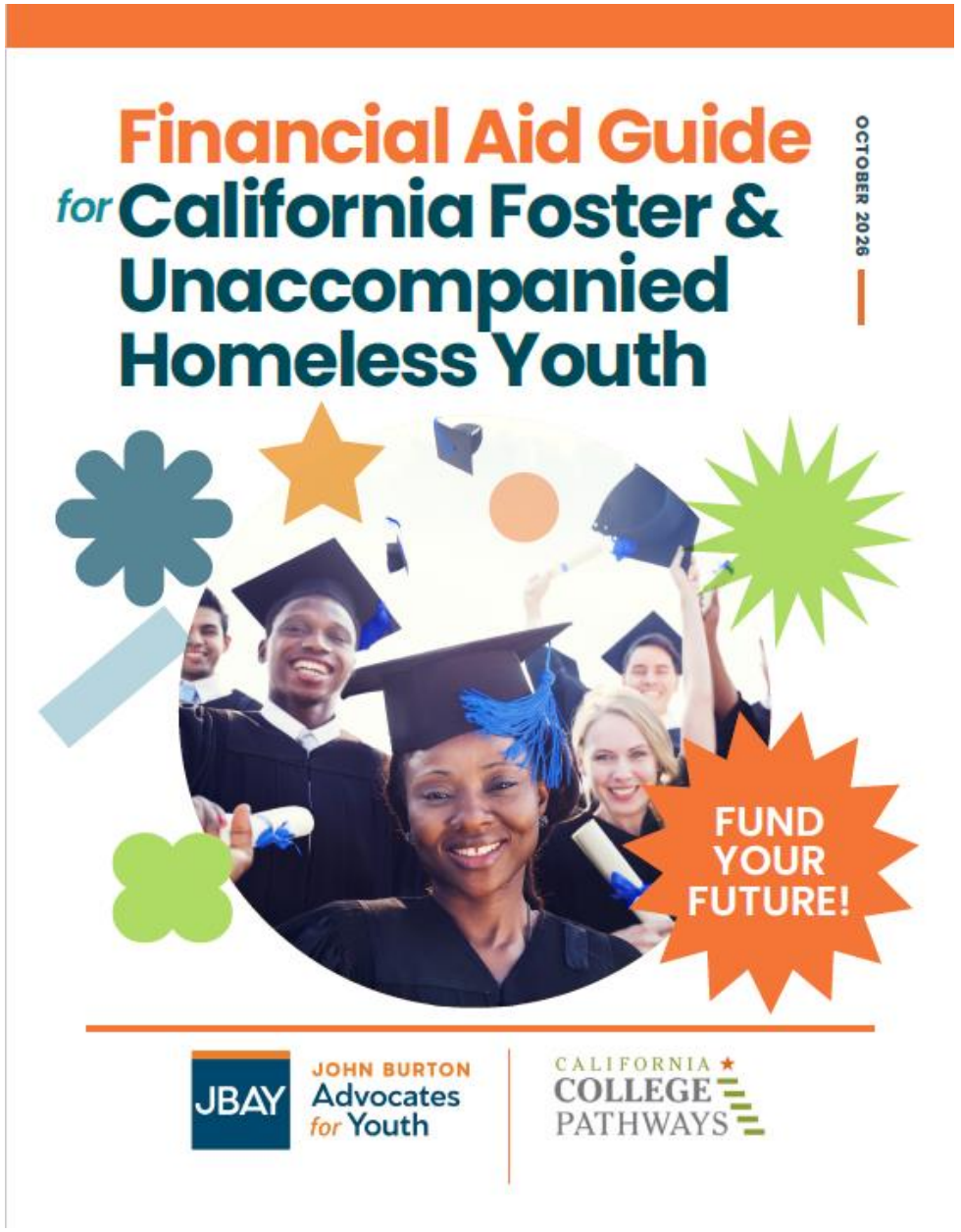
October 2026

This Guide is intended to complement the *Financial Aid Guide for California Foster and Unaccompanied Homeless Youth* with screen shots of the online California Dream Act Application (CADAA) and detailed step-by-step instructions for youth who have experienced foster care or homelessness.

Please refer to the full Guide for information on the different types of financial aid, what to do after completing the CADAA, and how to maintain financial aid.

While this guide strives to be as accurate as possible, information may change, and errors may occur. Errors can be reported to info@jbay.org.

jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide/



Who Should Use This Guide

This guide is intended for youth who have experienced foster care or homelessness in California who qualify for "Independent Student Status" on the CADAA. Students who do not qualify for "Independent Student Status," will need to provide financial information about their parent(s). Information about providing parental information is not included in this guide.

Students who do not qualify as homeless, but who cannot obtain parental information can request an exemption for unusual circumstances such as an abusive family, parental incarceration or when parents' whereabouts are unknown (see section 4(c)). Note that circumstances such as parents not providing financial support or being unwilling to provide information on the CADAA do not alone qualify as unusual circumstances.

If a student is a U.S. Citizen or eligible noncitizen,* they should fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) instead of the CADAA to qualify for both state and federal aid. A Visual Guide to the FAFSA is available at jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide.

*See https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/non-us-citizens for details

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1.

What to Know Before You Apply

What is the CADAA?

- The CADAA allows undocumented and nonresident documented students, as well as students from mixed-status families, who meet certain eligibility requirements to apply for state financial aid such as the Cal Grant and Chafee Grant.
- Students who complete the CADAA are not eligible for federal financial aid, like the Federal Pell Grant.
- It also allows qualified students to pay in-state resident fees (instead of higher out-of-state fees) at California's public colleges and universities.



- Free Application for Federal Student Aid
- Available to U.S. Citizens, permanent residents or other eligible non-citizens*
- Apply at FAFSA.gov (mobile friendly)
- Available in English or Spanish online
- Used for Federal and State aid

*This most commonly includes someone who is a U.S. Permanent Resident (i.e. someone with a "green card" or Resident Alien Card) or a refugee. For the full list of eligible non-citizens, see studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/non-us-citizens .



- Eligibility: qualified undocumented students, mixed-status families, Temporary Protected Status or U Visa*
- Apply at dream.csac.ca.gov
- Available in English only online (paper Spanish application)
- Qualifies students as CA residents and for state aid

*See https://www.csac.ca.gov/post/california-nonresident-tuition-exemption for details

Who is eligible to submit a CADAA?

- **Undocumented Students Who Meet AB 540 Criteria:** Assembly Bill (AB) 540 is a California bill that specified which undocumented students are eligible for state financial aid and in-state tuition fees. Not all undocumented students are eligible. See subsequent page for the full list of eligibility criteria.
- **Students with a U Visa:** A "U Visa" is a type of nonimmigrant visa for victims of certain crimes who have suffered mental or physical abuse and are helpful to law enforcement in the investigation or prosecution of such criminal activity.

  www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/victims-of-criminal-activity-u-nonimmigrant-status
- **Students with Temporary Protected Status (TPS)**: Students hold a temporary immigration status because they are unable to return to their home country safely due to conditions or circumstances like war, environmental disasters, or epidemics.

  www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status

Who is eligible to submit a CADAA?

Mixed-Status Families: Refers to students who have legal immigration status and qualify for FAFSA, but have contributors (parents, legal guardians, or spouse) who are undocumented and do not have legal status.

These students are eligible to submit a FAFSA but may choose to submit a CADAA. Note that submitting a CADAA means that the student will receive state aid only and not federal aid.

Additional information regarding CADAA eligibility is available at https://firstgenempower.org/advising-undocu-students

AB 540 Eligibility

The CADAA asks questions to determine if an undocumented student meets AB 540 criteria. To qualify, a student must satisfy ALL of the criteria below.

1. **Schooling Requirement - meet ONE of the following (A or B):**

   A. Three or more years in California schools
   You completed 3+ years of full-time attendance OR earned 3+ years' worth of credits at any combination of:
   - California high schools
   - California adult schools
   - California Community Colleges

   OR

   B. High School coursework + elementary/secondary school attendance
   You completed:
   - 3+ years of full-time high school coursework in California (55 credits = 1 year of high school coursework) **AND**
   - 3+ years of attendance in CA, using any combination of:
     - Elementary school
     - Middle School
     - High School

2. Completion Requirement - meet ONE of the following:
You have:
- Graduated (or will graduate) from a California high school, **OR**
- Passed (or will pass) your General Education Development (GED), High School Equivalency Test (HiSET), Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC), or California Proficiency Program (CPP) **OR**
- Earned an associate degree from a California Community College, **OR**
- Met the minimum transfer requirements from a California Community College to a UC or CSU

3. **Enrollment Requirement:**
You are enrolled or will enroll at an accredited California college or university.

4. **Visa Status Requirement:**
You do not hold a valid and current non-immigrant visa (examples include F-1, J-1, H-1B, B-1/B-2). ***Exceptions: U Visa and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders are eligible under California law.***

Does DACA status or having a Social Security Number impact eligibility?

- Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status is not required to apply for the CADAA.
- If you received DACA status and you have a Social Security card, but it says “VALID FOR WORK ONLY WITH DHS AUTHORIZATION” you are not eligible to complete the FAFSA. You must meet the AB 540 criteria on the prior slide to be eligible for the CADAA.
- Your parents’ citizenship status does not impact your eligibility to receive financial aid under the CADAA or FAFSA.

What about Special Immigration Juvenile Status (SIJS)?

- **Foster youth who are undocumented immigrants may qualify to receive Special Immigration Juvenile Status (SIJS).** Undocumented children who are a dependent of the juvenile court who cannot be reunified with one or both of their parents due to abuse, abandonment or neglect, and for whom it is not in their best interest to return to their country of nationality, may be able to obtain SIJS and apply to become a lawful permanent resident, also known as obtaining your Green Card.
- **Students with a *pending* application for SIJS are not eligible for federal financial aid and should submit the CADAA** until they have received permanent resident status (i.e., a Green Card/Alien Registration).
- If an undocumented student in foster care does not have an application for SIJS pending, the child welfare agency should be contacted for eligibility screening.

CADAA Information is Private!

- CADAA information is not shared with the Federal government
- The California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) protects the confidentiality of student records
- CSAC has never shared any information about a student's immigration status, documented or undocumented
- CSAC also complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which protects the privacy of student education records
- More info can be found here: https://www.csac.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2024-11/eom_2024_04.pdf

Deadlines

To qualify for state and institutional aid:

4-Year Universities:	**March 2, 2027***
CA Community Colleges:	**September 2, 2027**

Private or out of state colleges may have different deadlines. If you've missed these deadlines, you can still apply. While most state aid will no longer be available, some grants, such as the Federal Pell Grant, will still be available.

**Priority deadlines can change. Be sure to check for the latest information.*

What a student needs to apply

- An email address AND a list of at least one and up to 20 colleges
- Information about current assets, such as cash, and checking/savings accounts
- Tax return or income information from the "prior-prior" year (2025). If you filed a tax return, also have your Social Security number or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) (optional)
- Statewide Student Identifier (SSID): a 10-digit number that is given to all students enrolled in a California elementary, middle or high school. This is optional but recommended.
- School transcript information needed to demonstrate that school attendance satisfies AB 540 criteria (see next page for more information).

AB 540: School Transcripts

- Students will need to provide information on the CADAA about their school attendance history to determine AB 540 eligibility. **This information includes credits or hours attained at each school and the dates the student attended each school.**
- Depending on how they are meeting AB 540 eligibility, the student may have to provide information about elementary, middle, and high schools, adult schools, and/or community colleges they attended.
- Students should report all relevant school history, even if they attended a school for a short time and received partial credits.
- Students should work with their school counselor to obtain transcripts and review the transcripts to ensure they have the information (credits/hours/dates) needed to complete the AB 540 affidavit on the CADAA.

2.
Verifying Eligibility

VERIFYING ELIGIBILITY

The CADAA must be filled out EVERY year! This is a FREE application.

New Users:
Select first-time account registration

Returning User:
Click "Login." You can also log in to make corrections or add a new college to your application.



VERIFYING ELIGIBILITY

Starting a new CADAA account begins with Registration to verify your eligibility for the CADAA.

Click Continue.



VERIFYING ELIGIBILITY

The CADAA will confirm your eligibility by asking if you have a Social Security Number (SSN).

If you respond “No” you meet the first eligibility criteria.

If you respond “yes,” you will be asked if you received your SSN through DACA.

If you respond “Yes” you meet the first eligibility criteria.



You have a Social Security Number for work purposes only that you received through: ○ Yes ○ No

- Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)
- Temporary Protected Status
- A U-Visa
- A pending immigration case including Asylum and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (excluding T-visas)

More information on DACA can be found on USCIS website below:

https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-of-deferred-action-for-childhood-arrivals-daca

VERIFYING ELIGIBILITY

If you answer that you have a social security number and that it was not received through DACA, you will be asked if you are a US citizen or eligible non-citizen.

If you respond “No” the application will tell you that it is unable to determine your eligibility and you should consult a counselor.



Are you a US Citizen (US National) or eligible non-citizen? (see below to check status) ○ Yes ○ No

Generally, you are considered an “eligible noncitizen” for financial aid purposes if you:

1. Permanent US resident with a permanent resident card (I-551)
2. Conditional permanent resident with a conditional green card (I-551c)
3. Holder of an Arrival-Departure Record (I-94) from the Department of Homeland Security with the following designations:
   - Refugee
   - Asylum Granted
   - Cuban-Haitian Entrant, Status Pending
   - Victim of human trafficking, T-visa holder (T-2, T-3, or T-4, etc.)

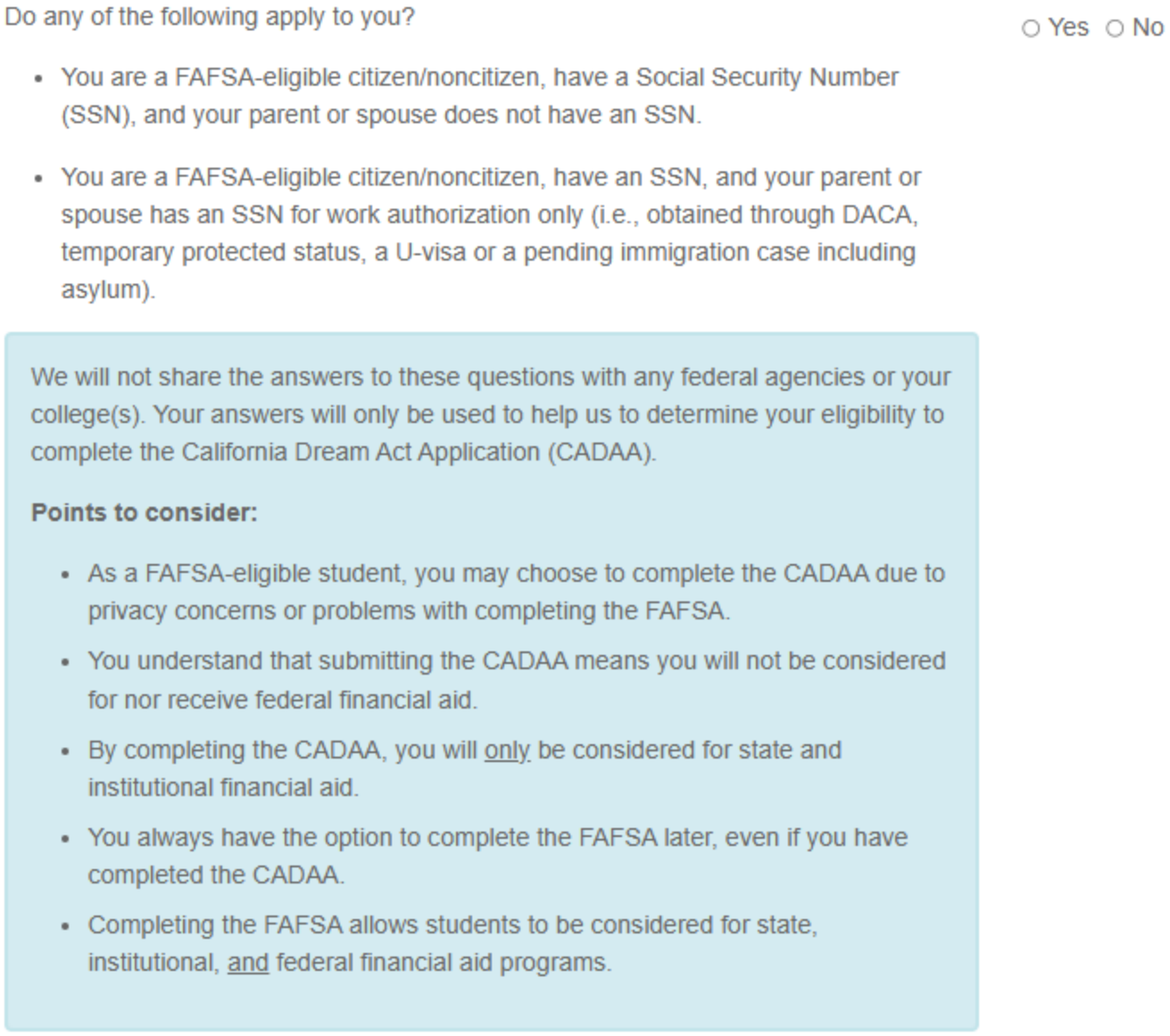
VERIFYING ELIGIBILITY

If you answer that you are a US Citizen, you will be asked if you meet one of the criteria below:

- Your parent or spouse does not have a SSN
- Your parent or spouse has a SSN but is a noncitizen (i.e., has DACA, asylum, etc.).
- You are a FAFSA-eligible noncitizen.

If you respond "Yes" you meet the first eligibility criteria.

Responding "no" to this question means you are not eligible and should complete the FAFSA



VERIFYING ELIGIBILITY

You will then be asked if you meet the AB 540 criteria.

You must be able to answer “Yes” to continue.

Do you meet the AB540 criteria list below?

What is the Non-Resident Tuition Exception commonly known as AB 540?

AB 540 lets eligible students pay in-state tuition and qualify for state/institutional financial aid at California colleges even if they are not classified as "residents" for tuition purposes.

To qualify for AB 540, you must meet all four requirements listed below

1. **Schooling Requirement - meet ONE of the following (A or B):**
   A. Three or more years in California schools
   You completed 3+ years of full-time attendance OR earned 3+ years' worth of credits at any combination of:
   - California high schools
   - California adult schools
   - California Community Colleges

   OR

   B. High School coursework + elementary/secondary school attendance
   You completed:
   - 3+ years of full-time high school coursework in California (55 credits = 1 year of high school coursework) **AND**
   - 3+ years of attendance in California, using any combination of:
     - Elementary school
     - Middle School
     - High School

2. **Completion Requirement - meet ONE of the following:**
   You have:
   - Graduated (or will graduate) from a California high school, **OR**
   - Passed (or will pass) your General Education Development (GED), High School Equivalency Test (HiSET), Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC), or California Proficiency Program (CPP) **OR**
   - Earned an associate degree from a California Community College, **OR**
   - Met the minimum transfer requirements from a California Community College to a UC or CSU

3. **Enrollment Requirement:**
   You are enrolled or will enroll at an accredited California college or university.

4. **Visa Status Requirement:**
   You do not hold a valid and current non-immigrant visa (examples include F-1, J-1, H-1B, B-1/B-2). ***Exceptions: U Visa and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders are eligible under California law.***

   For a complete list of non-immigrant visas, click here.

VERIFYING ELIGIBILITY

If you meet the eligibility requirements, you will be informed that you are eligible to file a CADAA and can click “Start Application.”



3.
Creating an Account

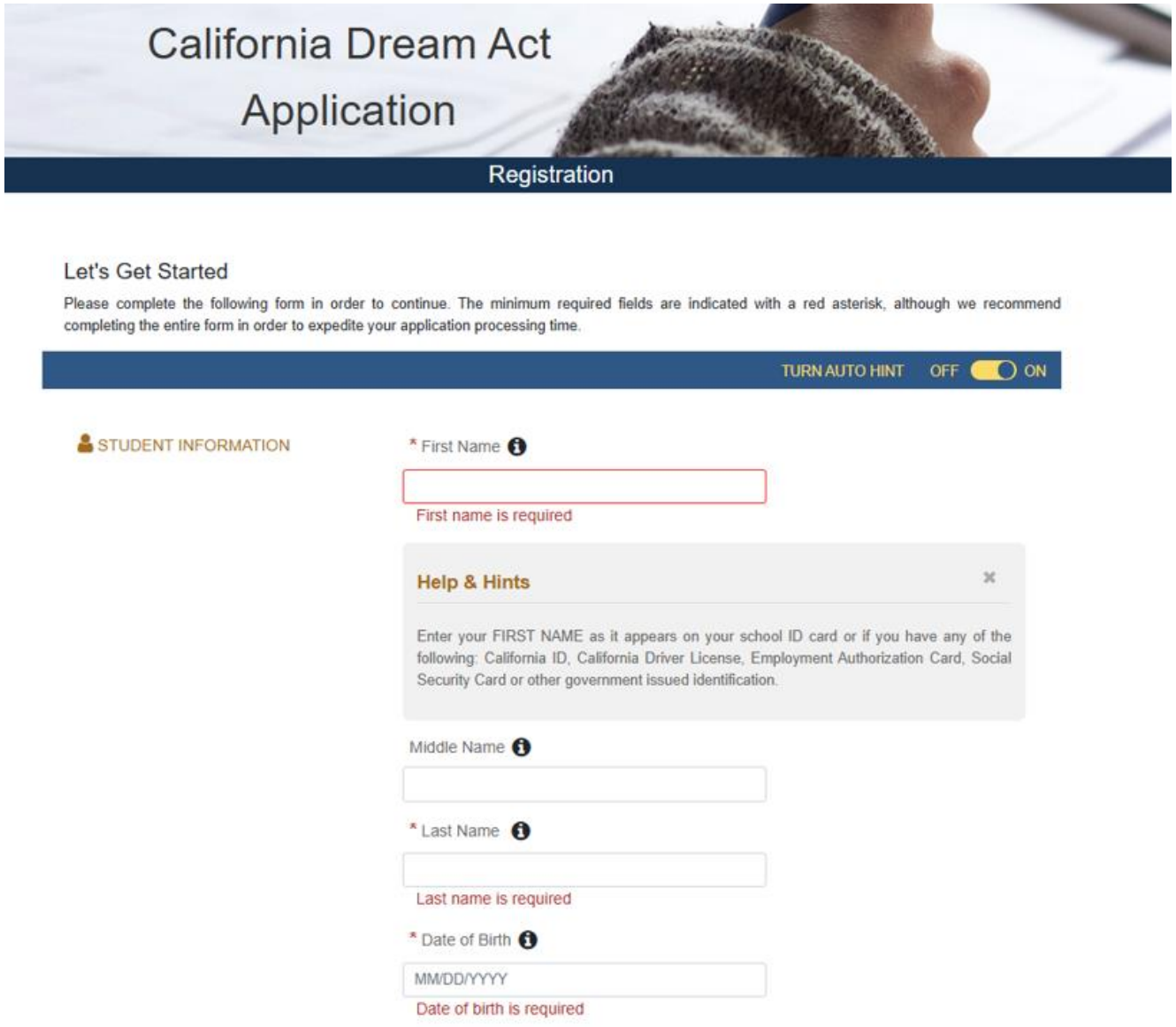
CREATE A USER ACCOUNT

You will need to provide your name and date of birth, and create a User ID, which must be 8 characters.

Your name and date of birth must match your high school or college records. If you use a different name on your college admissions applications than what was used in high school, you should contact your college/university.

Required fields are marked with a red asterisk (*).

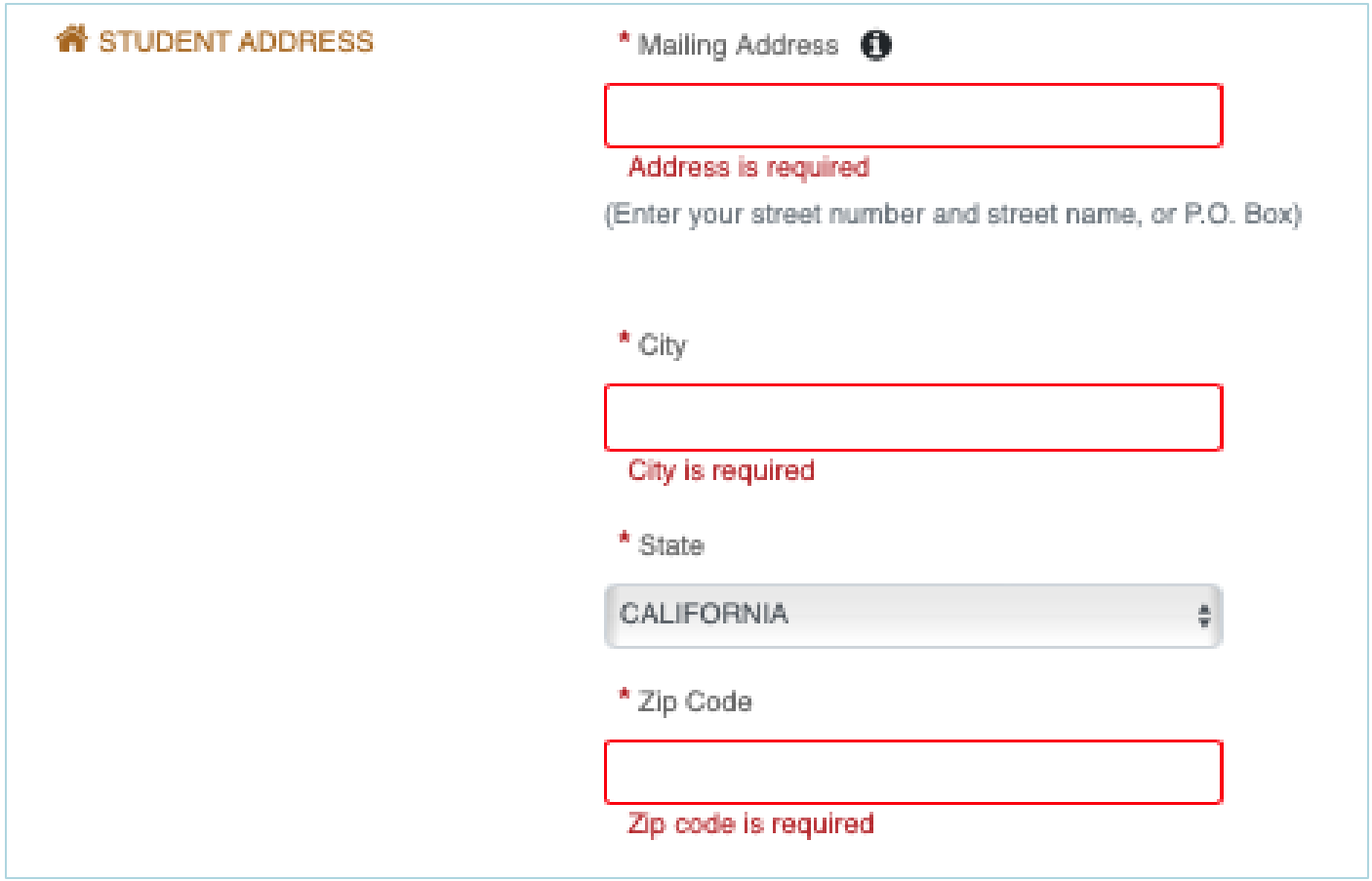
If "Auto Hint" is turned on in the upper right corner, an explanation of what to include for each field will l shown. If this is off, you can click the next to the field for information.



CREATE A USER ACCOUNT (continued)

Student Address: Do not provide a temporary mailing address.

If you do not have a permanent mailing address, you can use an address where you can reliably receive mail, like the address of a friend, relative, or social service agency that has given you permission to use their address.



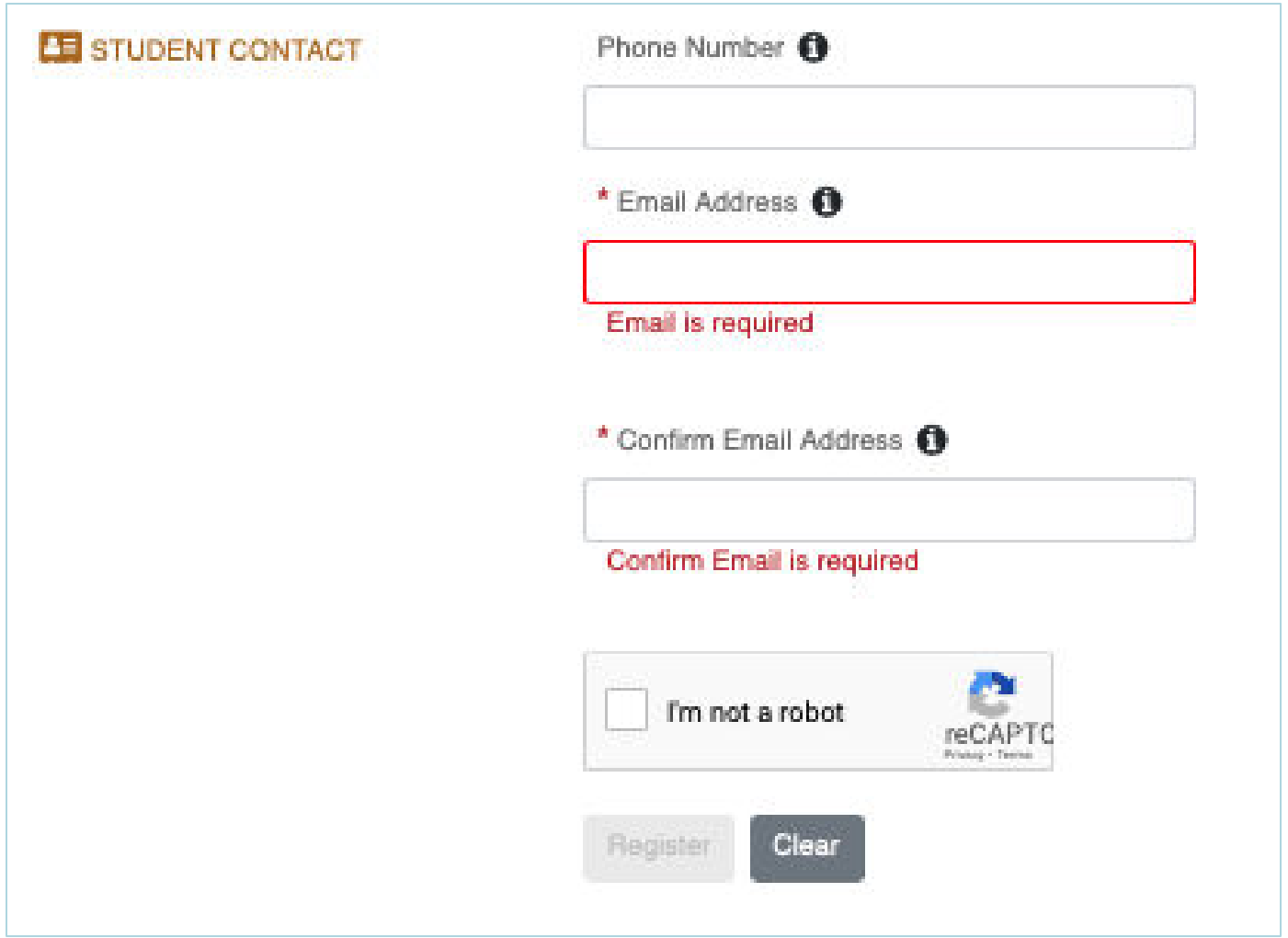
CREATE A USER ACCOUNT (continued)

Phone Number: Providing a phone number is not required, but is recommended

Email Address: You must provide an email address, as this is used for communication from CSAC and your college.

Double-check the email address to make sure there are no typos. Avoid using high school emails that can expire.

Emails from CSAC may go to your junk or spam folder, so be sure to check these folders and add csac.ca.gov as a "safe sender."



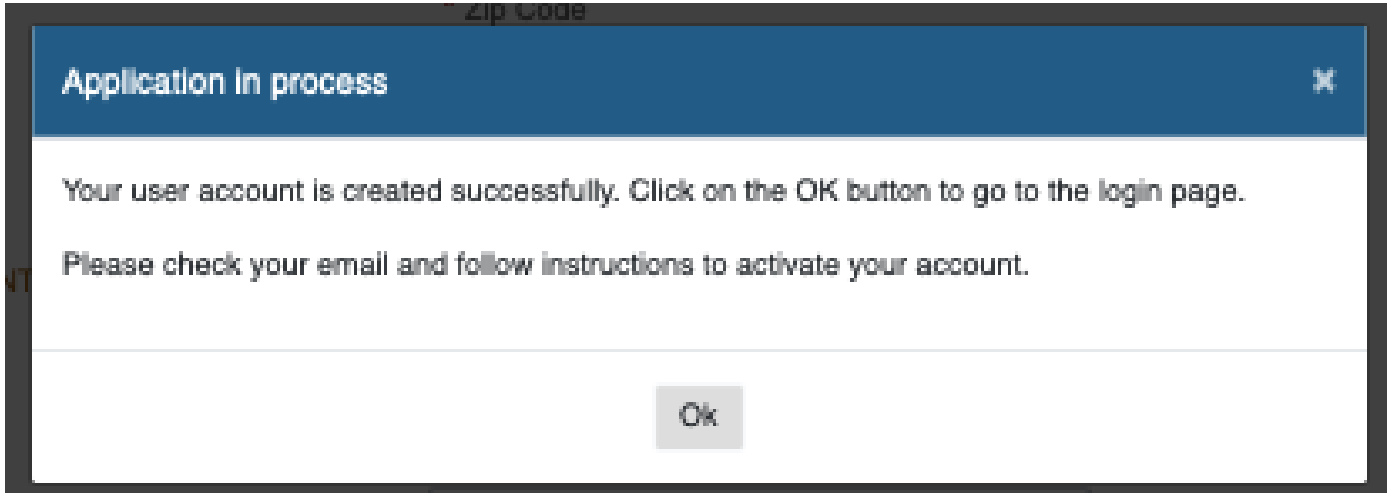
CREATE A USER ACCOUNT (continued)

1. You will see a pop up indicating that your account has been created.

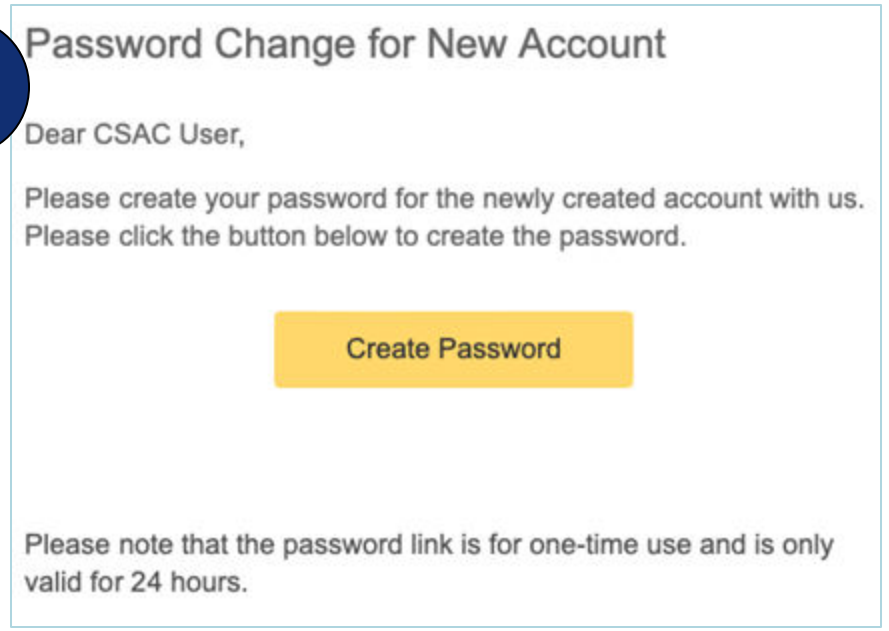
2. You will receive an email message to confirm your email address. Click on the link in the email message to activate your account. You must activate your account within 24 hours.

3. You will be asked to create a password and can then log in to the account.

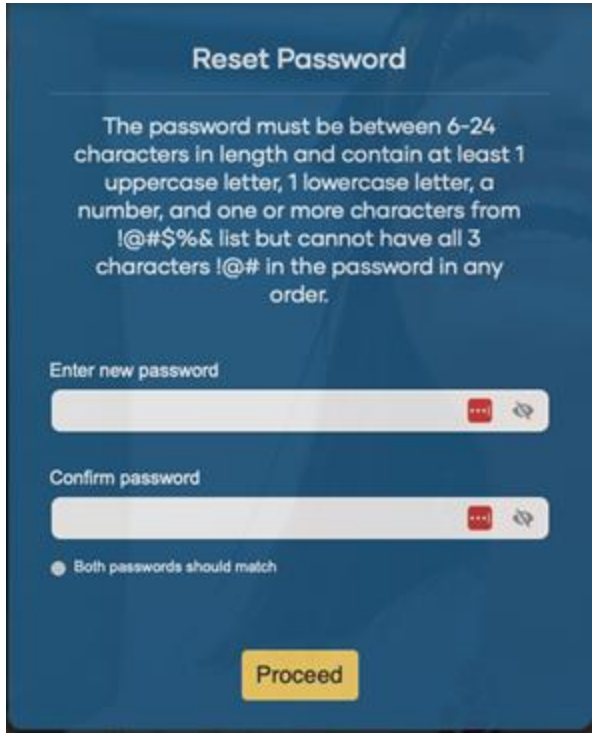
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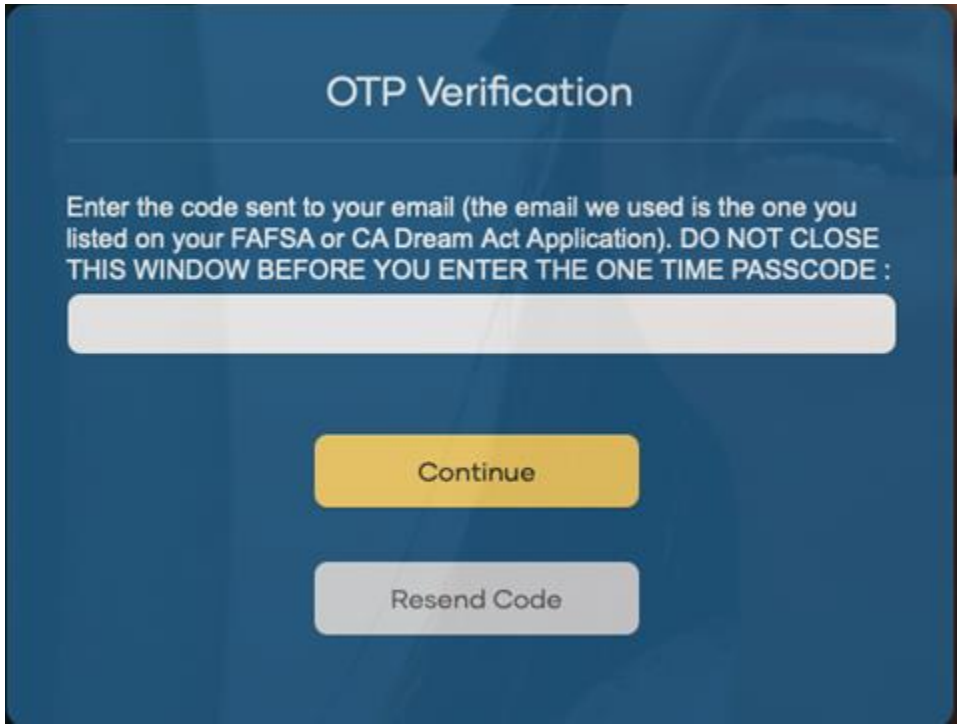
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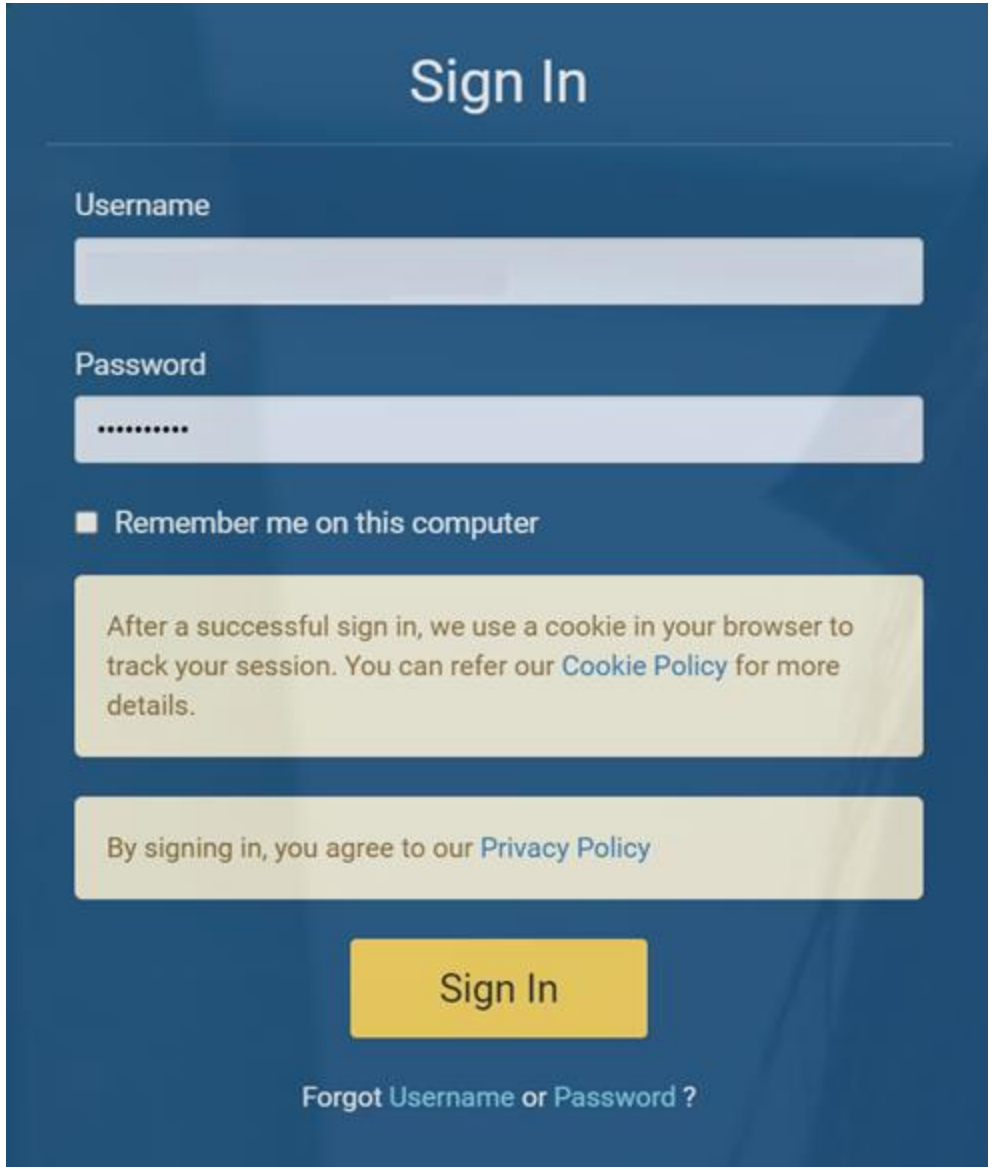


LOG IN

Go to DREAM.CSAC.CA.GOV and log in with your username and password to begin your application.

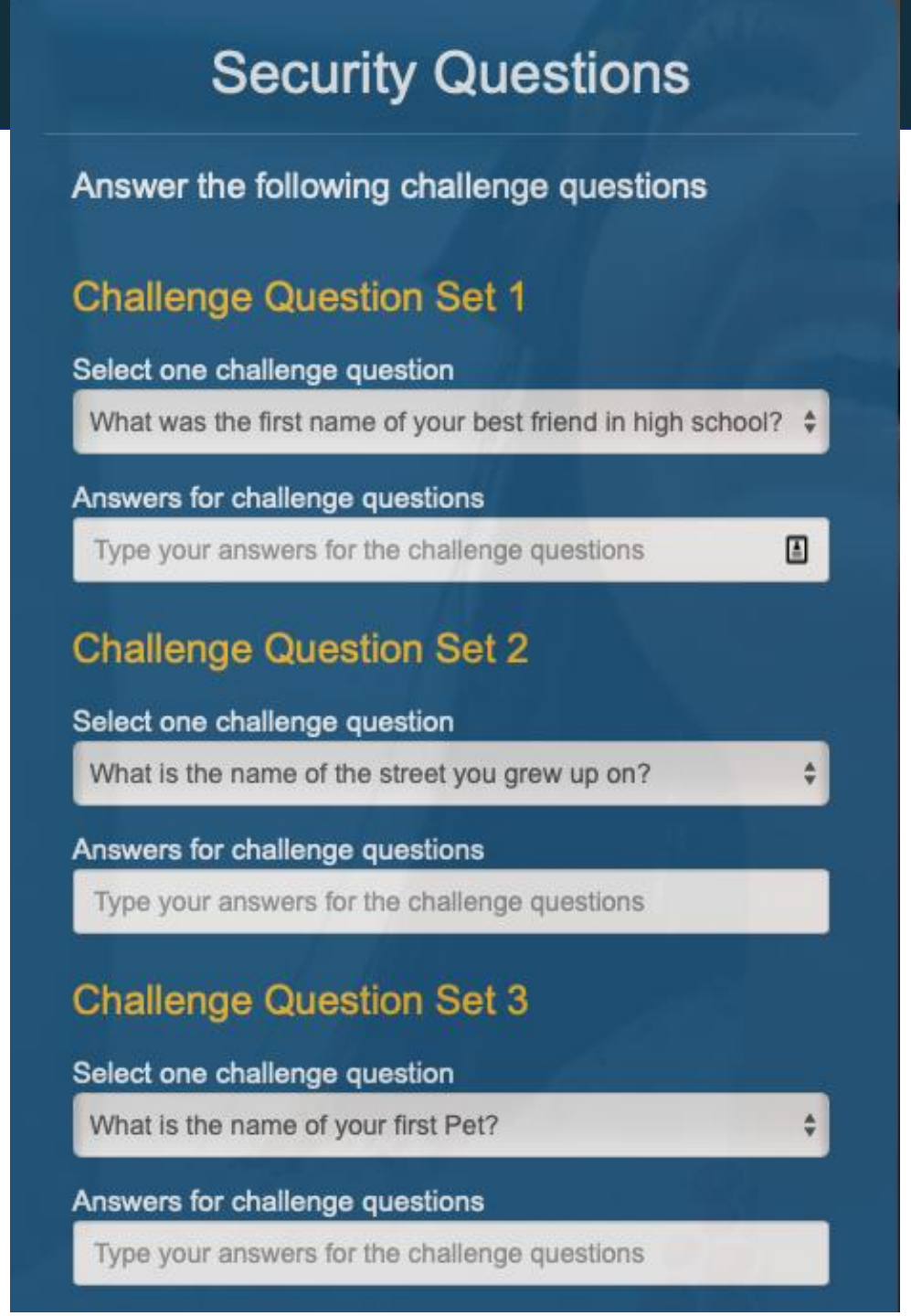
A code will be sent to the email address that you provided.





LOG IN (continued)

You will then be asked to provide answers to three security questions, which can be used to recover your account if you forget your password.





Write down these items somewhere safe or save these items with your mobile device so you don't forget:

- ❑ Username
- ❑ Password
- ❑ Email Address & Password
- ❑ Challenge Questions & Answers

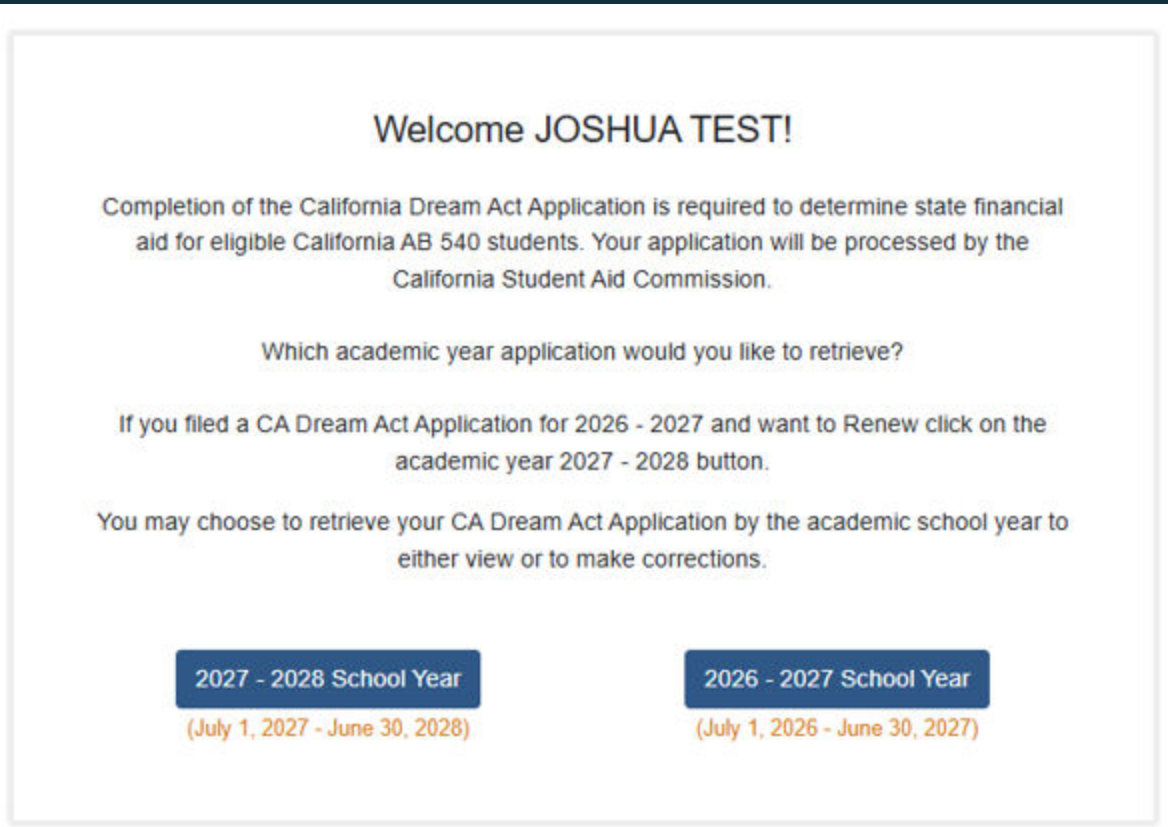
SELECT SCHOOL YEAR

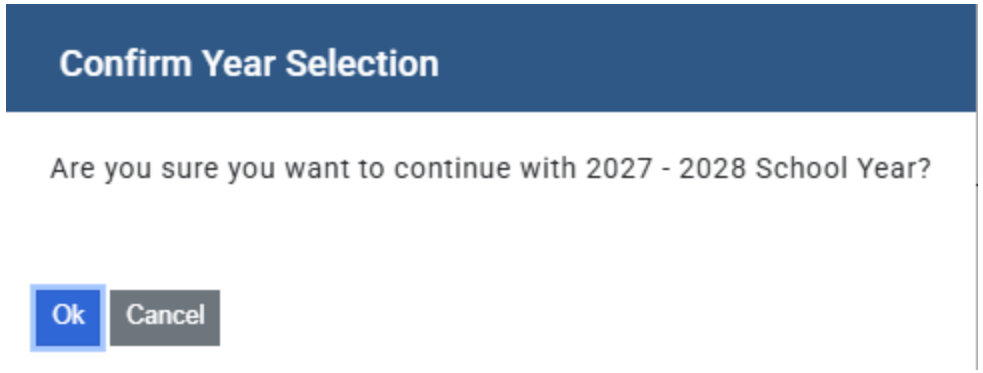
Select the school year that you plan to attend college. If you select the wrong year, your financial aid will not be processed.

Most students will want to complete the CADAA for next fall, which is the academic year on the left.

If you are applying for an upcoming summer session, it is recommended that you complete applications for both years. Schools have the option of using either the prior or upcoming year's financial aid for summer. Once you've picked a college, check with the financial aid office about summer financial aid.

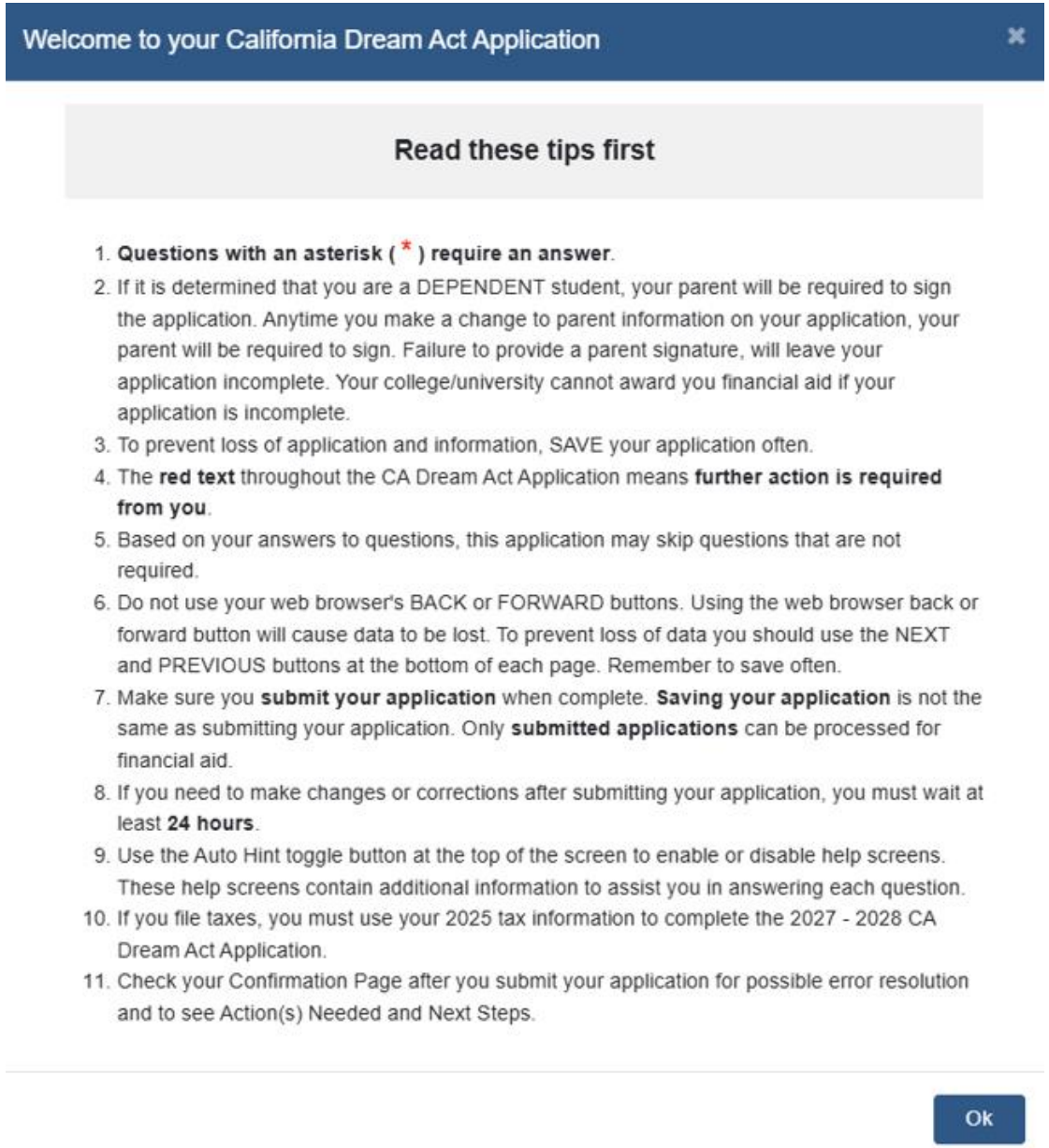
The application may ask you to confirm your selection.





REVIEW INSTRUCTIONS

Read the instructions and then click on the OK button.



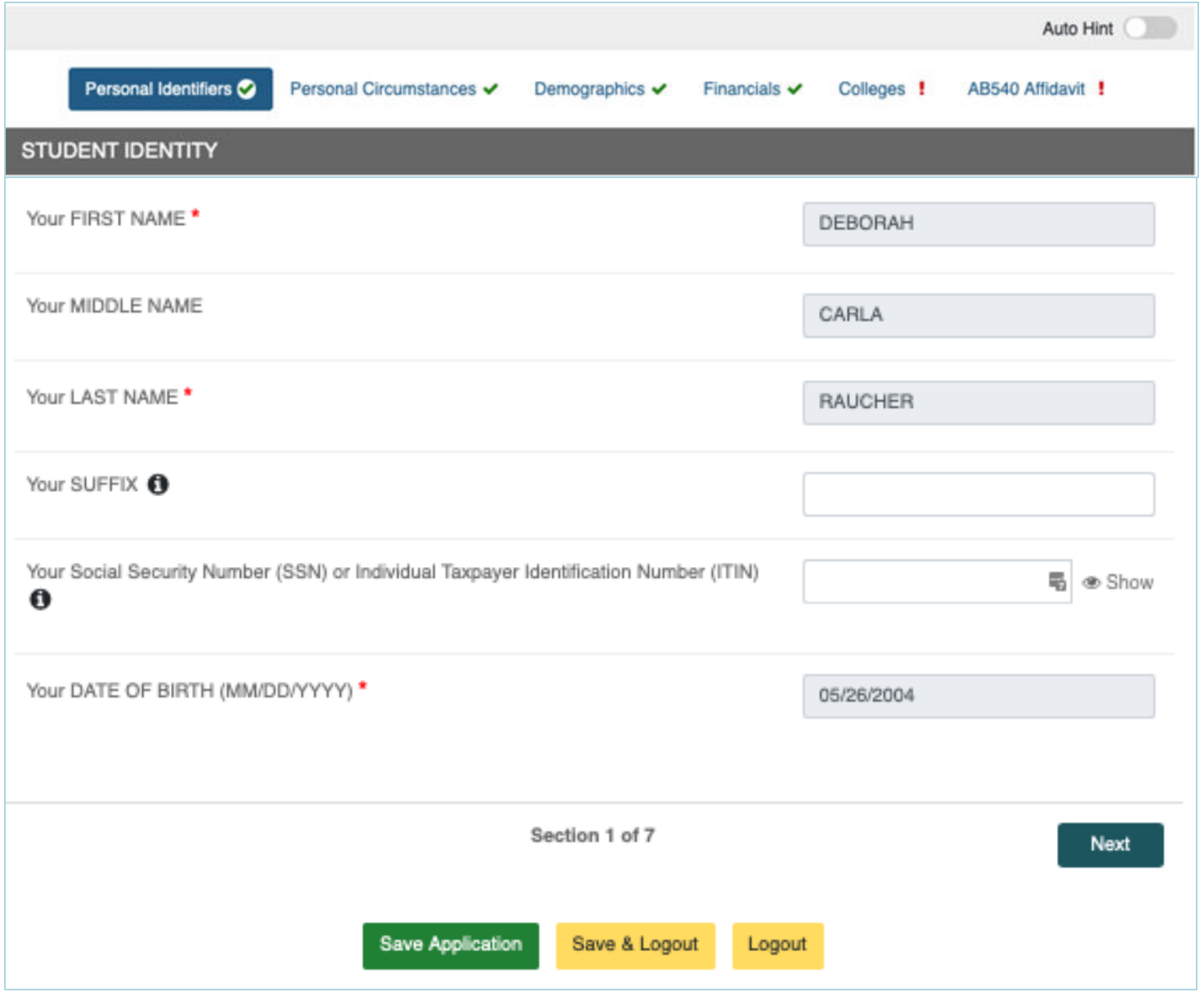
4.
Personal Identifiers

VERIFY IDENTITY INFORMATION

Your CADAA will auto-populate your name and date of birth. If you have a valid Social Security Number or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) you can enter it.

Entering your valid SSN or ITIN can help CSAC and campuses match your information to your GPA record.

Leaving this question blank will not impact your eligibility for state aid.



CITIZENSHIP

You will be asked about your citizenship status. If you indicate that you are a citizen or eligible non-citizen, you will be redirected to the FAFSA. If you indicate you are "Neither Citizen nor Eligible Non-citizen" you will continue with the CADAA.

Indicate whether you have a valid U Visa. If you answer yes, you are eligible for the CADAA.

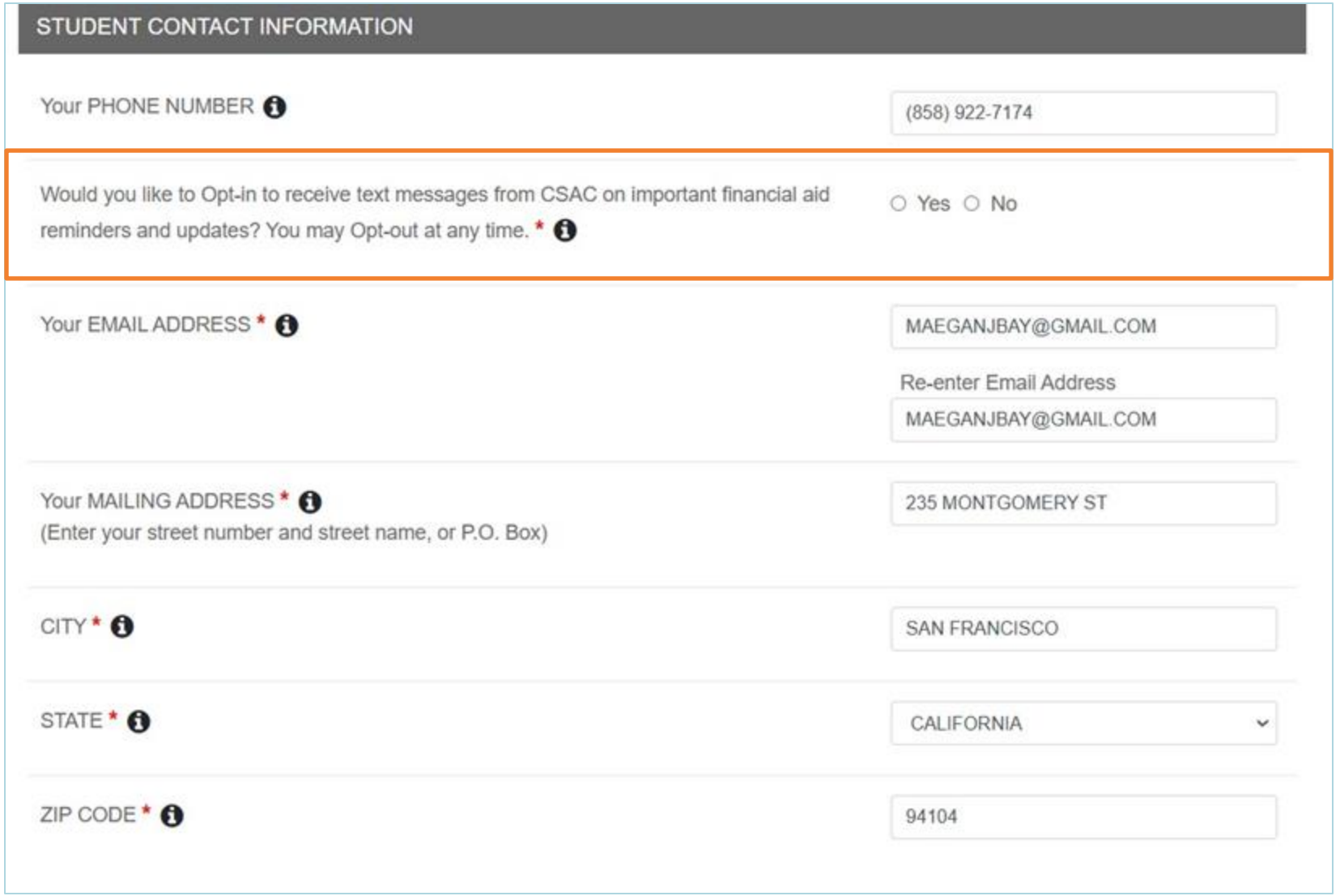
A "U Visa" is a type of nonimmigrant visa for victims of certain crimes who have suffered mental or physical abuse and are helpful to law enforcement in the investigation or prosecution of such criminal activity. If you have a U Visa, contact your campus which can provide guidance on how you can establish residency for in-state tuition purposes.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Your contact information will auto-populate on the next screen.

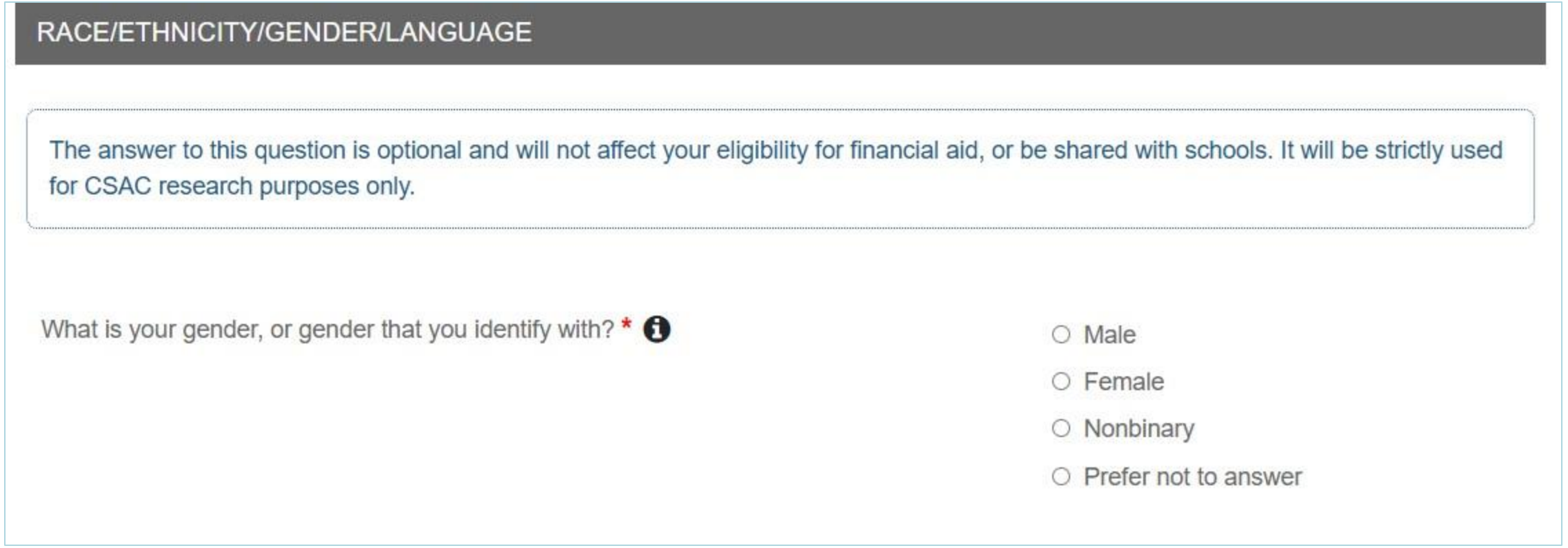
You have the option of indicating if you would like to receive notifications via text message.



GENDER

The student is asked about their gender identity.

Selecting “prefer not to answer” does not impact eligibility for aid. The answers are not shared with the colleges and are for research purposes only.

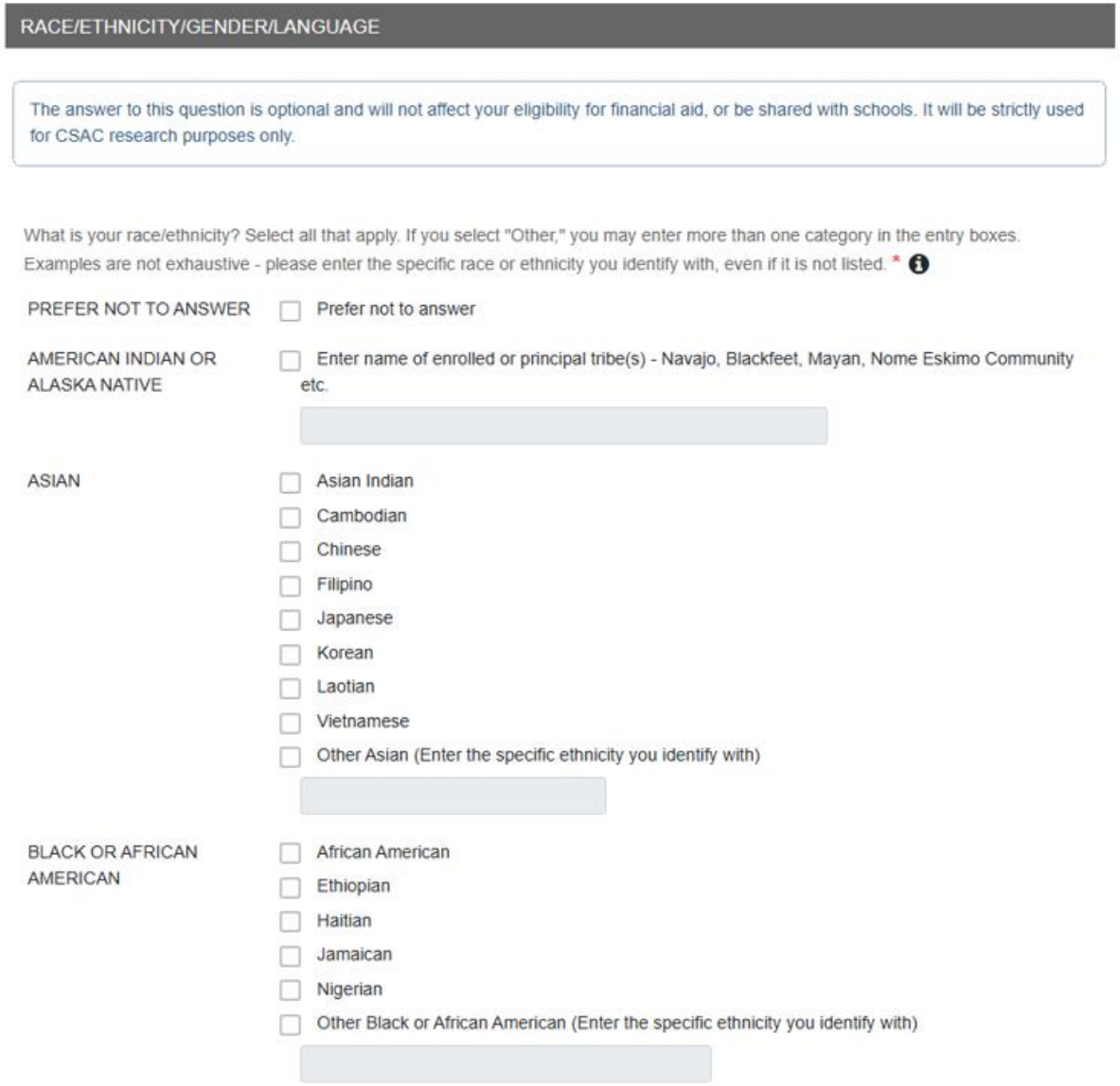


RACE/ETHNICITY

The student is asked their race/ethnicity and can select all that apply.

Selecting “prefer not to answer” does not impact eligibility for aid. The answers are not shared with the colleges and are for research purposes only.

Additional displayed categories include Hispanic or Latino, Middle Eastern or North African, Pacific Islander, and White.

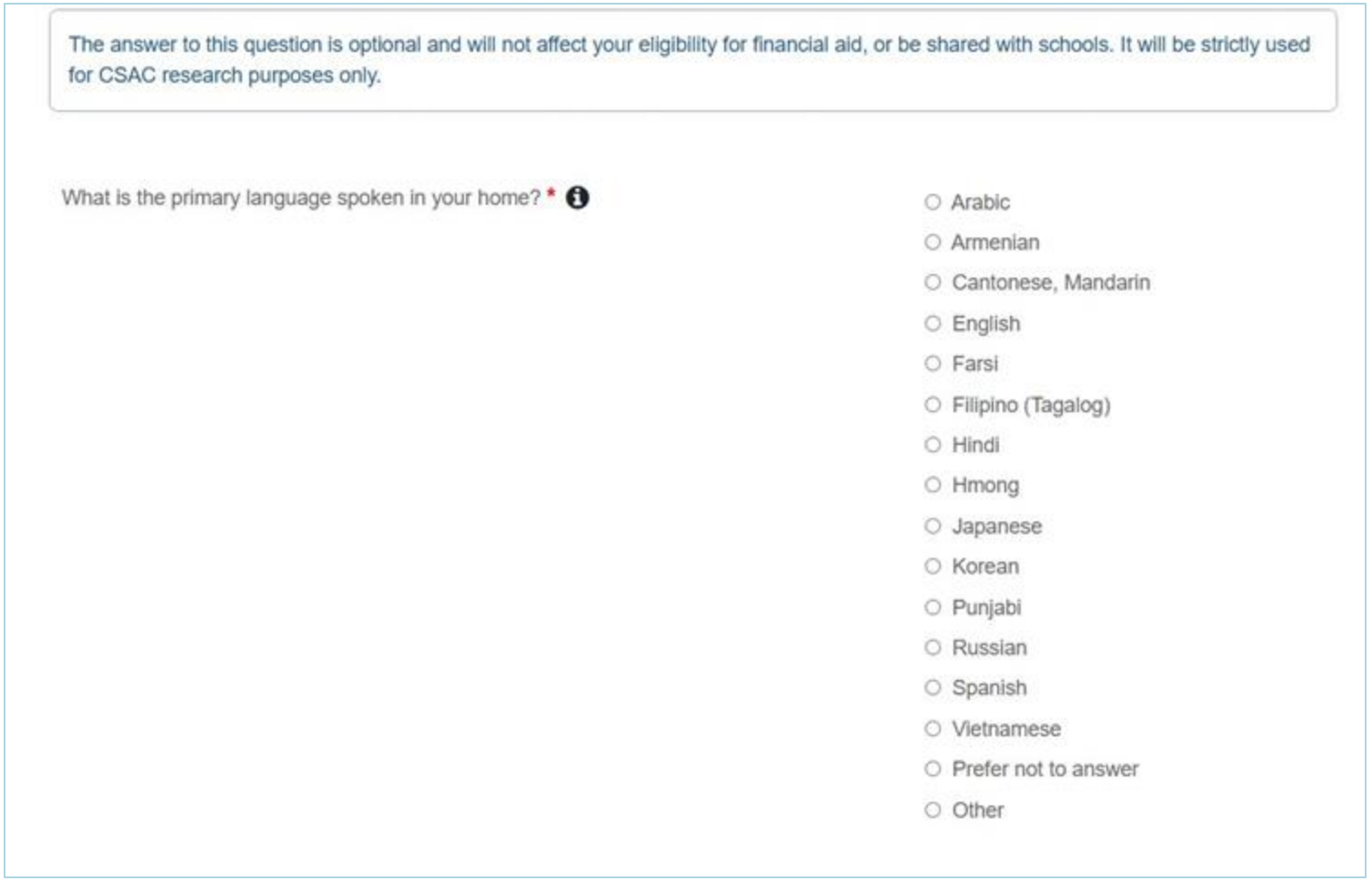


PRIMARY LANGUAGE

The student is asked what the primary language spoken in their home is.

Selecting “prefer not to answer” does not impact eligibility for aid. The answers are not shared with the colleges and are for research purposes only.

If the student selects “other” they can manually input the language. Students can select one option only.

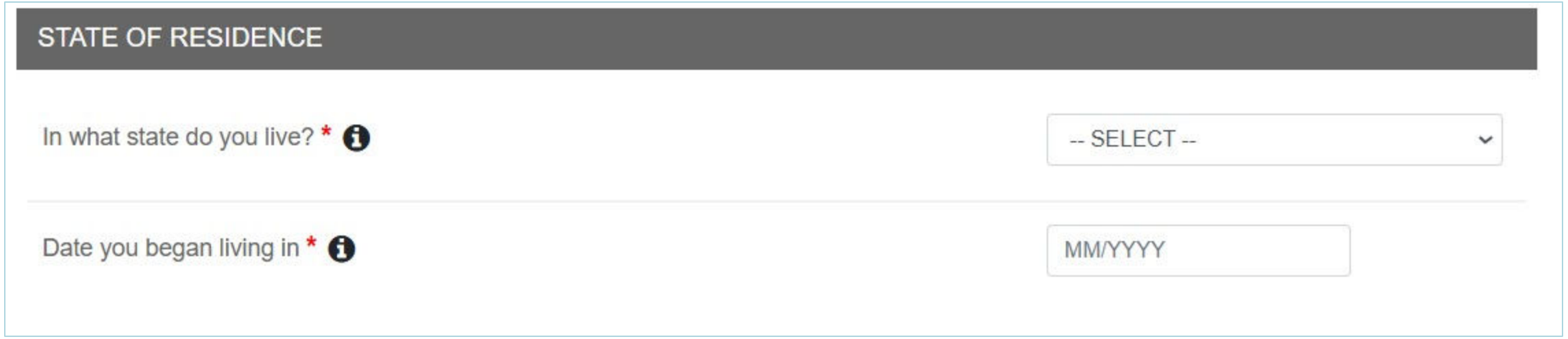


STATE OF RESIDENCE

Enter the state where you reside and the date you began living in that state (month and year only – MM/YYYY).

You must be a California resident to qualify for California student aid such as the Cal Grant, Middle Class Scholarship and in-state tuition.

To qualify for California residency, you must have been living continuously in California for at least 366 days immediately prior to a determination date (set by your institution, i.e., college) and have the intent and capacity to continue to live in California indefinitely.



5.
Student Personal Circumstances

MARITAL STATUS

- You are asked your marital status. Your status is “single” if you are not legally married, even if you live with or have a boyfriend, girlfriend, partner, or significant other.
- If you are married, your spouse must provide income information. The screens for this process are not included in this guide.



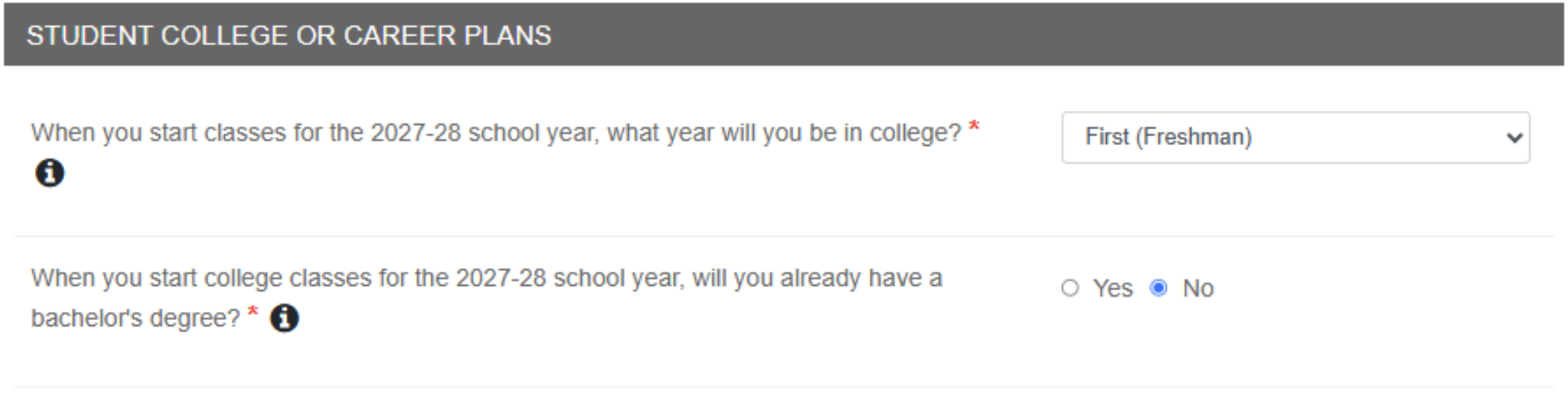
STUDENT COLLEGE OR CAREER PLANS

Indicate what your grade level will be when the 2027-2028 school year begins.

Students who took “dual enrollment” courses in high school should select “First (freshman)”

For returning students, this is based on units completed, not the number of years enrolled. For example, if degree completion requires 60 units, a student entering their second year who had completed less than 30 units, would select “First (freshman).”

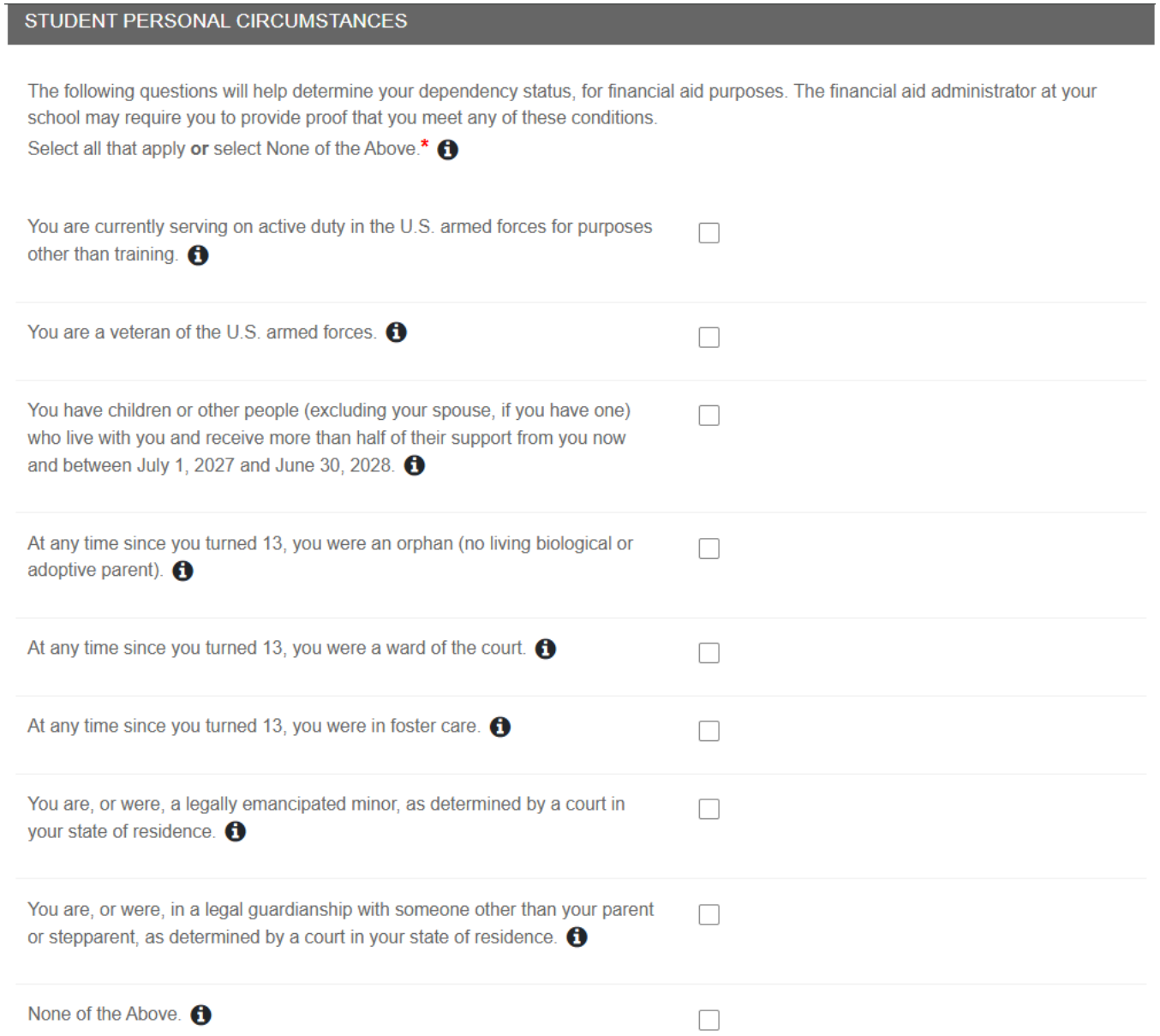
You should answer NO regarding whether you will have your first bachelor’s degree unless you have already COMPLETED a bachelor’s degree program.



PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The “Student Personal Circumstances” section is used to determine if a student is independent. Students who qualify as independent do not need to provide information about their parents and eligibility for financial aid is based on the student’s income only (and spouse if applicable).

Students should select all that apply.

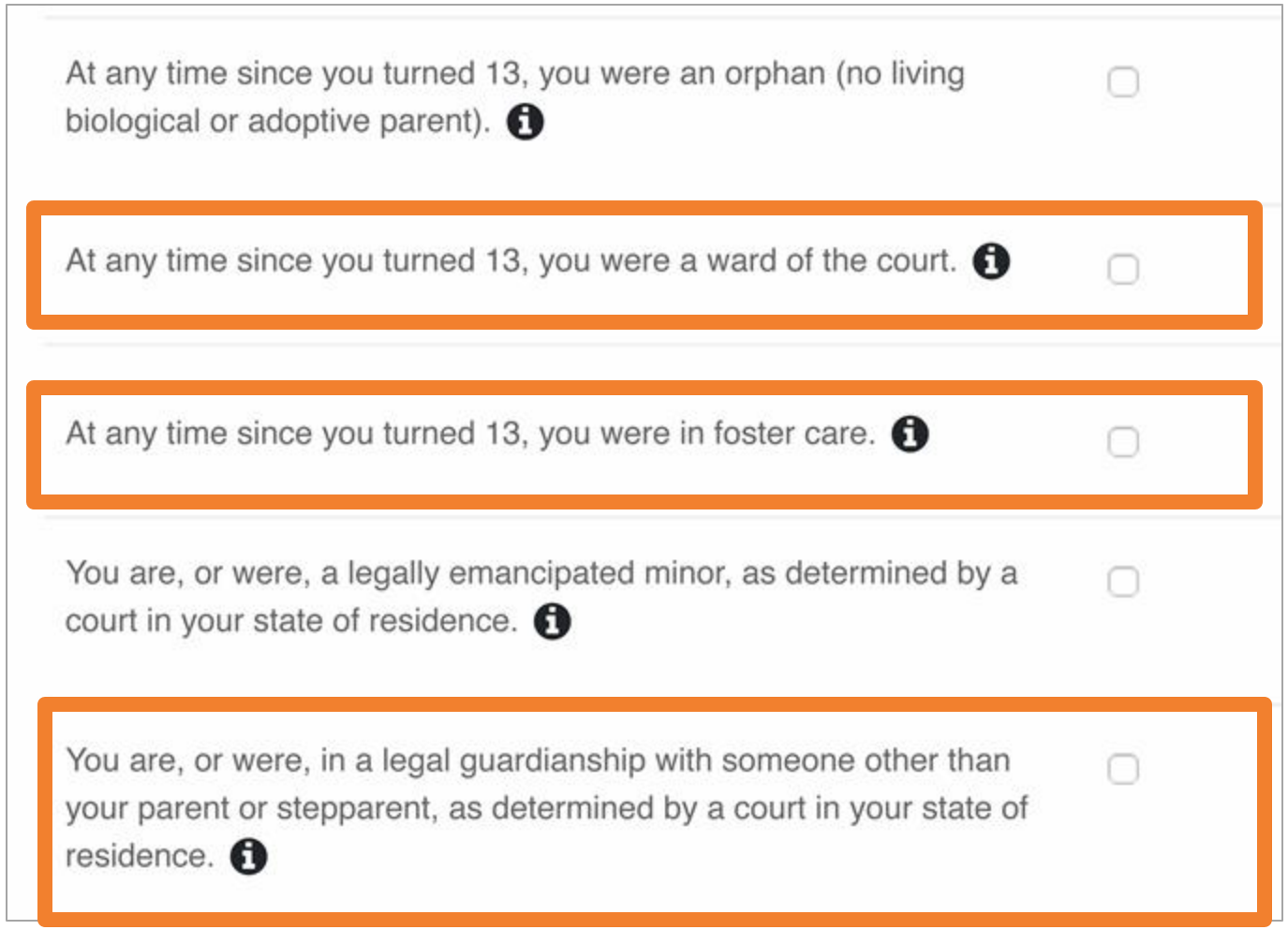


5a.
Current & Former Foster Youth

Current and Former Foster Youth

To qualify as a **ward of the court** or in **foster care**, a student must have been a dependent of the court and lived in an out-of-home placement at any point on or after their 13th birthday. No guidance is available regarding the difference between being in foster care and being a ward of the court, and so students can check either or both. While this includes foster youth who are under the jurisdiction of the probation system, someone who is incarcerated is not considered a ward of the court for CADAA purposes.

To qualify under the legal guardianship criteria, you must have a guardianship in place currently or when you turned 18. Both kinship guardianships and non-related legal guardianships qualify.



How is Foster Youth Status Verified?

Each college determines if it will require verification of foster care status. Financial aid offices can automatically verify foster care status through a data match with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS); however, this doesn't always happen, and a letter or other acceptable documentation (see next page for options) may be required.

Once verified, status does not need to be redetermined in subsequent years.

Who Can Provide Verification?

College financial aid administrators (FAA) must accept any of the following:

- Court order or official State documentation that the student received Federal or State support in foster care;
- Verification of eligibility for a Chafee Grant;
- A phone call, written statement, from:
  - A State, county, or Tribal agency administering a program under part B or E of title IV of the *Social Security Act*;
  - A State Medicaid agency;
  - A public or private foster care placing agency or foster care facility or placement;
  - An attorney or Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA);
  - A financial aid administrator who documented the student's circumstance in the same or a prior award year.

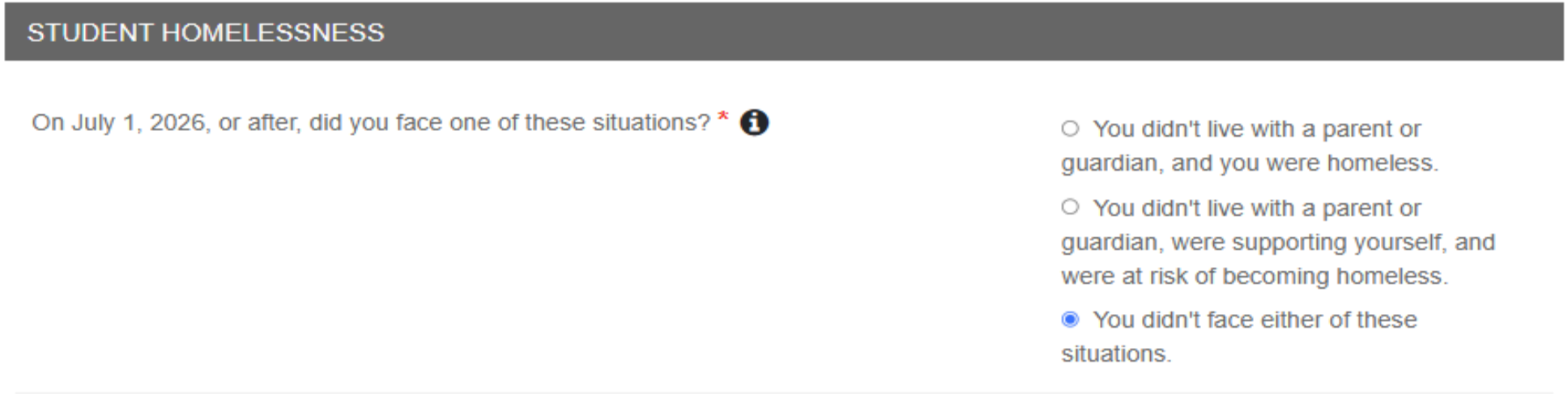
To Get a Foster Youth Verification Letter:

- ✓ **Current foster youth**: Contact your social worker or Independent Living Program (ILP) representative
- ✓ **Former foster youth:** May also contact the Office of the California Foster Care Ombudsperson: 877-846-1602 or fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov/verification-request-form

5b.
Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Unaccompanied Homeless Students

Students are then asked about their homelessness status.



If a student indicated they were in foster care, this question will be skipped:



*This information was based on the CADAA as of October 22. This question may be further updated to mirror the FAFSA.

Definition of Homeless Youth on the CADAA

A Student Must be Unaccompanied AND either Homeless OR Self-Supporting & at risk of being homeless

Unaccompanied

Not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

+

Homeless

Lacking fixed, regular, and adequate housing. (Learn more on the next page)

OR

Self-supporting AND at risk of being homeless

A student is paying for their living expenses (including housing) AND when a student's housing may cease to be fixed, regular, and adequate.

Note: *A student living in any of these situations and fleeing an abusive parent may be considered homeless even if the parent would provide support and a place to live.*

“Lacking fixed, regular and adequate housing” includes students who:



Are staying with other people temporarily due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (i.e., couch-surfing)



Are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations



Are living in emergency shelters



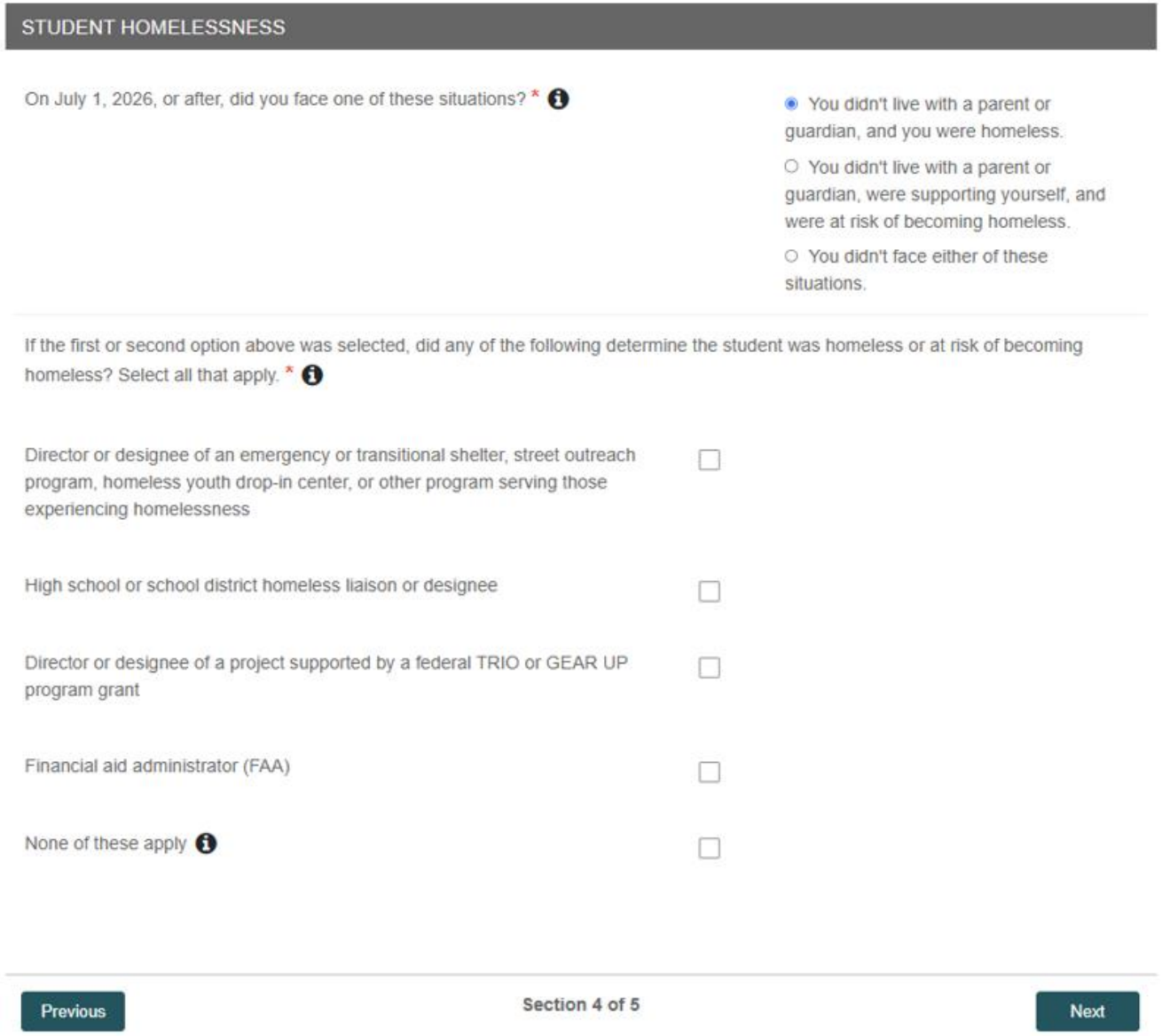
Are living in their car, sleeping outside, or staying someplace not normally meant for human habitation

Homeless Determinations

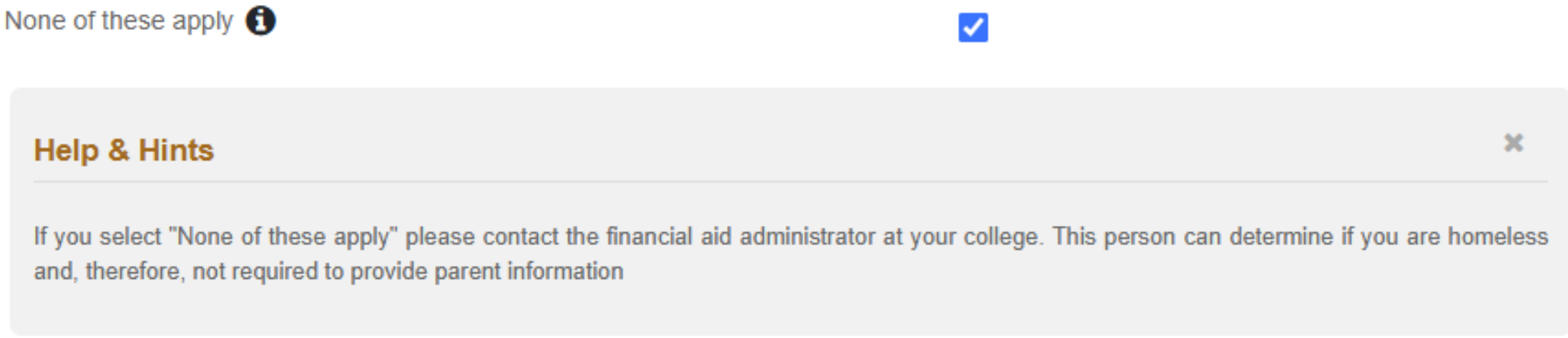
If you select the first or second option, you will then be asked who will provide a homeless youth determination.

FAAs must accept documentation, including a documented phone call, from these entities unless there is "documented conflicting information."

If you don't have verification from one of the listed entities, select "none of these apply."



Homeless Determinations

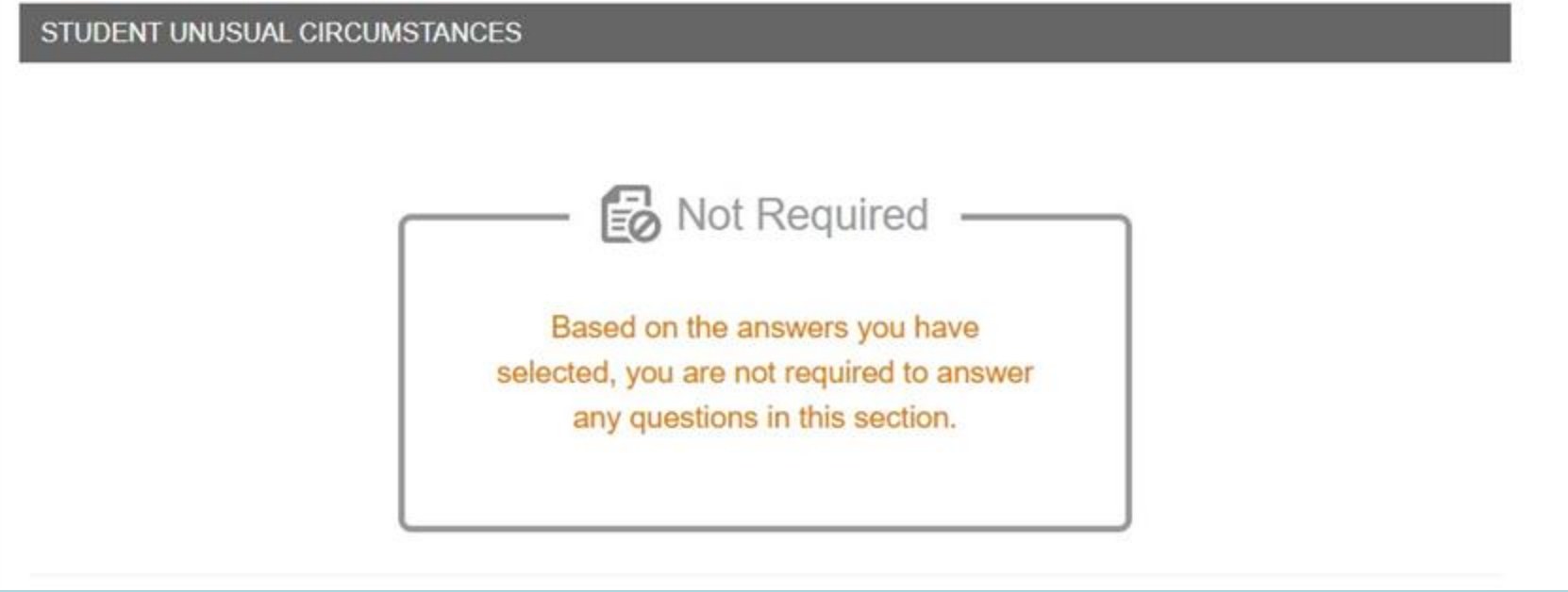


- If “None of these apply,” you can complete the CADAA but must contact the financial aid office for a determination.
- FAAs MUST make a determination based on a written statement, or documented interview, with a student.
- Financial aid administrator's determination of homelessness must be made without regard to the reasons why the student is unaccompanied and/or homeless.

5c.
Unusual Circumstances

Student Unusual Circumstances

If a student has already indicated that they have independent student status because they are a current/former foster youth and/or experiencing homelessness, they will NOT be asked the question about unusual circumstances.

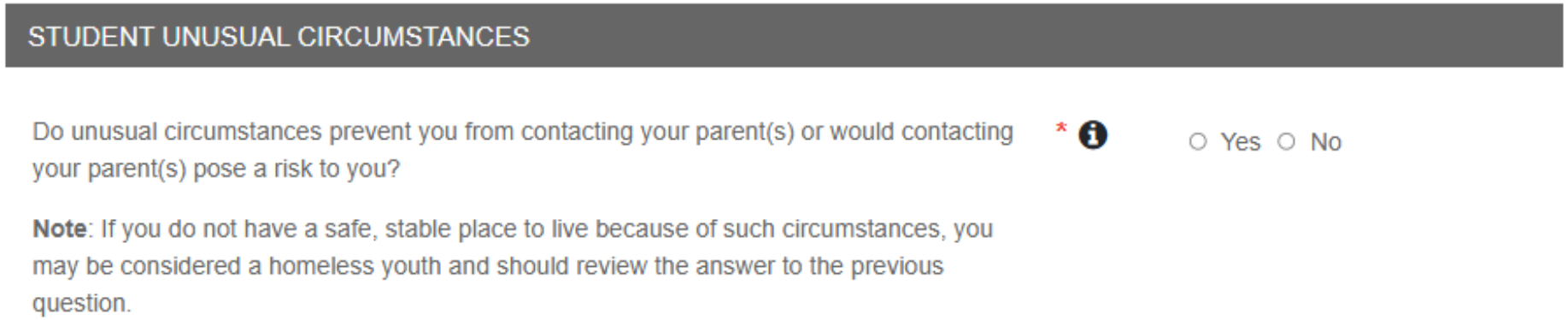


Student Unusual Circumstances

Students may complete the CADAA as a “provisionally” independent student if they believe they may qualify for independent status due to unusual situations such as parental abandonment, abuse, neglect, legally granted asylum, or student or parental incarceration or institutionalization (see next page).

Provisional independent provisions may be helpful for youth who are neither homeless nor former foster youth, but who nonetheless have extenuating circumstances that preclude being able to obtain parental information.

If a student has “unusual circumstances", they will be “Provisionally Independent.” The student can sign and submit their CADAA without providing parental income information but will need to contact their school to see what supporting documentation they need to submit. A financial aid administrator at the school will review and make a determination regarding a dependency override. Colleges have discretion to use professional judgement when evaluating whether to consider unusual circumstances.



Student Unusual Circumstances

"Unusual circumstances" are situations that prevent you from providing **parental information** (when required) on the California Dream Act Application (CADAA). The answer to this question can assist the college(s) you select to help you finalize your CADAA application and will often require submission of supporting documentation of your circumstances directly to your college's financial aid office.

You may be experiencing unusual circumstances if:

- You left home due to an abusive or threatening environment.
- You are abandoned by or estranged from your parents.
- You are separated from your parents, or your parents are displaced in a foreign country.
- You are a victim of human trafficking.
- Your parents are incarcerated, and contact with your parents would pose a risk to you; or
- You are otherwise unable to contact or locate your parents.

6.
Student Demographics

Parent Education Status

You will be asked if one or both of your parents attended or completed college. This information is used to identify first-generation college students and is for statistical purposes only.

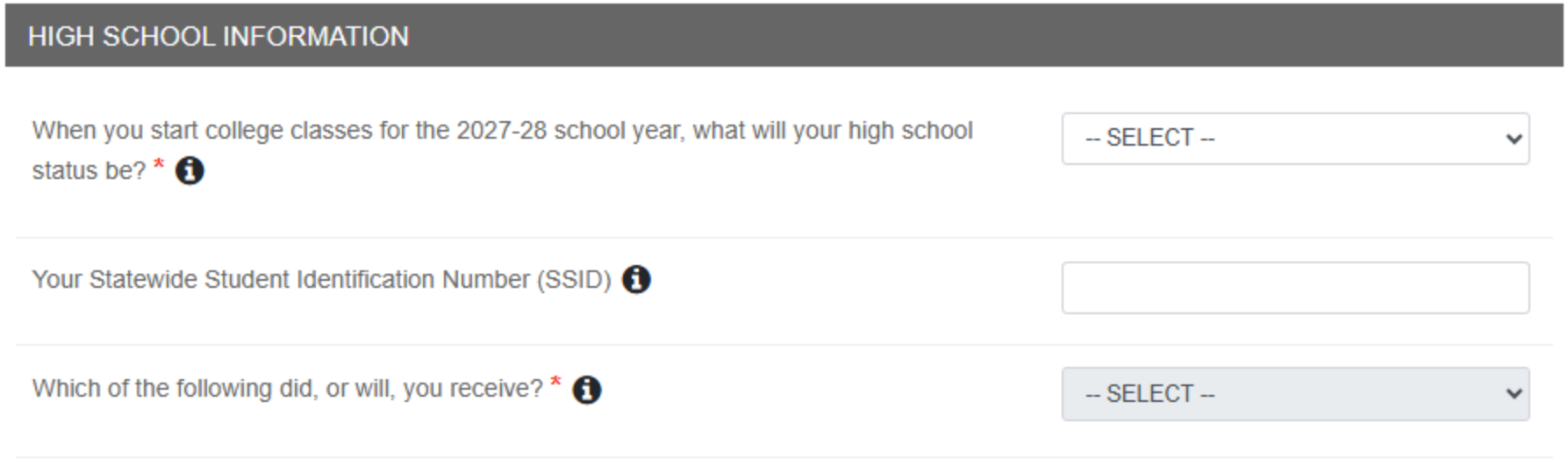
Selecting “don’t know” does not impact eligibility for aid.



High School Information

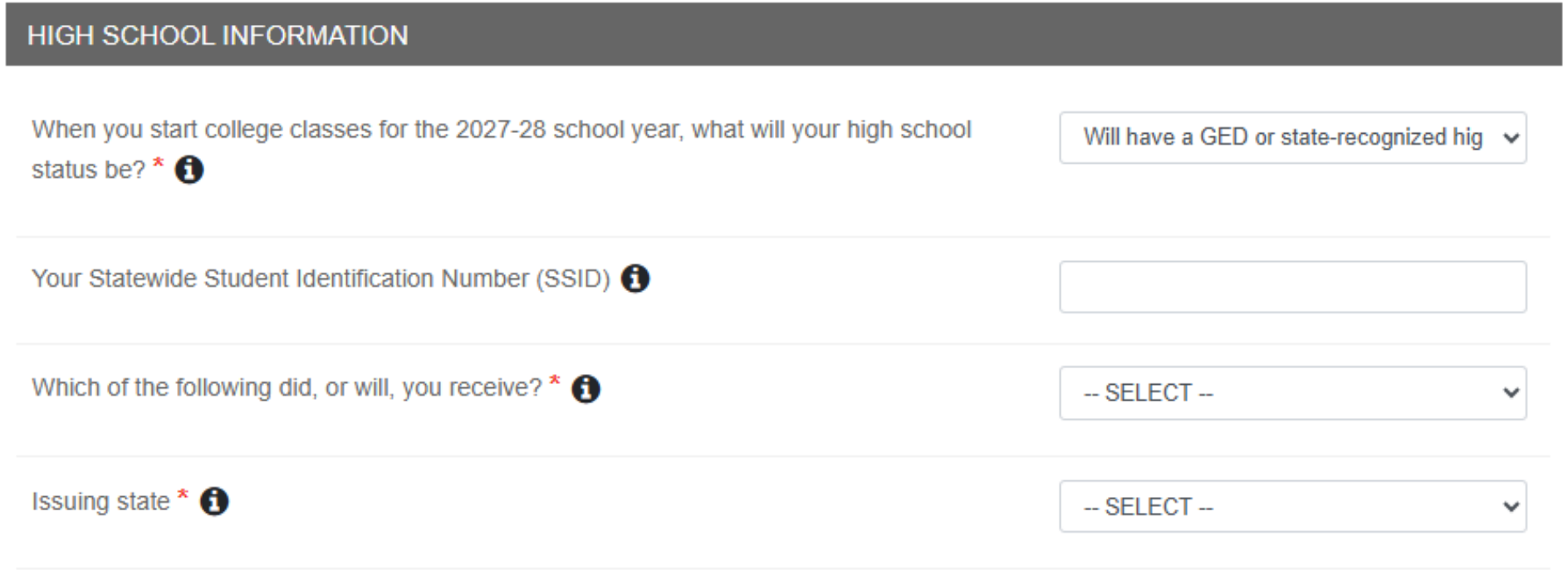
You are asked about what your high school completion status will be when you start the 2027–28 school year. Options are a high school diploma, state recognized high school equivalent (e.g., GED), homeschooled, or none of the above.

You can also provide your Statewide Student Identification Number (SSID). This is not required; however, it will help CSAC to match your application to your GPA record to qualify for a CalGrant. The 10-digit number is shown on high school transcripts, or you can ask your school counselor for help.



High School Information

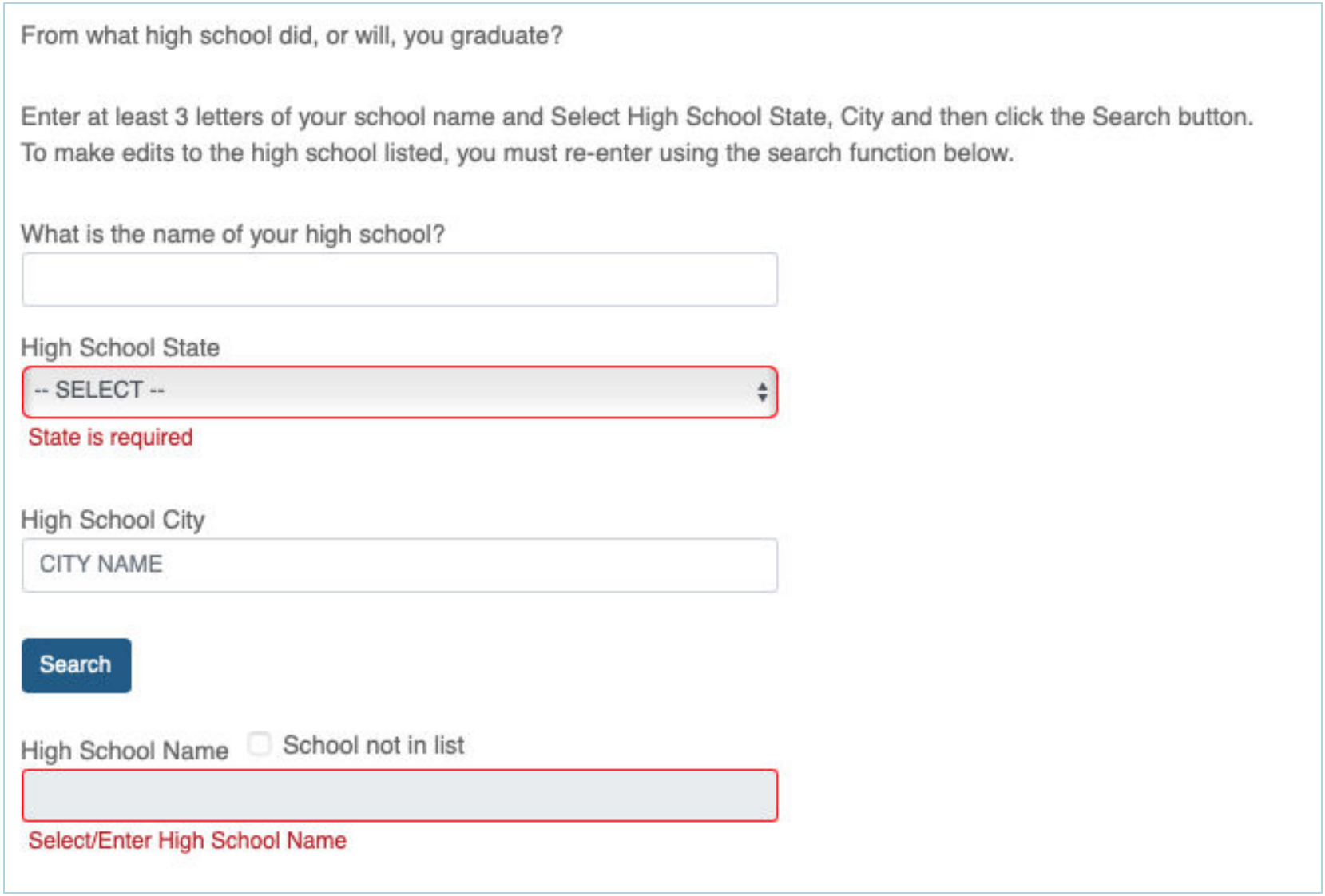
If you select “state recognized high school equivalent,” you will be asked the type of credential (GED, HiSET, TASC or other) and the issuing state.



High School Selection

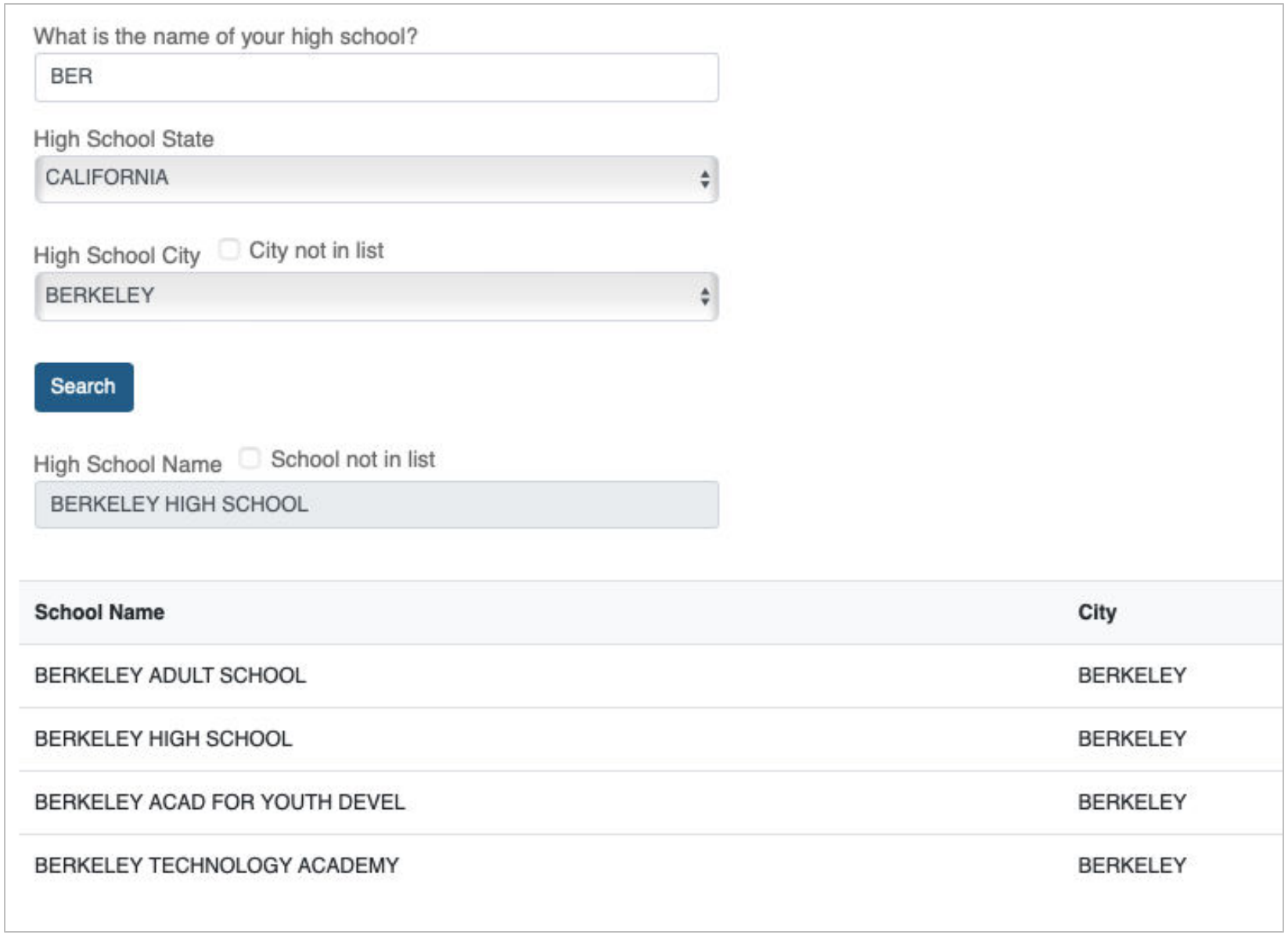
If you select that you will have a high school diploma, you will be shown fields that allow you to search for your high school by name, state and city.

Note: The purpose of this question is so that high schools can track how many students file the FAFSA and CADAA. High schools do not receive your financial or other information.



High School Selection

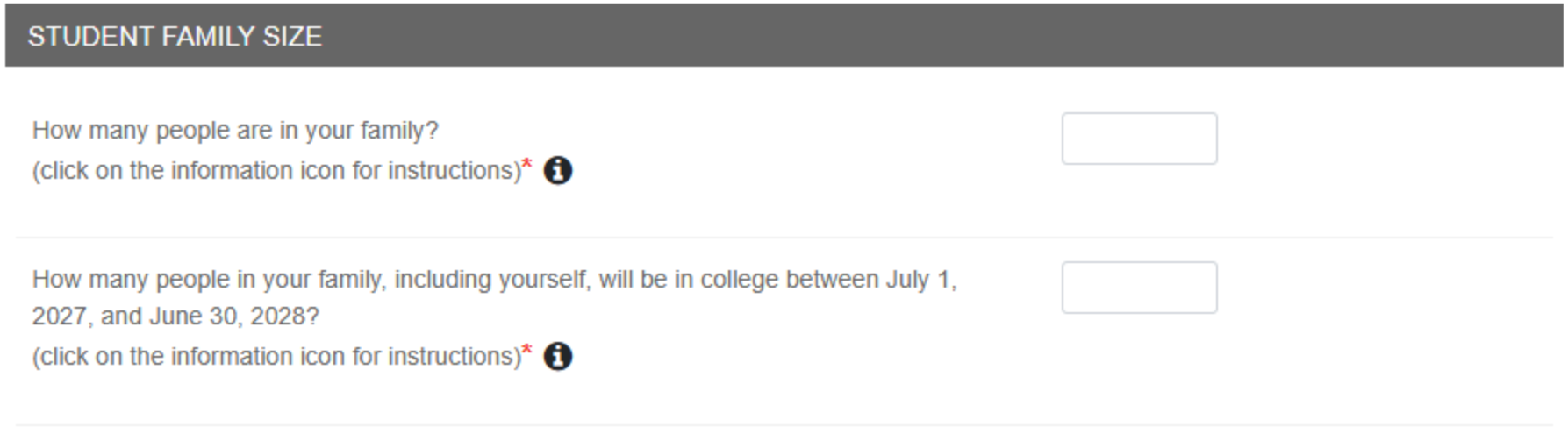
When you click the “Search” button, all schools that meet the criteria will appear and you select the correct option from the list.



Student Family Size

Provide the number of people in your family. This includes yourself, spouse and dependent children, if they live with you and you currently provide more than half of their support and will continue to do so between July 1, 2027, and June 30, 2028. This should also include other family members who live with you for whom you will provide more than half of their support between July 1, 2027, and June 30, 2028.

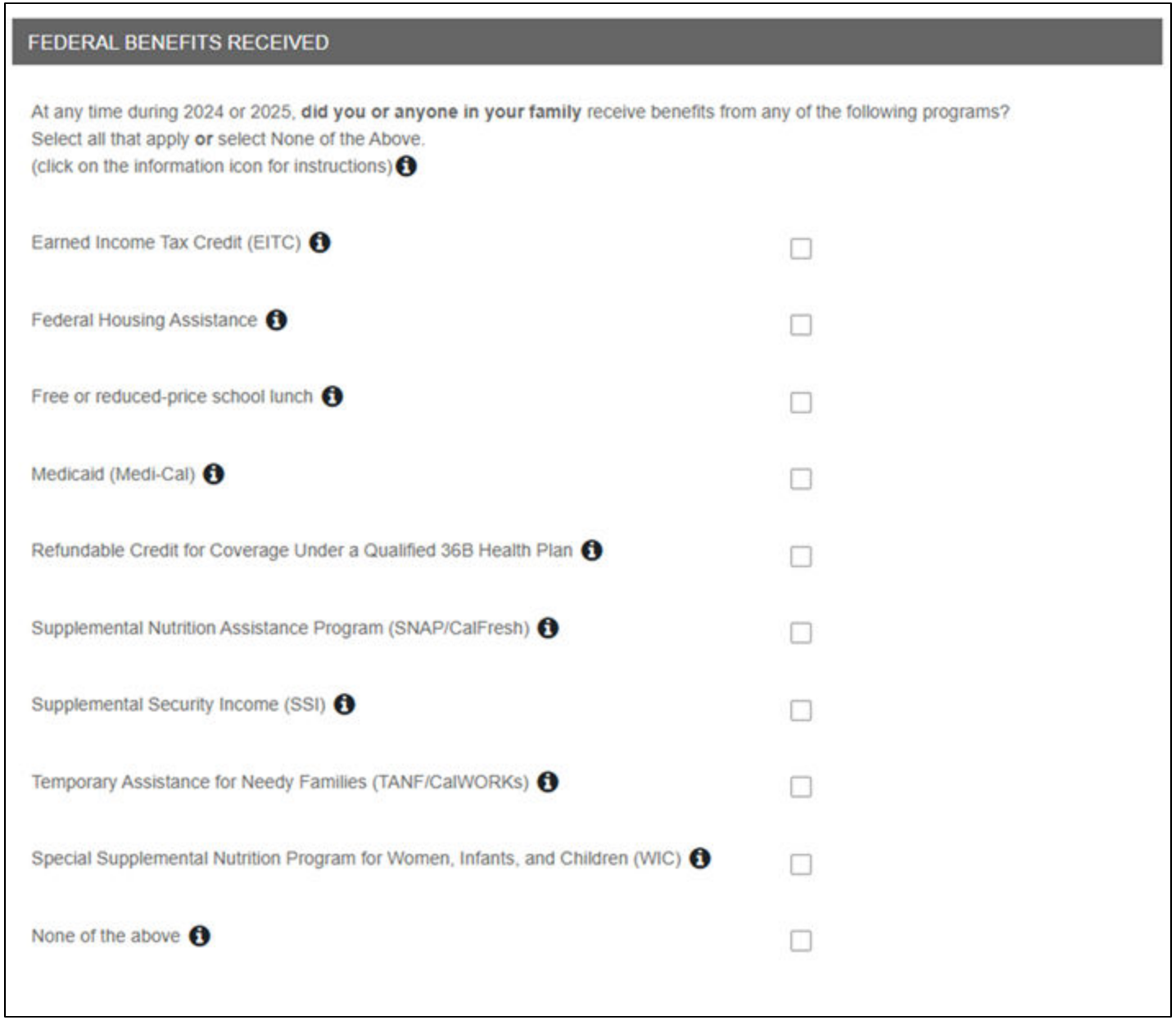
Then, provide the number of people included in your family number who will be in college (including yourself). Most students will answer "1" unless they have a spouse also in college. You should not include anyone other than yourself and your spouse or child (do not include siblings or other members of your household who are attending college).



7.
Student Financials

Federal Benefits Received

- You will be asked if you received certain public benefits at any time in 2024 or 2025.
- Click the ℹ icon to learn more about each benefit.
- Receiving these benefits does not reduce the amount of aid you qualify for.



Tax Filing Status

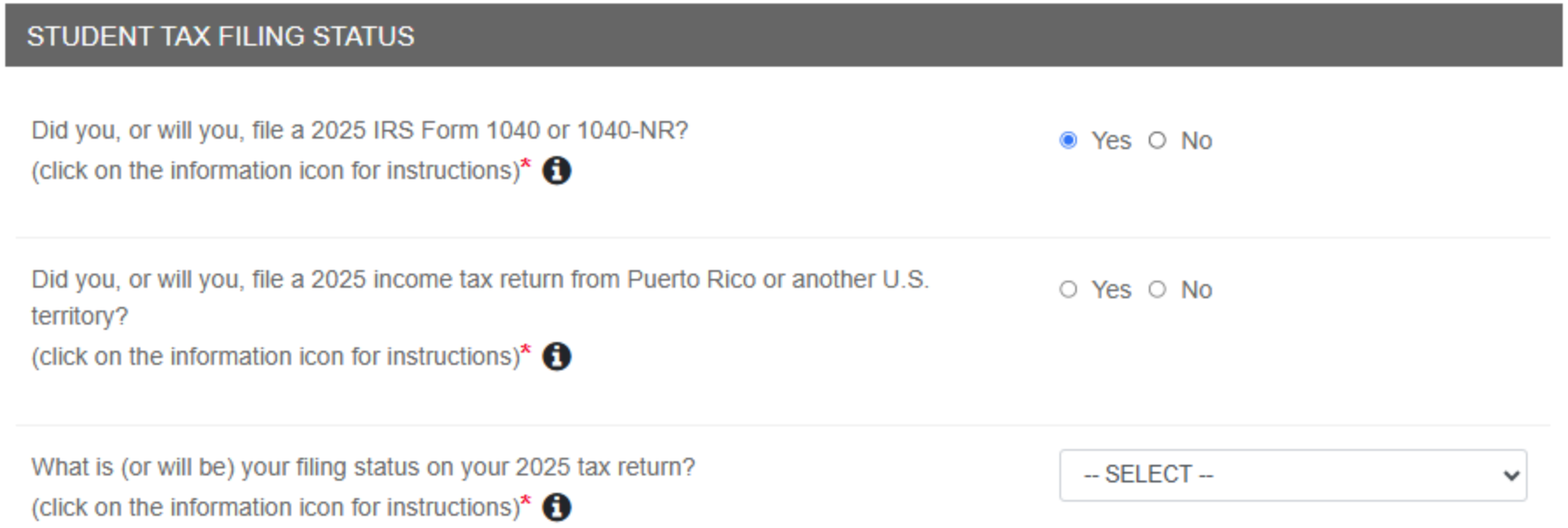
Indicate if you filed a tax return for 2025 (or plan to file one) and if you earned income in a foreign country in 2025, or you were employed by an international organization that did not require you to file a tax return.

STUDENT TAX FILING STATUS

Did you, or will you, file a 2025 IRS Form 1040 or 1040-NR? (click on the information icon for instructions)*	○ Yes ○ No
Did you, or will you, file a 2025 income tax return from Puerto Rico or another U.S. territory? (click on the information icon for instructions)*	○ Yes ○ No
Which one of the following situations applies to you for 2025? *	○ You earned income in a foreign country. ○ You worked for an international organization and weren't required to report that income on any tax return. (International organizations include, for example, the United Nations, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund.) ○ Neither situation applies.

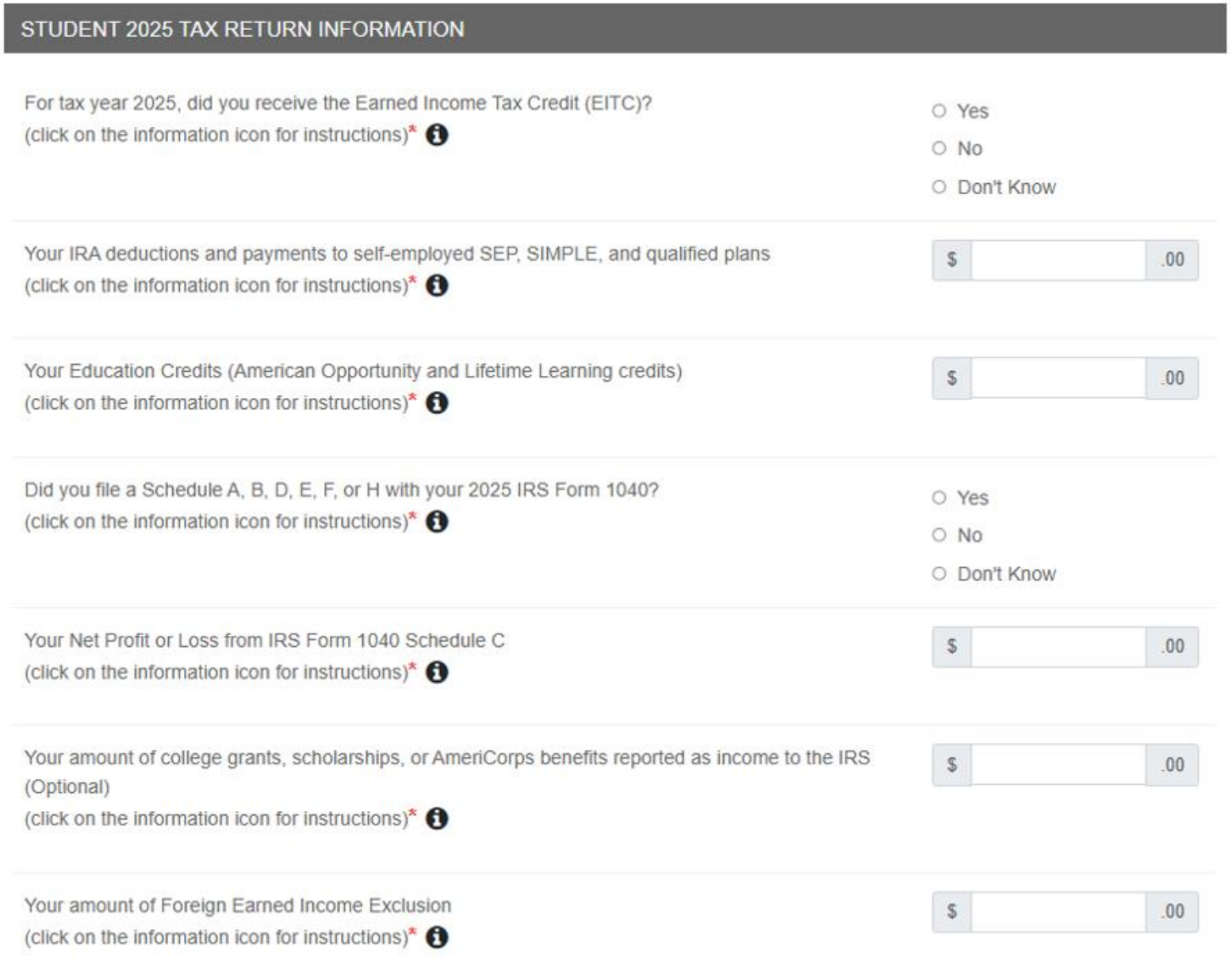
Tax Filing Status

If you indicate that you filed a 2025 tax return, you will be asked your filing status (single, married, etc.).

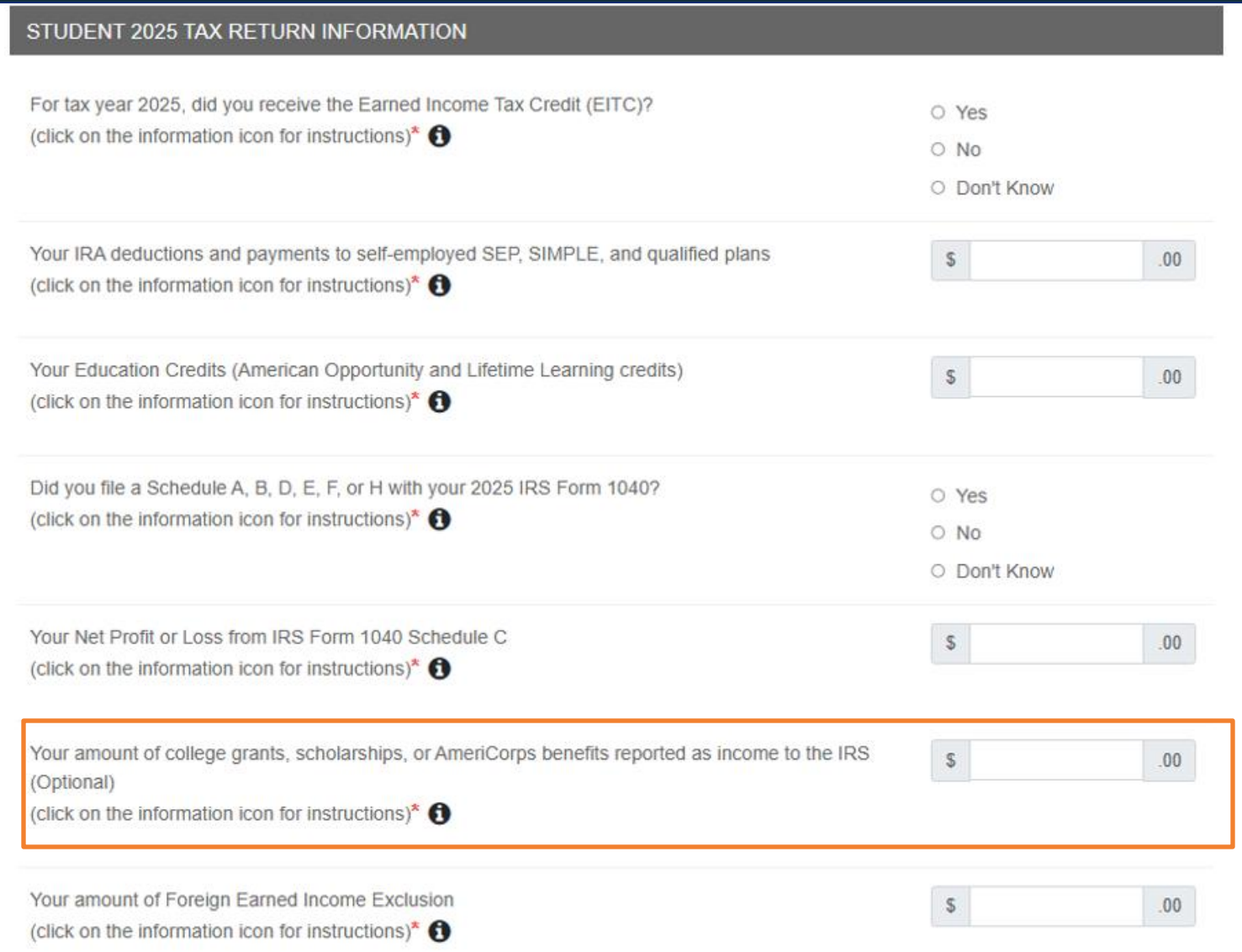


Student 2024 Tax Return Information: Tax Filers

If you indicated that you filed a tax return, you will be asked to provide information from your tax return shown here and on the following page. The help buttons provide the line on your 2025 federal income tax return where the information can be found.



Student 2024 Tax Return Information: Tax Filers (continued)

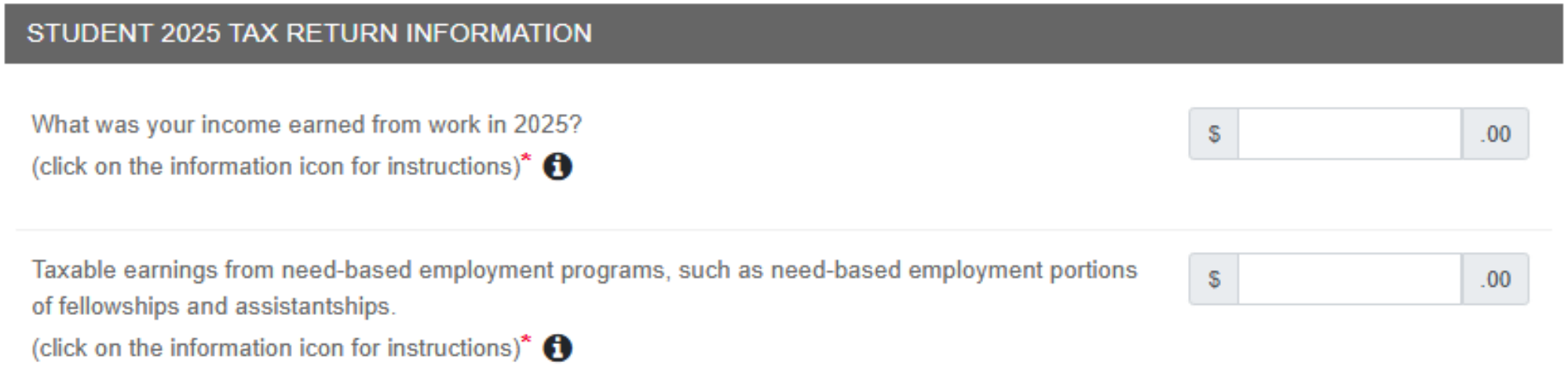


If you received college grants, scholarships, or AmeriCorps benefits in 2025 and included them on your 2025 tax return, it is important that they be reported on the CADAA. The amount reported will be **DEDUCTED** from your total income and could result in eligibility for more aid.

Student 2024 Tax Return Information: Non-Tax Filers

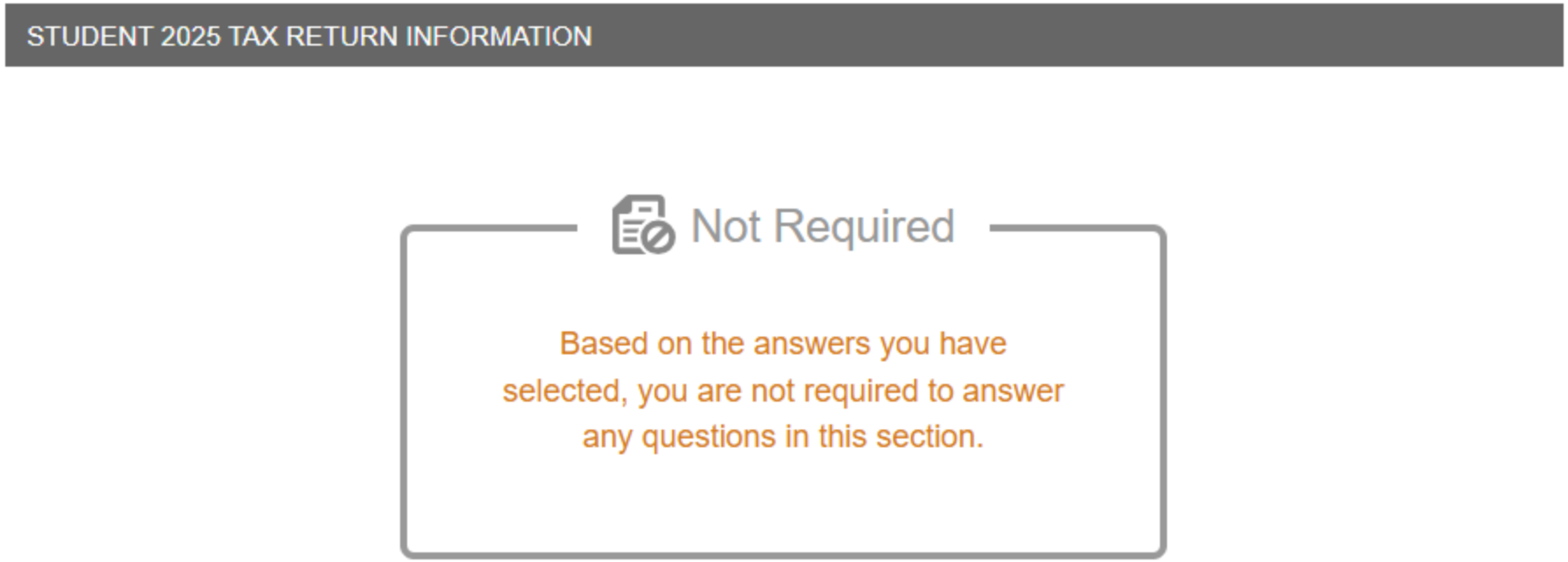
If you did not file a tax return, you will be asked the questions below. Earned income is typically defined as a combination of any income from employment and contract work. (e.g., Uber, DoorDash, etc.)

If you participated in a need-based employment program enter the amount of your earnings that was from this program. A need-based employment program is employment awarded by a school or other institution to a student based on financial need to meet educational expenses. Common examples include federal work study, fellowships, assistantships, or a learning-aligned employment program.



Student 2024 Tax Return Information: Non-Tax Filers

If you indicated that you did not file a tax return, you will then see the notice below. This section skips additional tax-related questions that are only applicable if you filed a tax return.

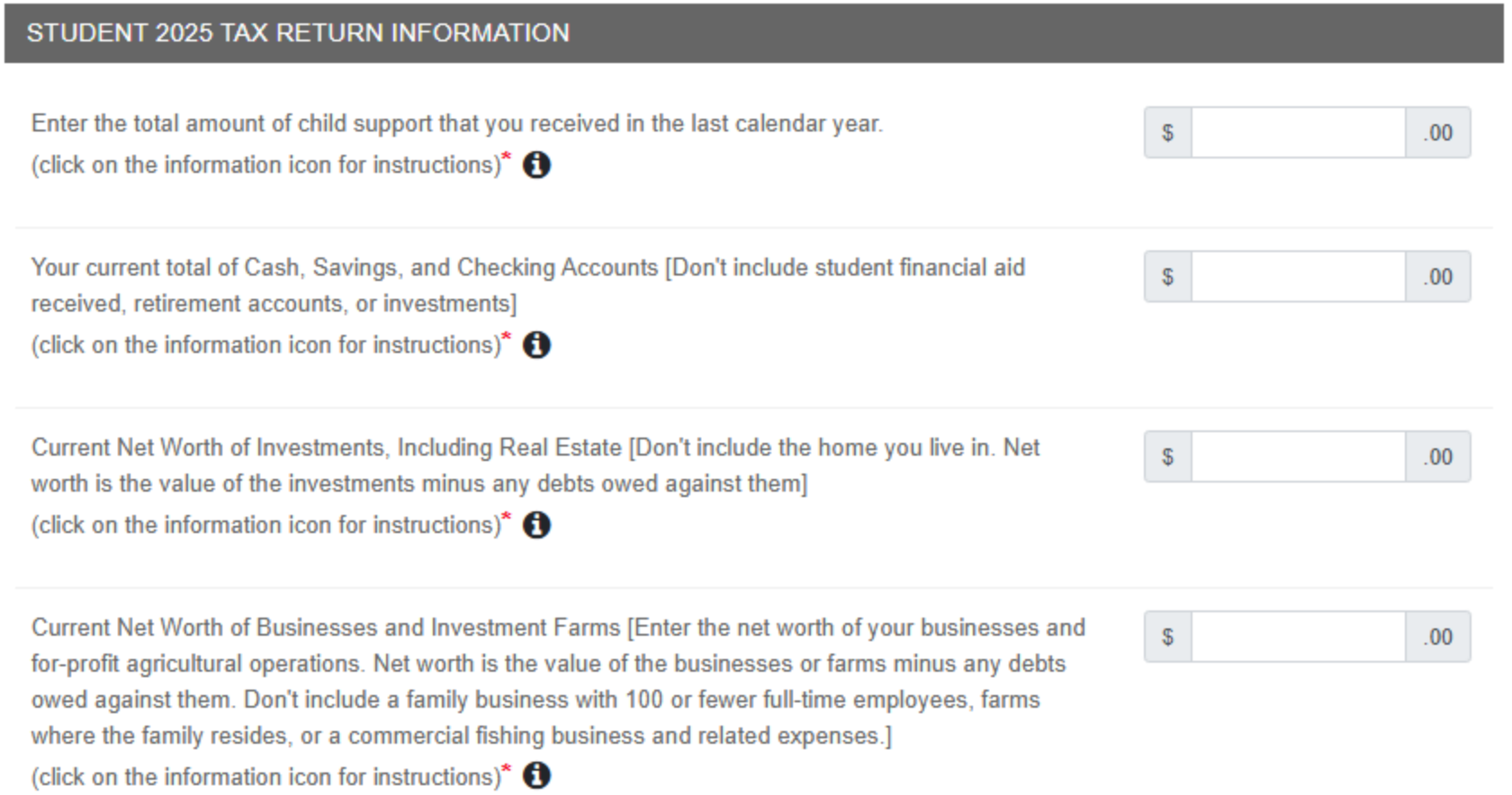


Student 2024 Tax Return Information

You will see the next set of questions whether you filed taxes or not.

When asked about current student assets, student financial aid, such as grants or scholarships received for the current term, does NOT need to be reported.

Only those assets indicated here must be reported.





If your income or circumstances have changed, submit the CADAA form and then contact your financial aid office to request an adjustment to the income that is used to calculate your eligibility.

Examples of special circumstances may include the following:

- significant changes to your financial situation, such as loss of employment or pay cuts
- tuition expenses at an elementary or secondary school
- high amounts of medical or dental expenses not covered by insurance
- a family member who recently became unemployed or furloughed
- impacted by a federally declared natural disaster such as wildfires, hurricanes, floods or tornados
- volatile income that varies from one year to the next, especially if self-employed
- other changes in income or assets that may affect your eligibility for federal student aid

Your school may ask you to document your special circumstances so that they can consider making an adjustment to your CADAA information.

8.
College Selection

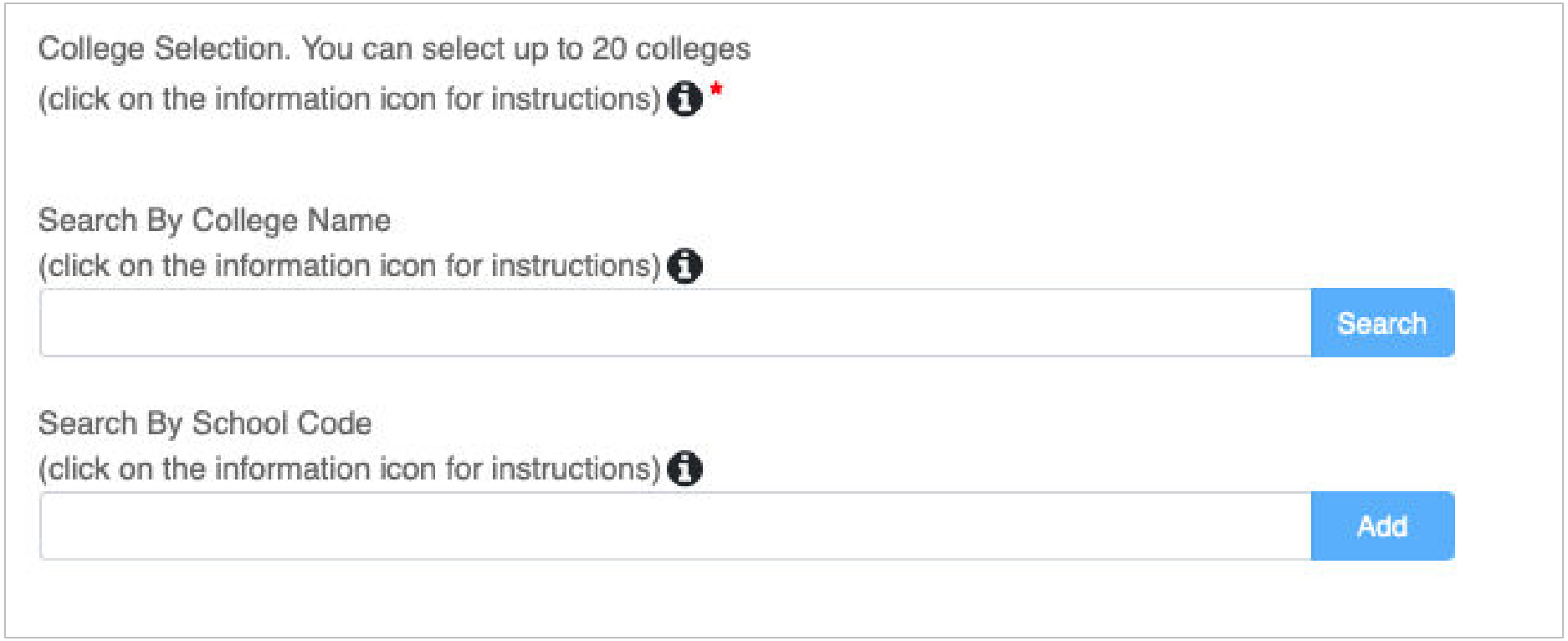
California Dream Act Service Incentive Grant (DSIG) Program

You will be asked if you are interested in being considered for the California Dream Act Service Incentive Grant (DSIG) Program. This program provides grants upon completion of community or volunteer service. Selecting "yes" does not obligate you to participate. More information is available at www.csac.ca.gov/dsig.



Student School Choices

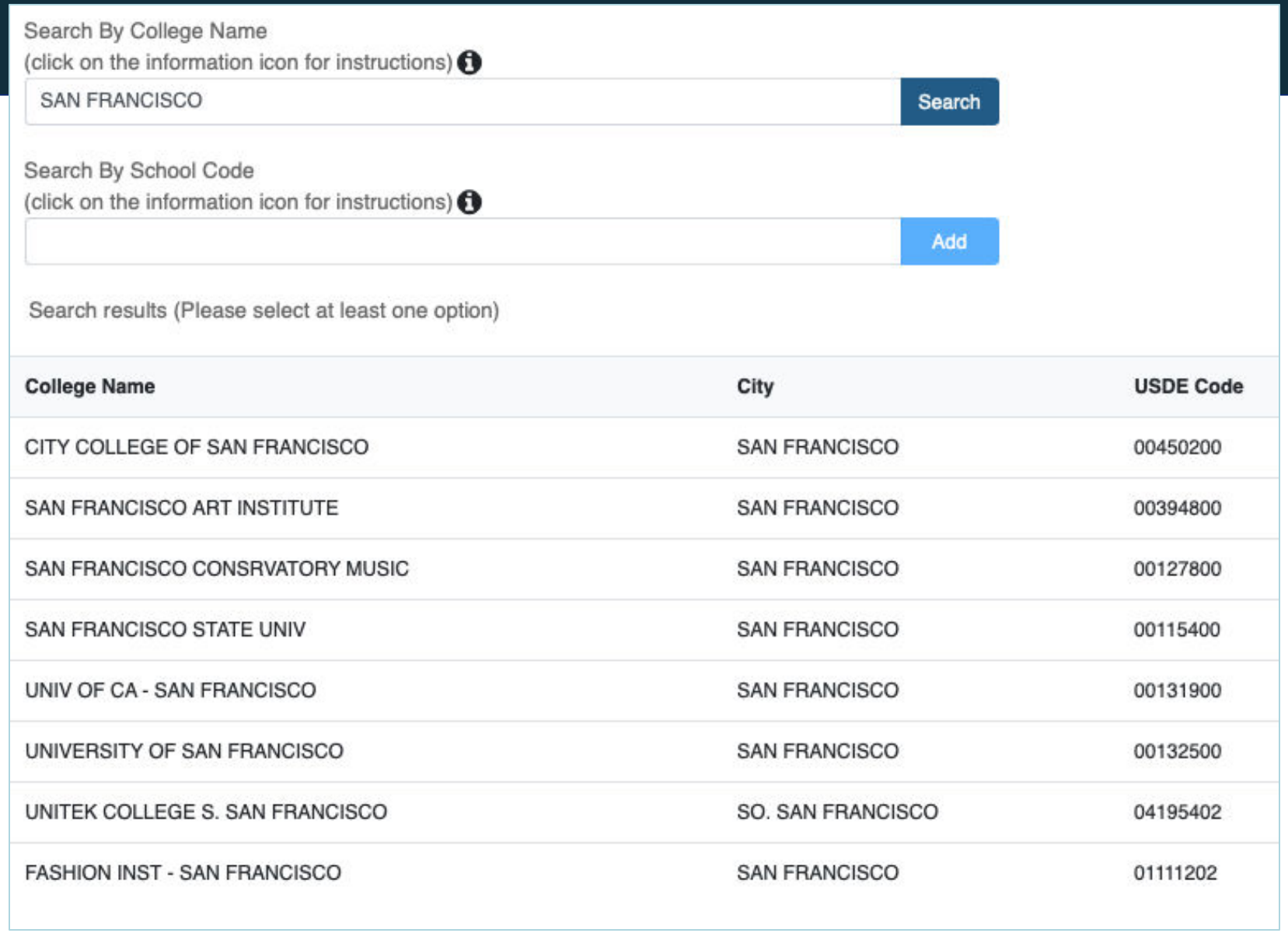
You will then indicate which college(s) you want your application sent to. You can search for a school by entering the college name or school code. The search function will look for the terms in any part of the college name.



Student School Choices

After selecting "Search," select the correct school from the search results. You can select to send your CADAA information to a maximum of 20 schools. A minimum of one school is required to proceed.

Schools may have similar names so take care to select the correct school.



College Name	City	USDE Code
CITY COLLEGE OF SAN FRANCISCO	SAN FRANCISCO	00450200
SAN FRANCISCO ART INSTITUTE	SAN FRANCISCO	00394800
SAN FRANCISCO CONSRVATORY MUSIC	SAN FRANCISCO	00127800
SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIV	SAN FRANCISCO	00115400
UNIV OF CA - SAN FRANCISCO	SAN FRANCISCO	00131900
UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO	SAN FRANCISCO	00132500
UNITEK COLLEGE S. SAN FRANCISCO	SO. SAN FRANCISCO	04195402
FASHION INST - SAN FRANCISCO	SAN FRANCISCO	01111202

Student School Choices

The colleges you select will display below the search tool. If you make a mistake, you can delete a college from the list using the icon. Each UC and CSU college must be listed separately.

Selected Colleges

College Name	USDE Code
SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIV	00115400
CITY COLLEGE OF SAN FRANCISCO	00450200
UC BERKELEY	00131200

9.

AB 540 Affidavit

AB 540 Affidavit

You will be asked a series of questions to determine if you meet the criteria for being exempt from paying non-resident tuition.

GRADUATION AND TRANSFER REQUIREMENT

The following questions part of this "AB 540 Affidavit" subsection must be completed for campuses to determine if you are AB 540 eligible and thus, be exempt from paying non-resident tuition. To learn more about the AB 540 criteria, visit https://www.csac.ca.gov/post/california-nonresident-tuition-exemption. It is recommended, although not required, that you have your transcripts and school attendance records available to accurately complete the following set of questions about your eligibility for the Non-Resident Tuition Exemption (AB 540). Please note that your college is responsible for verifying your AB 540 eligibility, which may require submission of transcripts or other documentation to determine your eligibility. Check with the college's Admissions Office after you submit your CA Dream Act Application and before the term starts.

I have graduated or will graduate (before the first term of enrollment at the college/university) with a California high school diploma or the equivalent (i.e., California-issued GED, HiSET, TASC, CPP). *

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

I completed or will complete (before the first term of enrollment at the college/university) an associate degree from a California Community College. *

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

I completed or will complete (before the first term of enrollment at the college/university) the minimum requirements at a California Community College for transfer to a California State University (CSU) or University of California (UC). *

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

AB 540 Affidavit (continued)

TIME AND COURSEWORK REQUIREMENT

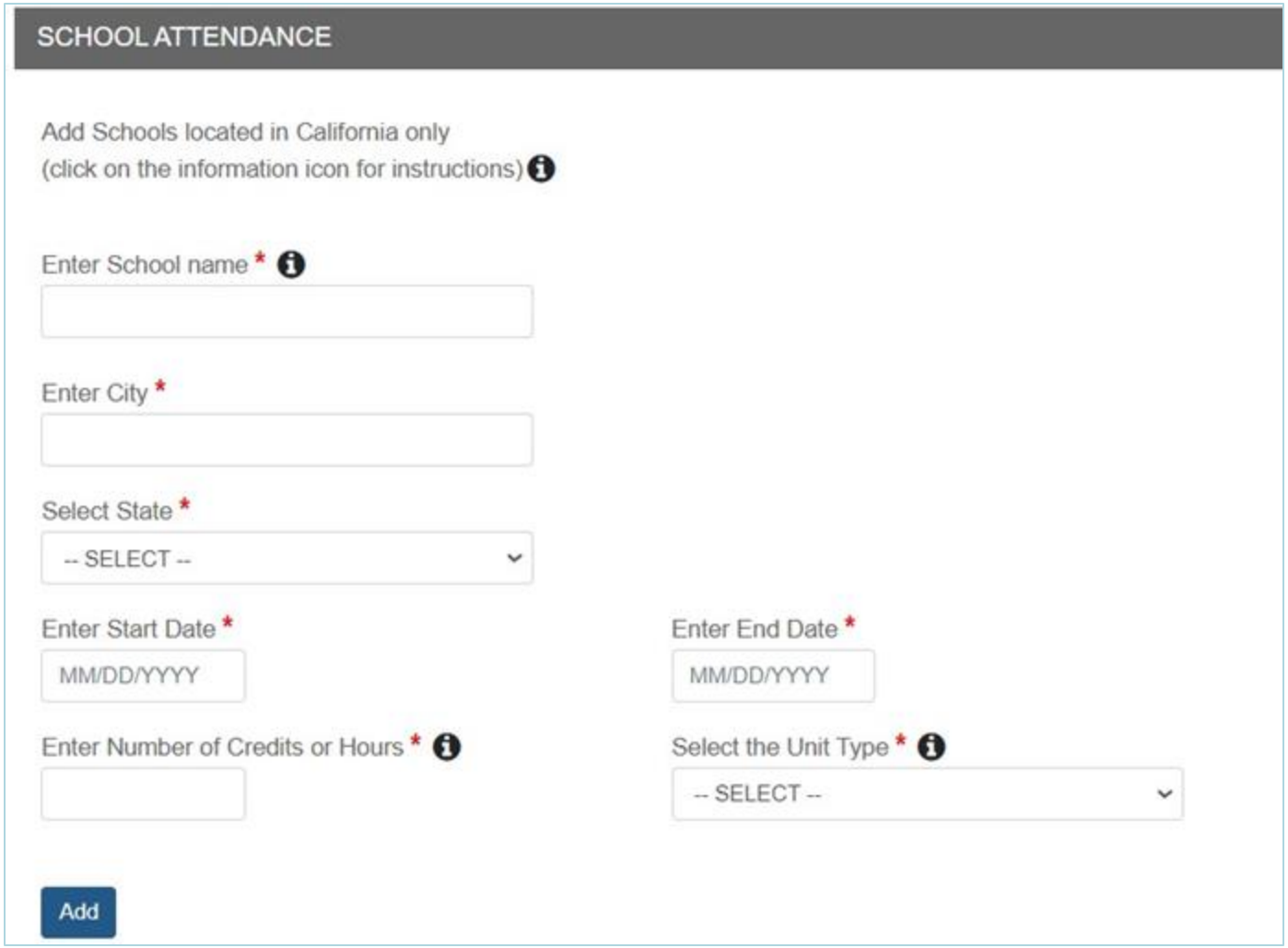
I have completed, or will complete, 3 or more years of attendance in California at any combination of elementary school, middle school or high school. *	○ Yes ○ No
I have or will have, attained credits from a California high school, equivalent to 3 or more years of full-time high school coursework and 3 or more years of attendance in a California elementary school, middle school, or high school. *	○ Yes ○ No
I have completed, or will complete, 3 or more years of full-time attendance or earned credits equivalent to 3 or more years of full-time attendance at any combination of California high schools, California adult schools or California Community Colleges. *	○ Yes ○ No

AB 540 Affidavit (continued)

You must then list every school needed to meet the requirements from the previous page, including the number of credits or hours and the unit type for each. **It is essential that you have your academic transcripts/school records available to help you answer the questions**.

Information must be entered manually (there is no search function) and so make sure to enter school names accurately.

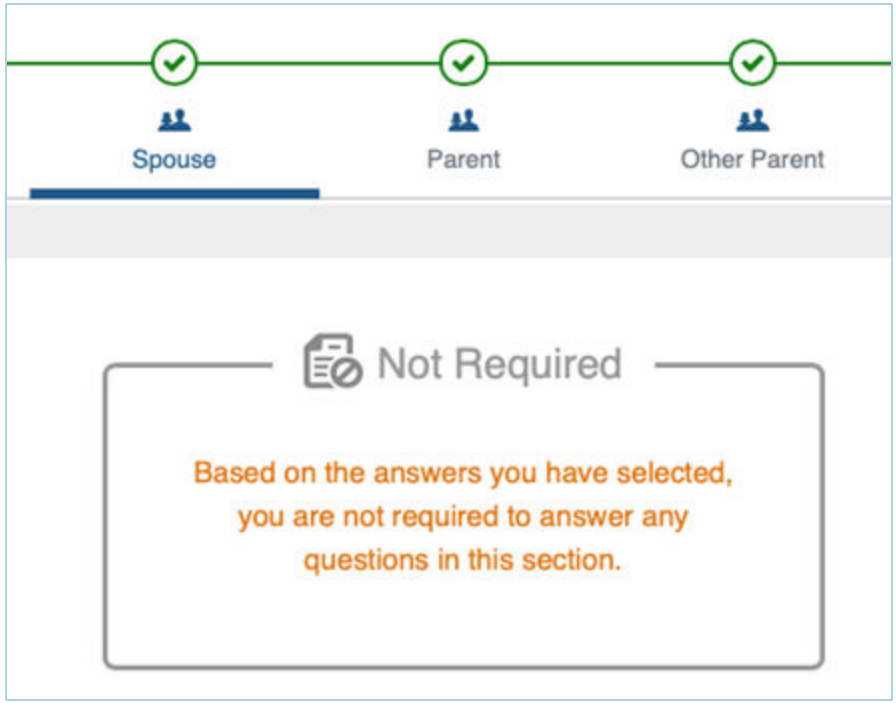
After providing the requested information, click “Add” to save the school information. You can continue to add as many schools as necessary.

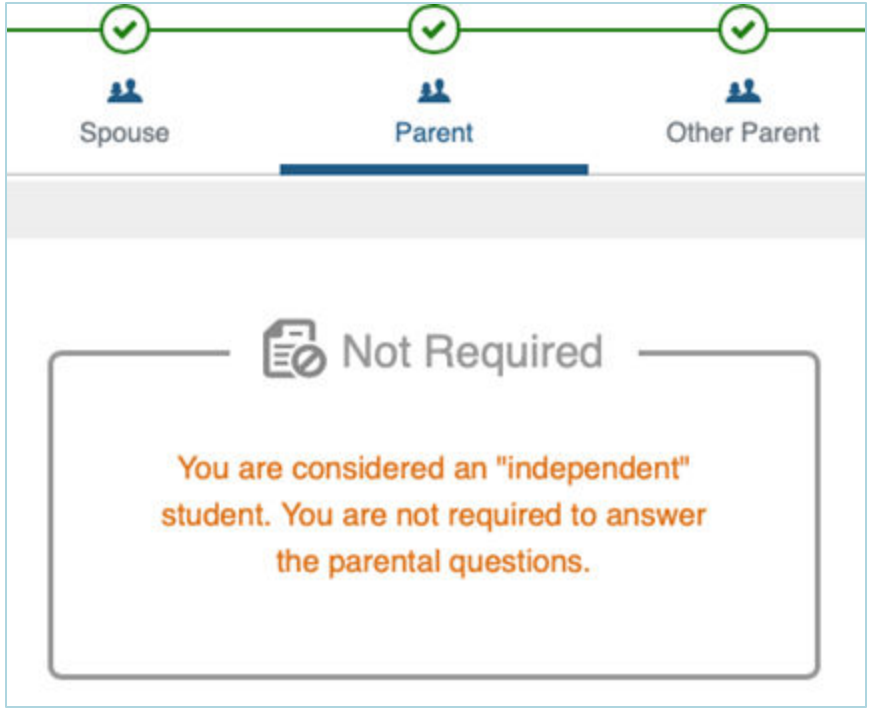


10.
Review & Signature

Spouse & Parent Information

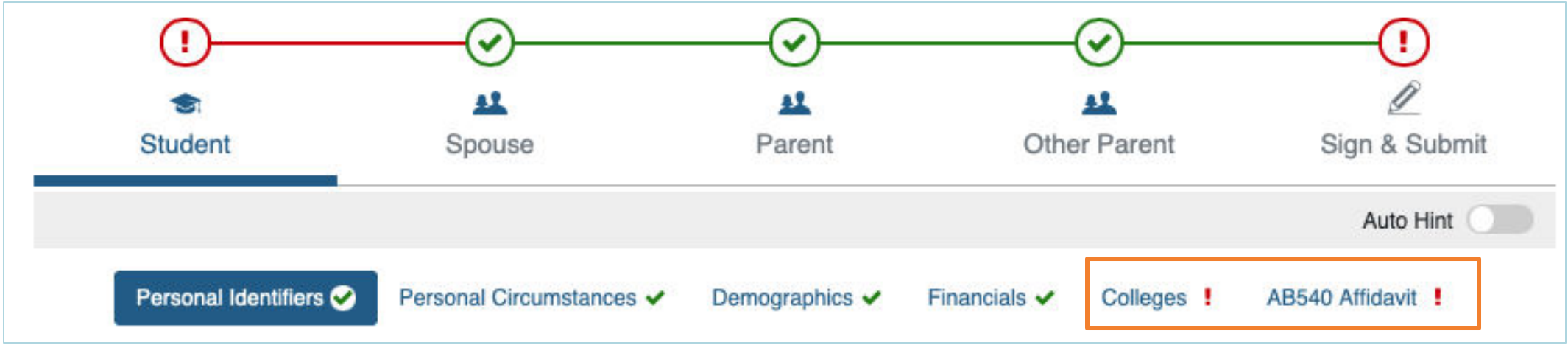
If you are an independent, unmarried student, you will see a notification that you can skip sections for spouse and parent information.





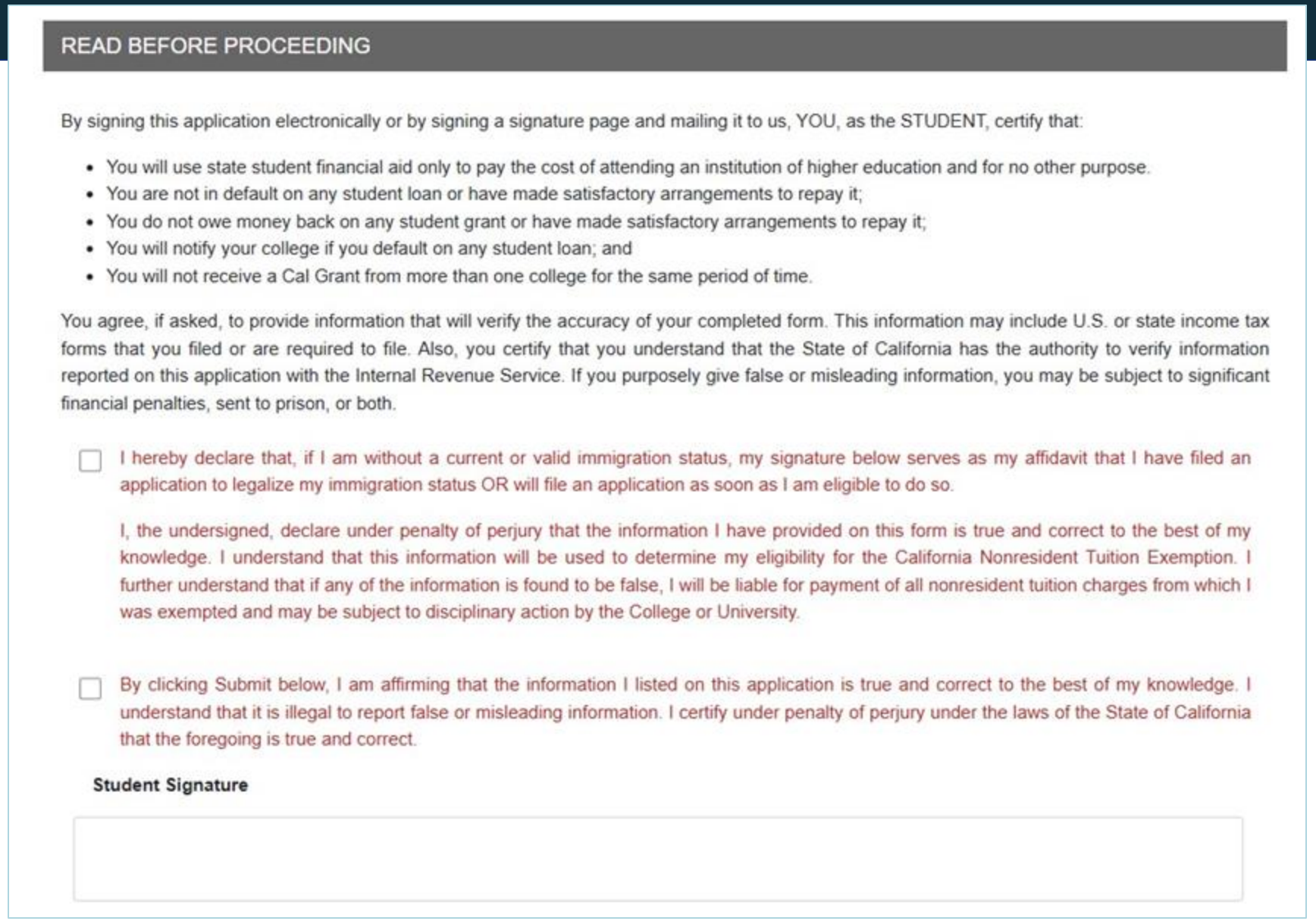
Sign & Submit

The final page consists of your signature and submission. If there is any invalid or missing data, you will need to correct the errors before you can submit the application. Any incomplete sections will be marked with a red exclamation point.



Sign & Submit

You must agree to the statements shown in red on the final screen. Once these boxes are checked, your name will appear in the signature box and you can click “Submit” to submit your application.



READ BEFORE PROCEEDING

By signing this application electronically or by signing a signature page and mailing it to us, YOU, as the STUDENT, certify that:

- You will use state student financial aid only to pay the cost of attending an institution of higher education and for no other purpose.
- You are not in default on any student loan or have made satisfactory arrangements to repay it;
- You do not owe money back on any student grant or have made satisfactory arrangements to repay it;
- You will notify your college if you default on any student loan; and
- You will not receive a Cal Grant from more than one college for the same period of time.

You agree, if asked, to provide information that will verify the accuracy of your completed form. This information may include U.S. or state income tax forms that you filed or are required to file. Also, you certify that you understand that the State of California has the authority to verify information reported on this application with the Internal Revenue Service. If you purposely give false or misleading information, you may be subject to significant financial penalties, sent to prison, or both.

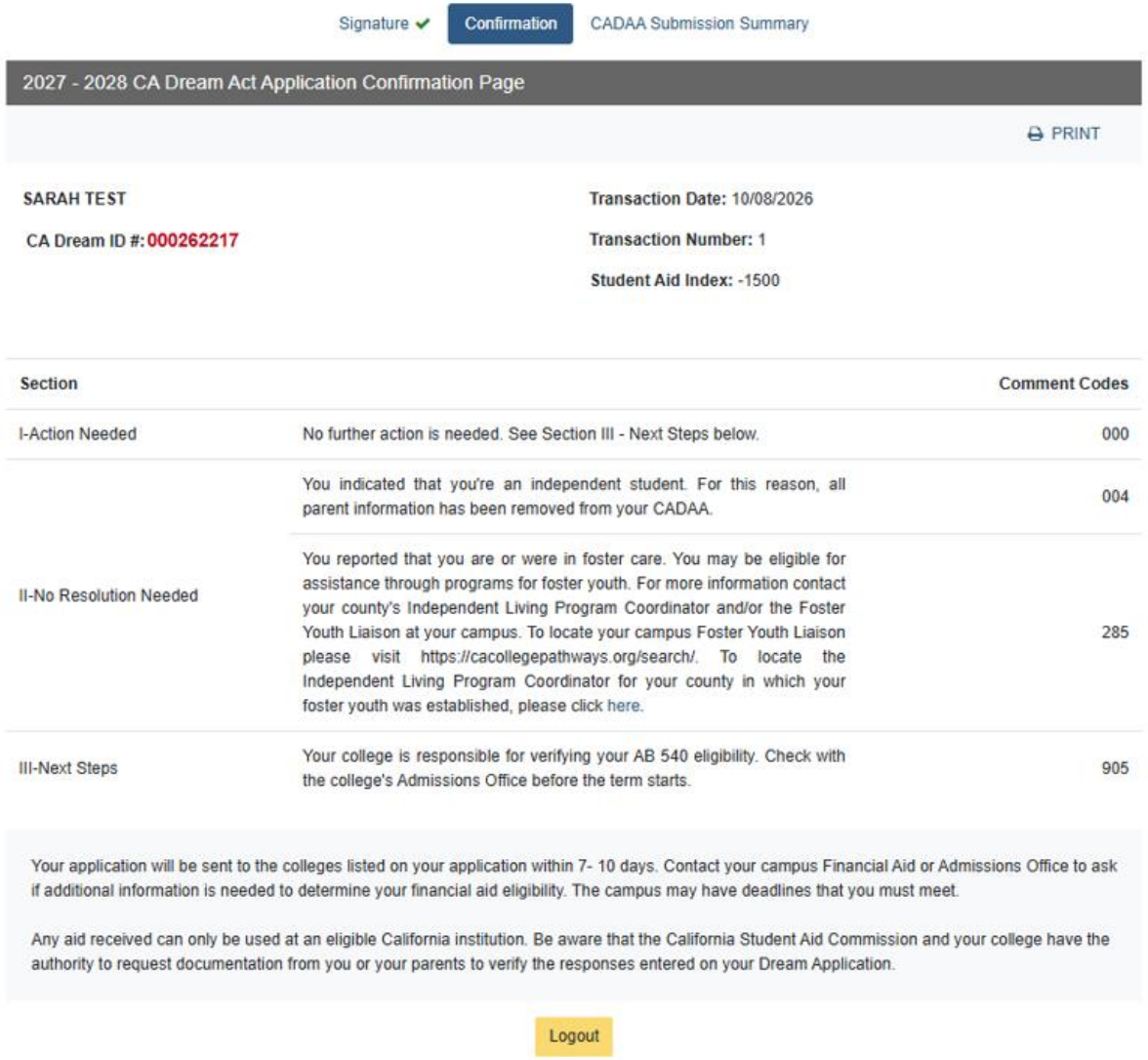
☐ I hereby declare that, if I am without a current or valid immigration status, my signature below serves as my affidavit that I have filed an application to legalize my immigration status OR will file an application as soon as I am eligible to do so.

I, the undersigned, declare under penalty of perjury that the information I have provided on this form is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand that this information will be used to determine my eligibility for the California Nonresident Tuition Exemption. I further understand that if any of the information is found to be false, I will be liable for payment of all nonresident tuition charges from which I was exempted and may be subject to disciplinary action by the College or University.

☐ By clicking Submit below, I am affirming that the information I listed on this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand that it is illegal to report false or misleading information. I certify under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct.

Student Signature

Sign & Submit



Signature ✔ | Confirmation | CADAA Submission Summary

2027 - 2028 CA Dream Act Application Confirmation Page

PRINT

SARAH TEST

CA Dream ID #: 000262217

Transaction Date: 10/08/2026

Transaction Number: 1

Student Aid Index: -1500

Section		Comment Codes
I-Action Needed	No further action is needed. See Section III - Next Steps below.	000
	You indicated that you're an independent student. For this reason, all parent information has been removed from your CADAA.	004
II-No Resolution Needed	You reported that you are or were in foster care. You may be eligible for assistance through programs for foster youth. For more information contact your county's Independent Living Program Coordinator and/or the Foster Youth Liaison at your campus. To locate your campus Foster Youth Liaison please visit https://cacollegepathways.org/search/. To locate the Independent Living Program Coordinator for your county in which your foster youth was established, please click here.	285
III-Next Steps	Your college is responsible for verifying your AB 540 eligibility. Check with the college's Admissions Office before the term starts.	905

Your application will be sent to the colleges listed on your application within 7- 10 days. Contact your campus Financial Aid or Admissions Office to ask if additional information is needed to determine your financial aid eligibility. The campus may have deadlines that you must meet.

Any aid received can only be used at an eligible California institution. Be aware that the California Student Aid Commission and your college have the authority to request documentation from you or your parents to verify the responses entered on your Dream Application.

Logout

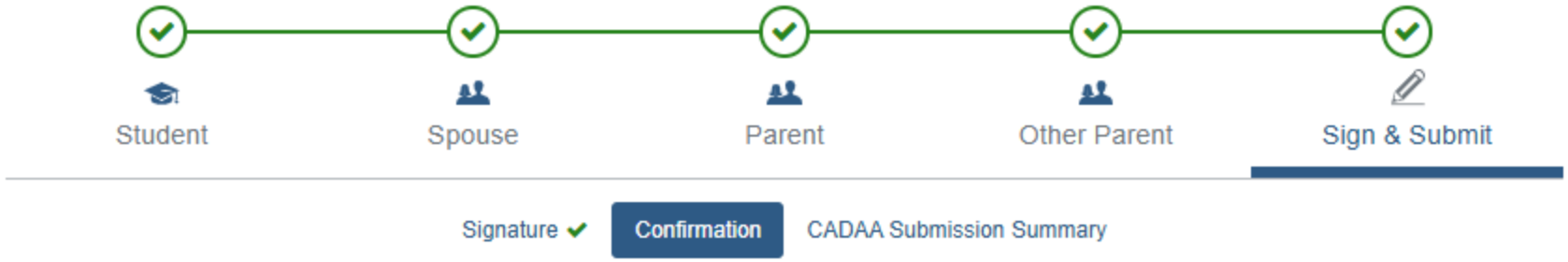
- Once you have submitted your application, you will see a Confirmation Page that shows that your CADAA has been submitted. You will also receive an email confirmation that your CADAA was submitted.
- It provides your CA Dream ID number and the date the CADAA was submitted.
- Save or print a copy of the Confirmation Page.
- **The Confirmation Page may identify actions you will need to take to ensure that your Dream Act eligibility can be determined. Pay close attention to any items that require follow-up.**

Sign & Submit

- Within 24 hours from when you submit your application, a California Student Aid Report (Cal SAR) will be available. The Cal SAR summarizes the information you submitted on the CADAA. Review it to confirm that there aren't any errors.

- After your CADAA is processed, the Cal SAR will include your Student Aid Index (SAI). The SAI is used to determine eligibility for student aid. It is not how much aid you are eligible to receive.

- Save or print a copy of the Cal SAR.



11.
After the CADAA

Apply for a Chafee Grant, if Eligible

- Eligibility: Current or former foster youth who were dependents or wards of the court at least one day between 16-18
- Up to $4,500 for up to 5 years until age 26.
- Can be used at public or private colleges, universities or career and technical schools in California or out of state.
- Must be enrolled at least half-time.





Chafee Grant Application Tips

- A separate application is required for first-time applicants in addition to the FAFSA/CADAA (**chafee.csac.ca.gov**).
- **You only need to fill out the Chafee application once.**
- Apply as soon as possible.
- Planned School of Attendance refers to one college the student plans to attend. If the school isn't listed, contact CSAC. If the school changes, the student must inform CSAC to receive the award.
- Depending on the availability of funding, students may be wait-listed.



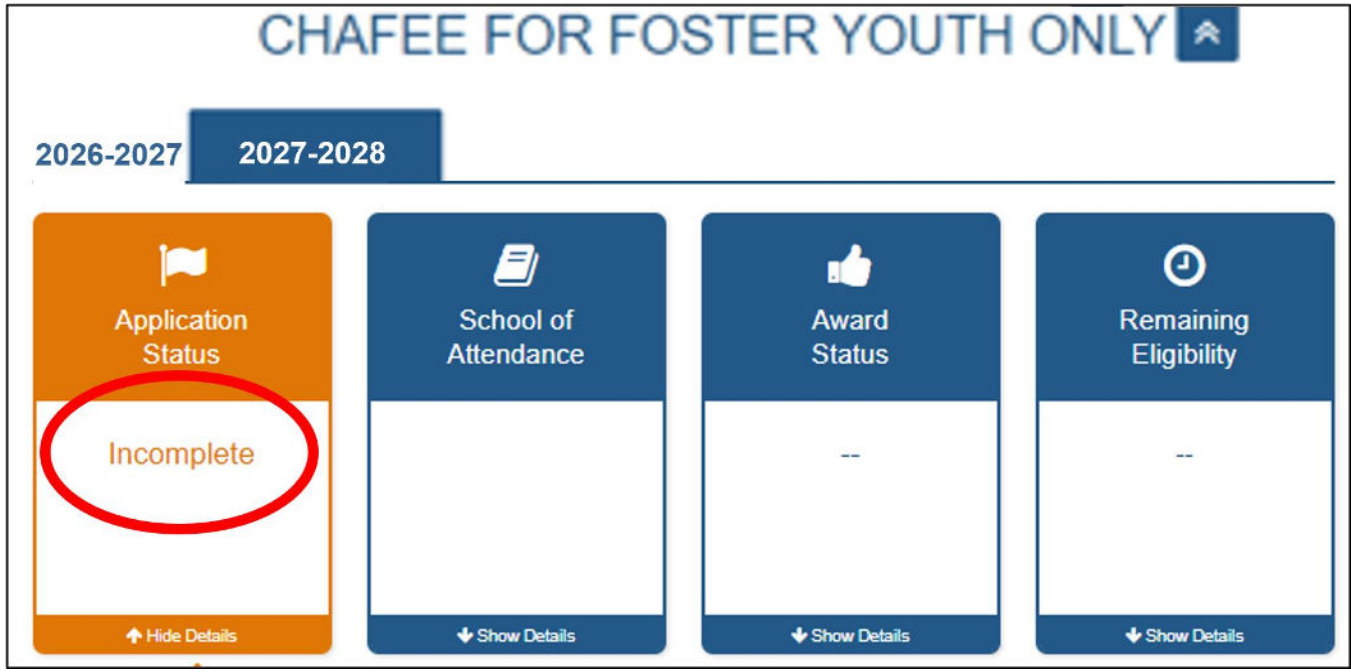
Create a Webgrants 4 Students Account at:

mygrantinfo.csac.ca.gov

- Wait until your CADAA is processed. It can take 1-2 weeks for the CADAA to process and link to WebGrants.
- If there are issues, contact the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC):
  - (888) 224-7268 or 1-800-735-2929 (TTY)
  - studentsupport@csac.ca.gov

WebGrants To Do's for Students

1. Check award status for Cal Grant, Middle Class Scholarship and Chafee Grant.
2. Verify if there are any "pending" items or forms that still need to be completed.
3. Confirm that school of attendance is accurate.
4. Verify that your GPA has been received. If not, contact high school/college counselor or CSAC.
5. Enter high school graduation date (available on the 1st day of the month of graduation month).
6. If you applied for a Chafee Grant, check that "Department of Social Services Record" is verified.



If your status shows incomplete on your Chafee Grant application, select "show details" to see what is missing (see next page).

WebGrants 4 Students: Check Your Chafee Grant Application Status

In the example shown here two of the three items are not completed

- FAFSA or CADAA **NOT** submitted
- Chafee application submitted
- Verification of foster youth status **NOT** completed*



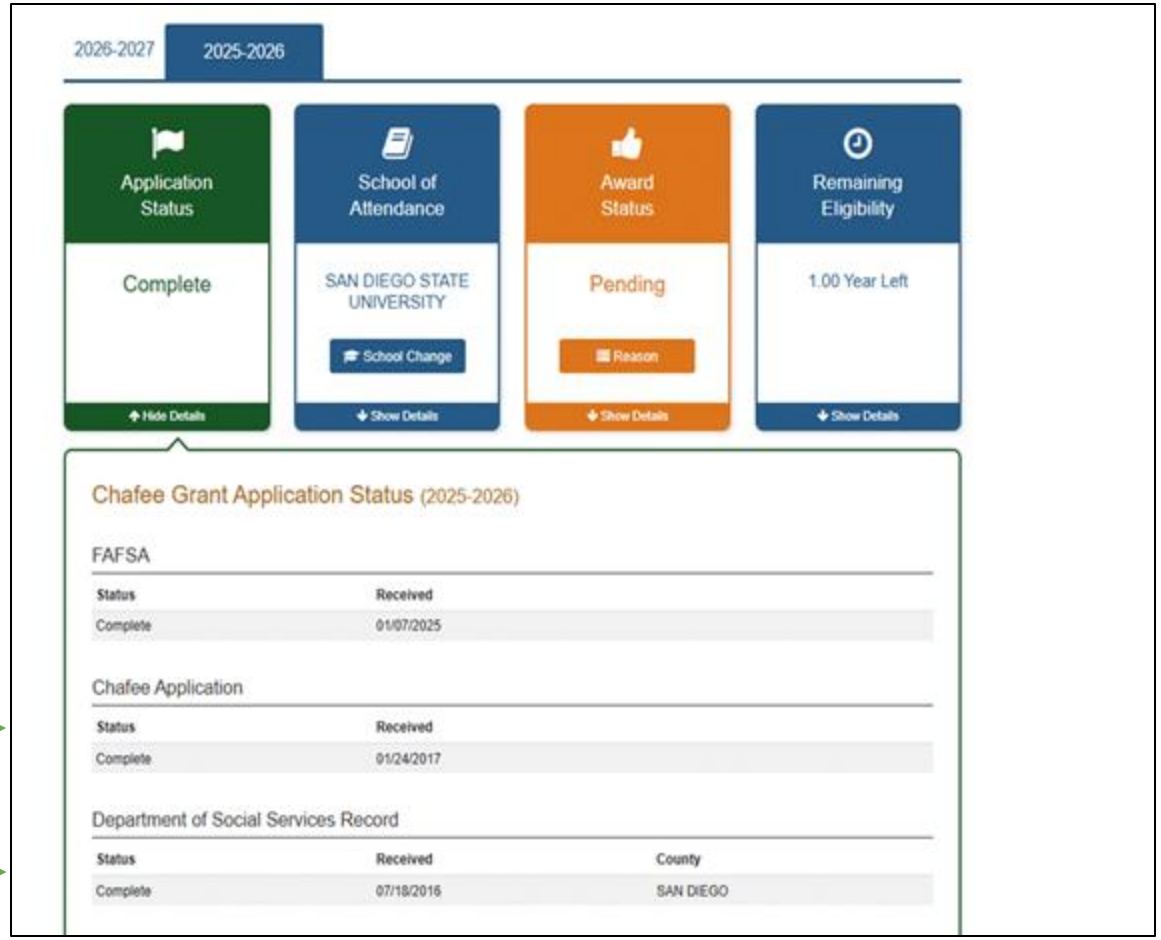
**There is an automated match with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to verify foster youth status, however this match only happens monthly and may not appear immediately. If the match is not successful, you must manually submit the Certification Form.*

WebGrants 4 Students: Check Your Chafee Application Status

COMPLETED Chafee Application:

The application will show as green when all three steps are complete but the award status can still be pending or now awarded:

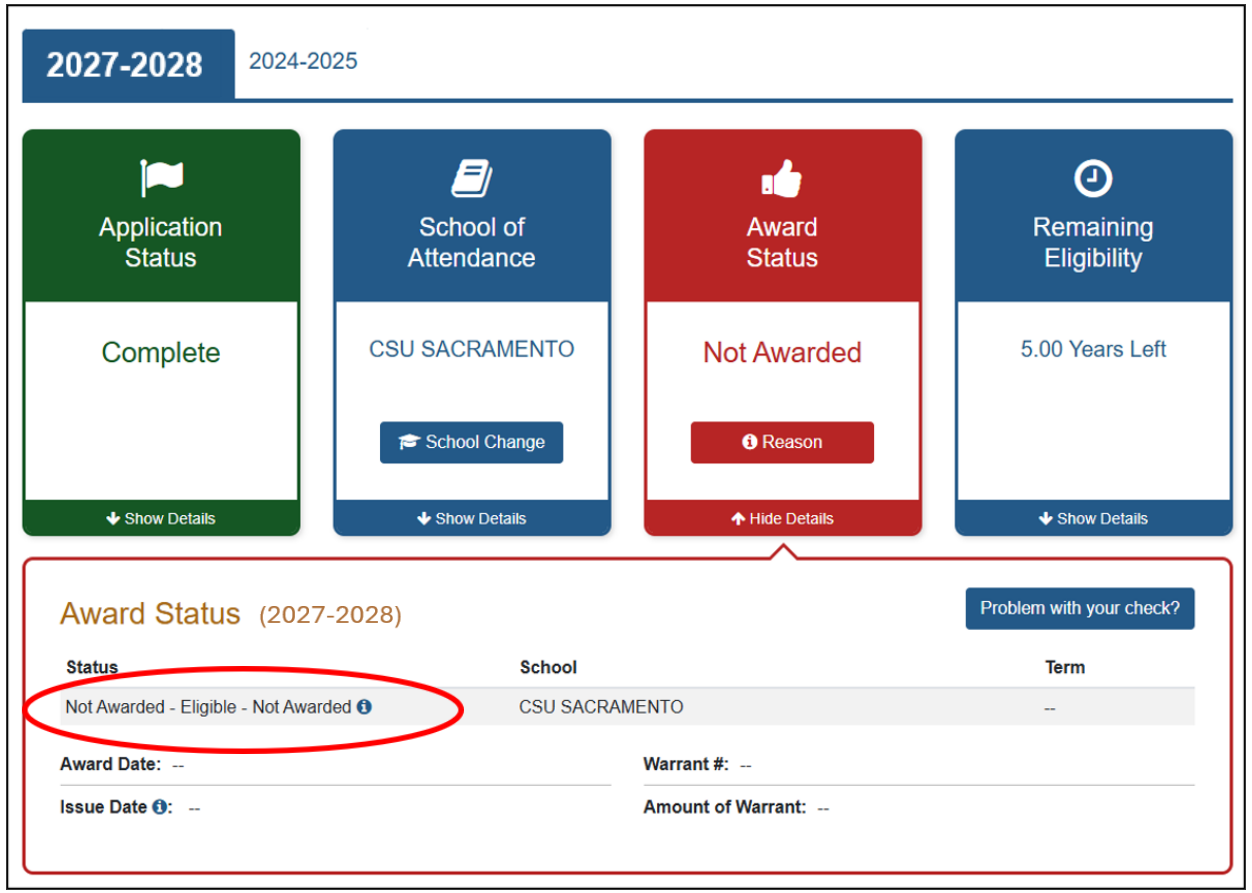
- FAFSA or CADAA submitted
- Chafee application submitted
- Verification of foster youth status completed



WebGrants 4 Students: Check Your Award Status

Award Status: Not Awarded – Eligible

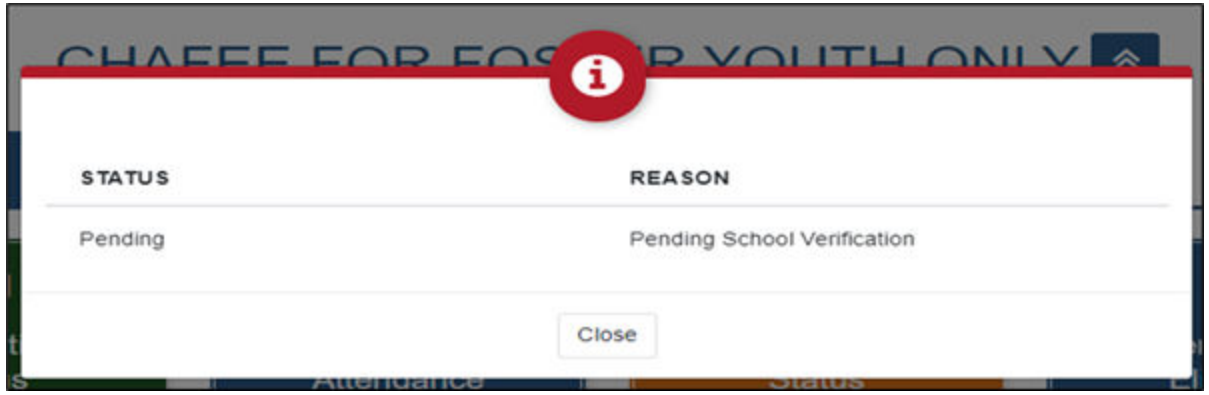
"Not Awarded – Eligible" means the student is wait listed until funding becomes available.



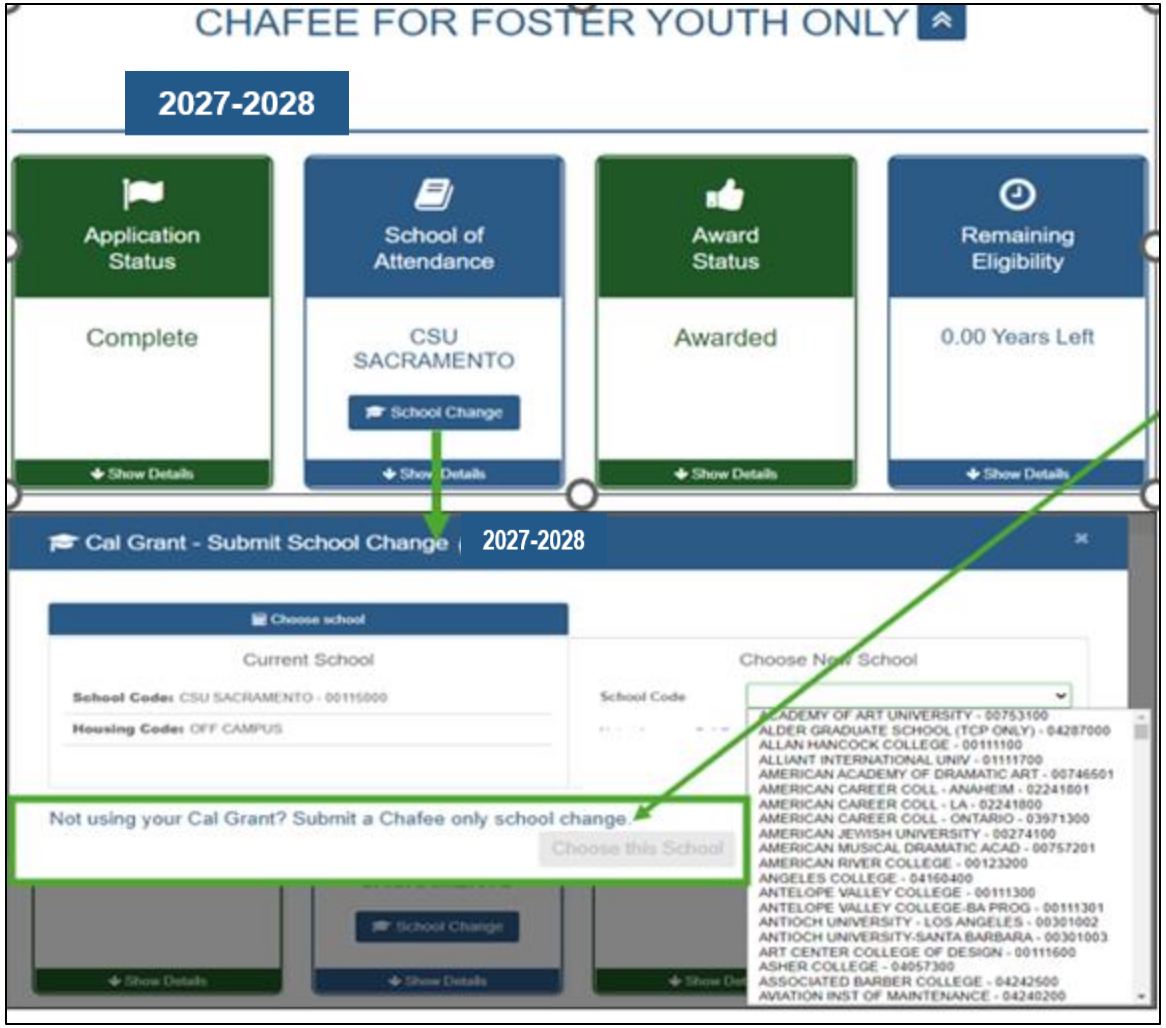
WebGrants 4 Students: Check Your Award Status

An application can be complete, but the award status can be “pending.” “Pending” means that an action step needs to be taken by the college or by the student before a payment can be reported. In this example, the college still needs to verify student eligibility.





WebGrants 4 Students: Update School of Attendance



- In order to receive state financial aid, including the Chafee Grant and Cal Grant, you must update your planned "School of Attendance"

- For the Chafee Grant only, if the school you plan to attend does not populate (most likely in scenarios with out-of-state schools), please email: chafee@csac.ca.gov. CSAC will need:
  - Proof of enrollment
  - Name and address of school
  - Financial Aid contact info: Name, email, phone

Claim Your CalKIDS Award

CalKIDS
California Kids Investment and Development Savings Program

- CalKIDS is a scholarship that may be available from the State of California.
- If you attended a California public K-12 school, you may have up to $1,500 in free money to use at an eligible college, university, technical or vocational institution.
- Once funds are requested, they are sent to your institution and treated like a scholarship. They can pay for qualified higher education expenses like tuition and fees, books and supplies and computer equipment. You can use these funds up to the age of 26.
- In addition, there are 15 locally operated programs similar to CalKIDS. To see if you qualify go to norcalpromisecoalition.org/child-savings-accounts.

Claim Your CalKIDS Scholarship



To claim your account at **calkids.org**, you'll need the following info:

1. California county where you attended school.
2. Your date of birth.
3. Statewide Student Identifier (SSID). You can find your SSID on your high school transcript or ask your counselor for help.

Webgrants 4 Students: CalKIDS Update!

All students who have a WG4S account and a matched CalKIDS account in their name will see a new section for CalKIDS on the WG4S portal. An account status saying “Claimed” means the CalKIDS Scholarship has been claimed.

Data is updated monthly and the account may say “unclaimed” if it has yet to update to “claimed” status.



CalKIDS
California Kids Investment and Development Savings Program

Webgrants 4 Students: CalKIDS Update!

An account status saying “Unclaimed” means the CalKIDS Scholarship has not yet been claimed.

A link will appear and this will direct you to claiming your CalKIDS Scholarship, which only takes a few minutes.



CalKIDS
California Kids Investment and Development Savings Program

Congrats! You Did It!

Remember:

- Continue to check your email and college student portal weekly. The college will communicate with you if they need more information. Even after college starts, continue to check it often.
- Respond promptly to any information requests, such as a verification of foster youth or homeless youth status or additional income verification.
- Update all your accounts if your address, email or phone number changes (e.g. WebGrants, college portal, CADAA, etc.)
- Apply for other scholarships and campus support programs such as NextUp, Guardian Scholars, EOP, EOPS, or Disability Student Services.
- Maintain your grades and don't drop too many classes. Once you receive financial aid, there are academic requirements you need to meet to keep receiving it. Check online for your college's "Satisfactory Academic Progress" policies.
- Re-apply for aid by submitting the CADAA every year!

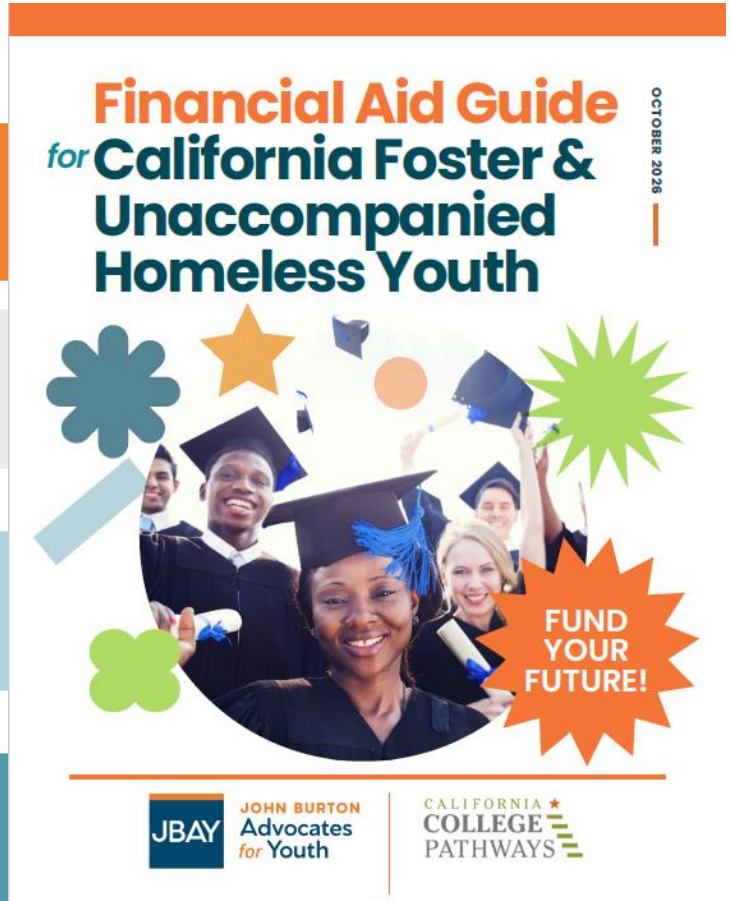
12. Resources

Help with the CADAA

- Live Help built into CADAA (Turn on “Auto Hint”)
- California Student Aid Commission (CSAC)
  - 1-888-CA-GRANT (1-888-224-7268)
  - If hearing impaired: 1-800-735-2929 (TTY) or 1-800-735-2922 (Voice)
  - StudentSupport@csac.ca.gov
  - CADAA Video Trainings & Resources
- IRS Get a Tax Return Transcript: 1-800-908-9946

JBAY Financial Aid Resources

- Financial Aid Guide (English & Spanish)
- FAFSA/CADAA Visual Guides
- High School Counselor Toolkits
- FAFSA/CADAA Overview Webinar Recording



https://jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide/

JBAY's Step-by-Step Postsecondary Education Planning Guides for Foster Youth

jbay.org/resources/ed-planning-guide/

- Available in English and Spanish for adult supporters of youth in grades 6-12 and for youth in grades 9-12.
- Includes downloadable checklists & student spotlight videos!

Visit **cacollegepathways.org** for comprehensive college planning information for current and former foster youth.



Resources for Homeless Youth

- School House Connection

www.schoolhouseconnection.org/CADAA/

✓ Sample Verification Letters
✓ Screening tools
✓ Flowcharts
✓ And more!

- National Center for Homeless Education

nche.ed.gov/higher-education/

Other Resources

- ICanGoToCollege.com
  ICanGoToCollege.com
- National College Attainment Network
  www.ncan.org/page/better-CADAA
- Financial Aid for Justice-Involved Youth
  https://www.ylc.org/financial-aid-guide-for-youth-with-juvenile-justice-involvement
- Immigrants Rising
  immigrantsrising.org

Resources for Undocumented Students

CSAC Resources: www.csac.ca.gov/undocumented-dreamer-students

Immigrants Rising: immigrantsrising.org

Golden Door Scholars: www.campusreel.org/scholarship/road-to-hire-scholarship

MALDEF: www.maldef.org/resources/scholarship-resources/

Resources for Undocumented Students

Cal State University (CSU) resources:
calstate.edu/attend/student-services/resources-for-undocumented-students

University of California (UC) resources: undoc.universityofcalifornia.edu

California Community College (CCC) resources:
cccco.edu/Students/Support-Services/Special-population/Undocumented-Students

John Burton Advocates for Youth

(415) 348-0011 | info@jbay.org | jbay.org

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