Completing the FAFSA:

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

JBAY
JOHN BURTON Advocates for Youth

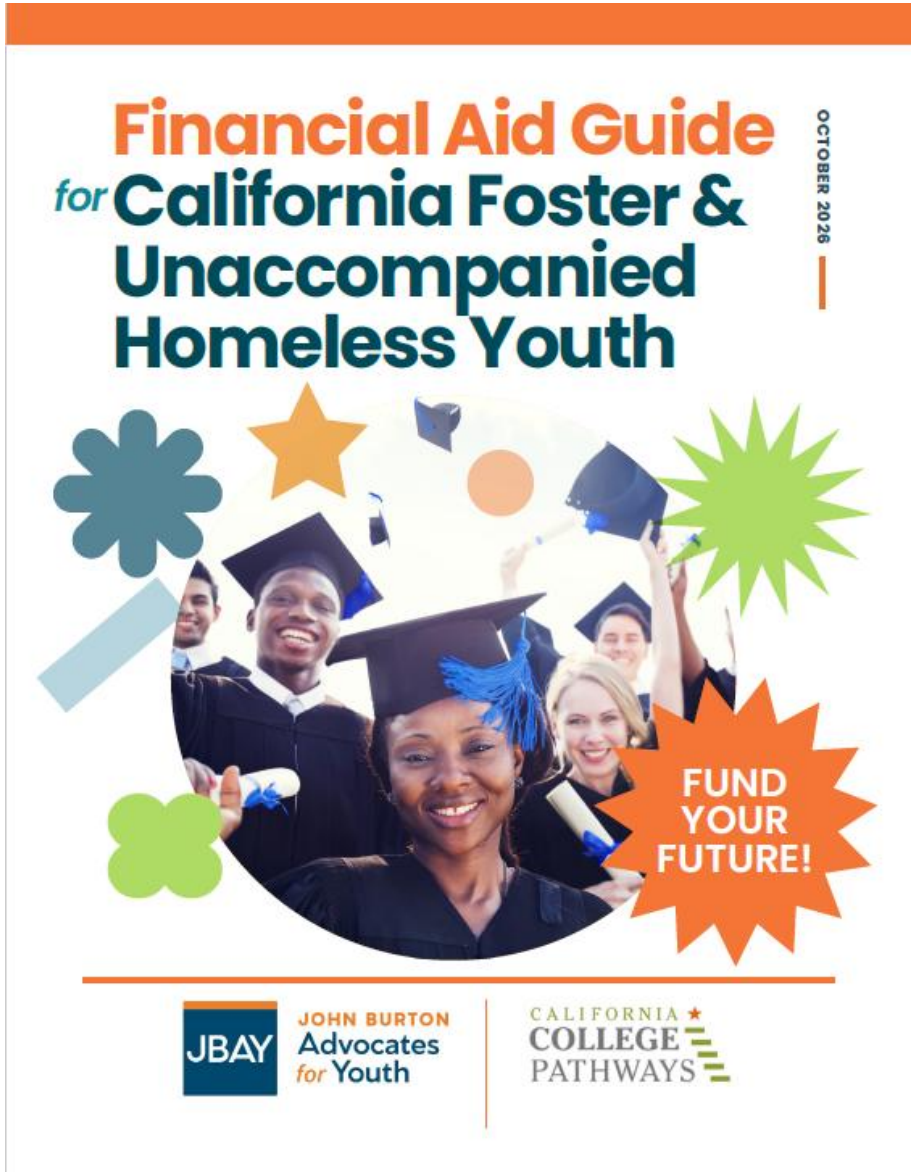
October 2026

This Guide is intended to complement the *Financial Aid Guide for California Foster and Unaccompanied Homeless Youth* with screen shots of the online Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and detailed step-by-step instructions for youth who have been in the foster care system or experienced homelessness.

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

While this guide strives to be as accurate as possible, if you find an error, please let JBAY know at info@jbay.org and a revision will be issued as needed.

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



Who Should Use This Guide

This guide is intended for youth who have experienced foster care or been homeless as an unaccompanied youth in California who qualify for “Independent Student Status” on the FAFSA. 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 meet the criteria as a foster youth or unaccompanied homeless youth, 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 FAFSA do not alone qualify as unusual circumstances.

If a student is undocumented, including DACA recipients, they should fill out the California Dream Act Application (CADAA) at dream.csac.ca.gov instead of the FAFSA even if the student was granted a temporary Social Security Number as a DACA recipient. A Visual Guide of the CADAA is available at jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide.

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1.

How to Apply for Financial Aid

FAFSA Eligibility

- The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is available to U.S. Citizens, permanent residents or other eligible non-citizens* and is used to apply for both Federal and State aid.

- Qualified undocumented students or those with Temporary Protected Status (TPS) or a U Visa should apply instead using the California Dream Act Application (CADAA).** A visual guide for completing the CADAA is available at jbay.org/resources/financial-aid-guide.

*See https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/non-us-citizens for details
** See https://www.csac.ca.gov/post/california-nonresident-tuition-exemption for details

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.*

Creating a Federal Student Aid (FSA) ID is Required

An FSA ID is a username and password combination you use to log in to U.S. Department of Education (ED) online systems. **An FSA ID is issued immediately upon application submission.**

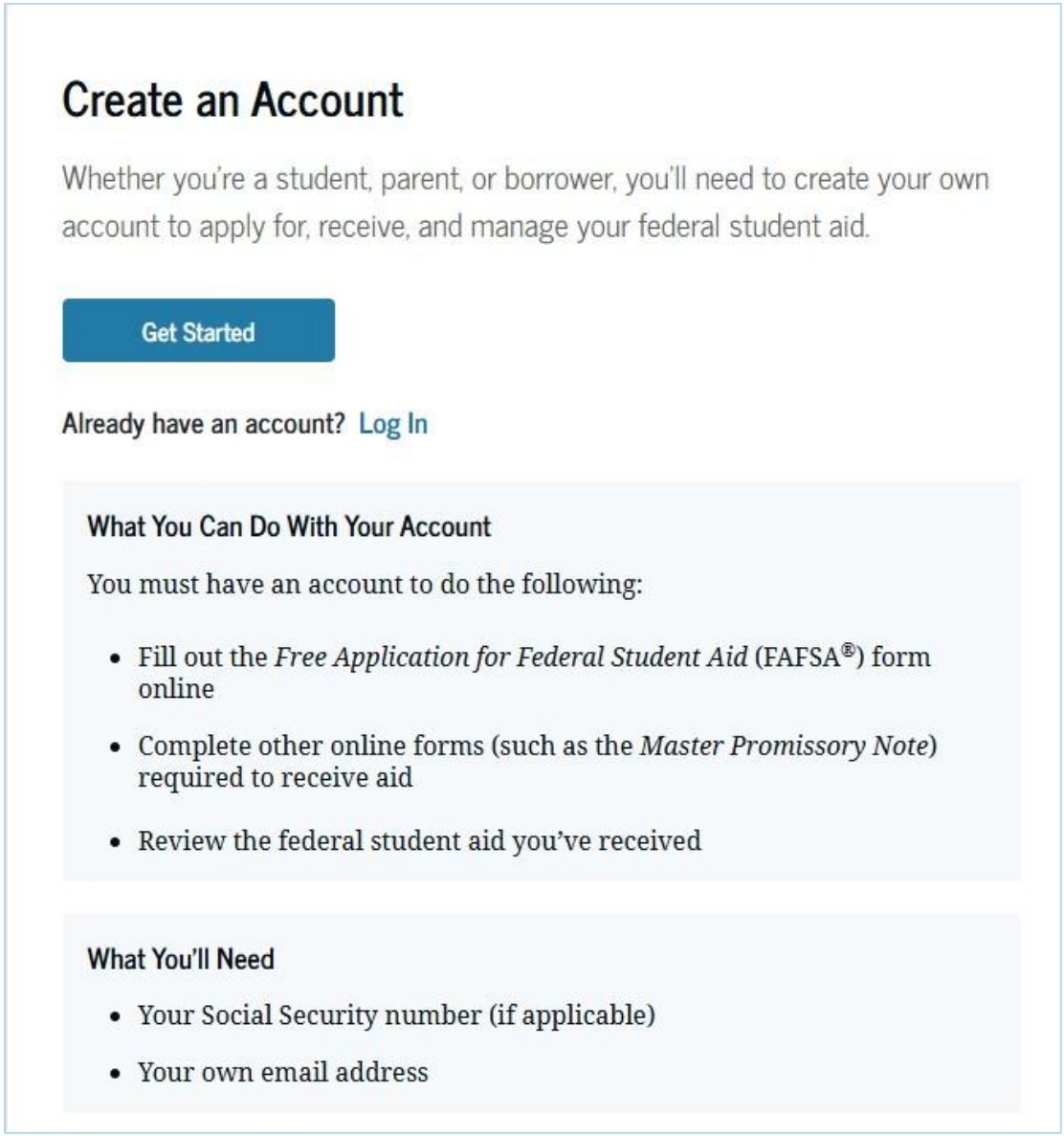
TIPS

- You will be asked to provide an email address. Providing a mobile phone number is recommended to easily reset your password.
- You will be asked to provide your social security number, if applicable.
- Enter your legal name exactly as it appears on Social Security Card.
- Students can use an existing FSA ID but will need to verify the phone number and/or email address on file.
- Students should create a system to safely store their username and password and not use high school emails accounts that may expire.

How to Create an FSA ID

Go to studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account/launch

Select “Get Started”



FSA ID: Step 1

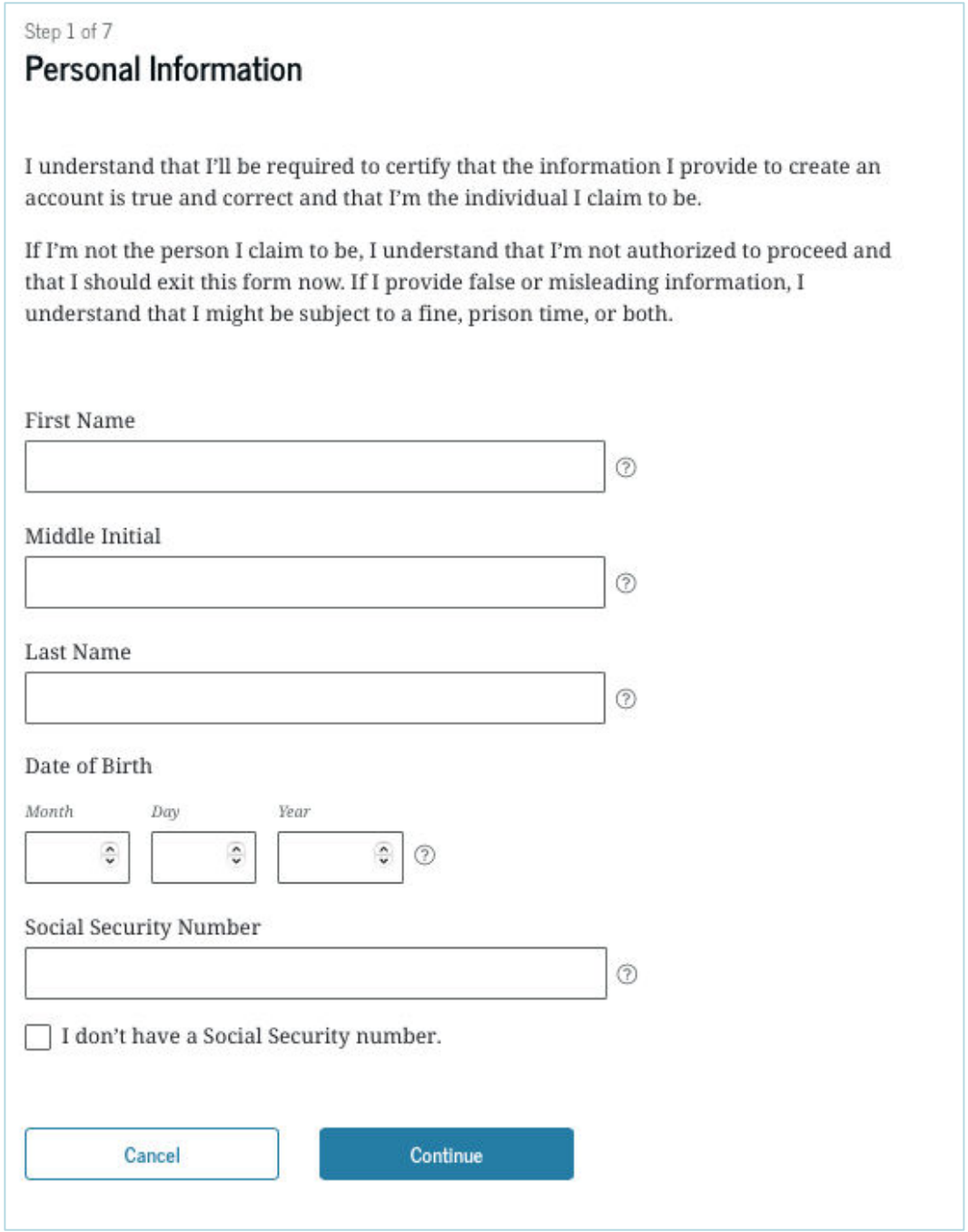
Enter your legal name and Social Security Number (SSN) exactly as they appear on your Social Security Card.

If you don't know your SSN, a parent or guardian, social worker or current or former employer may have the number. If you still can't find it, you will need to request a replacement card at https://www.ssa.gov/number-card/replace-card. You will need the physical card for employment, including work-study.

While the form provides an option for those who don't have a social security number, this is just for parents/spouses who are foreign citizens or undocumented or for students who are citizens of the Freely Associated States (e.g. Republic of Palau).* Students without a social security number should apply using the CADAA at **dream.csac.ca.gov**.

If an account already exists with the SSN entered, an alert will pop up.

**See https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/electronic-announcements/2024-04-30/update-access-2024-25-fafsa-form-individuals-without-social-security-number-updated-august-2-2024 and https://studentaid.gov/help/from-freely-associated-states.*

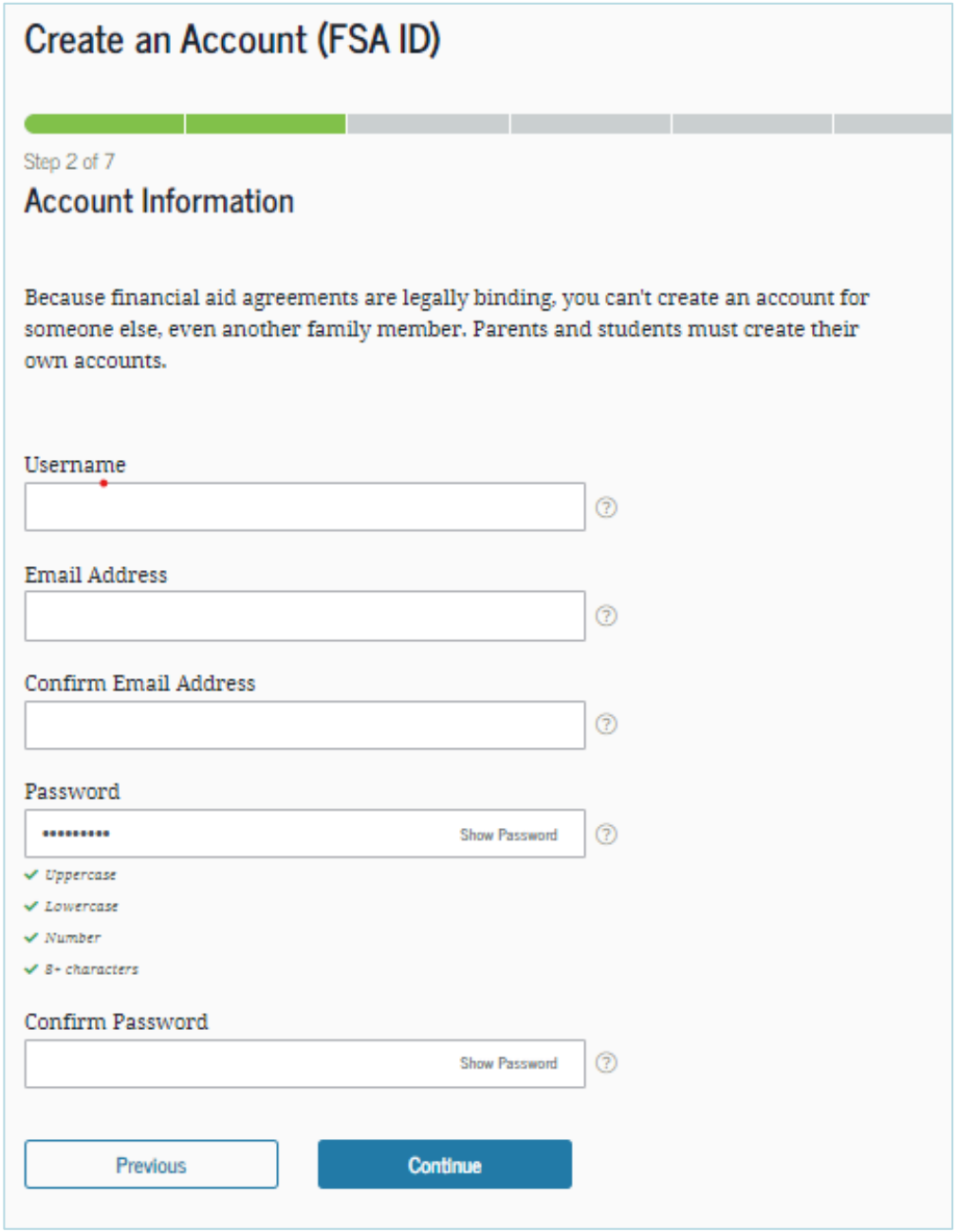


FSA ID: Step 2

Create a Username and Password that can be easily remembered but not easy for someone else to figure out (e.g., do not use your name, date of birth, or the word “password”). Your username must be between 8 and 30 characters.

Double check the email address for typos. You will need to verify the email address after you complete the process.

Do not use a high school email address, since those often expire. Create or use an email address that you can use throughout college such as a Gmail or Yahoo address.

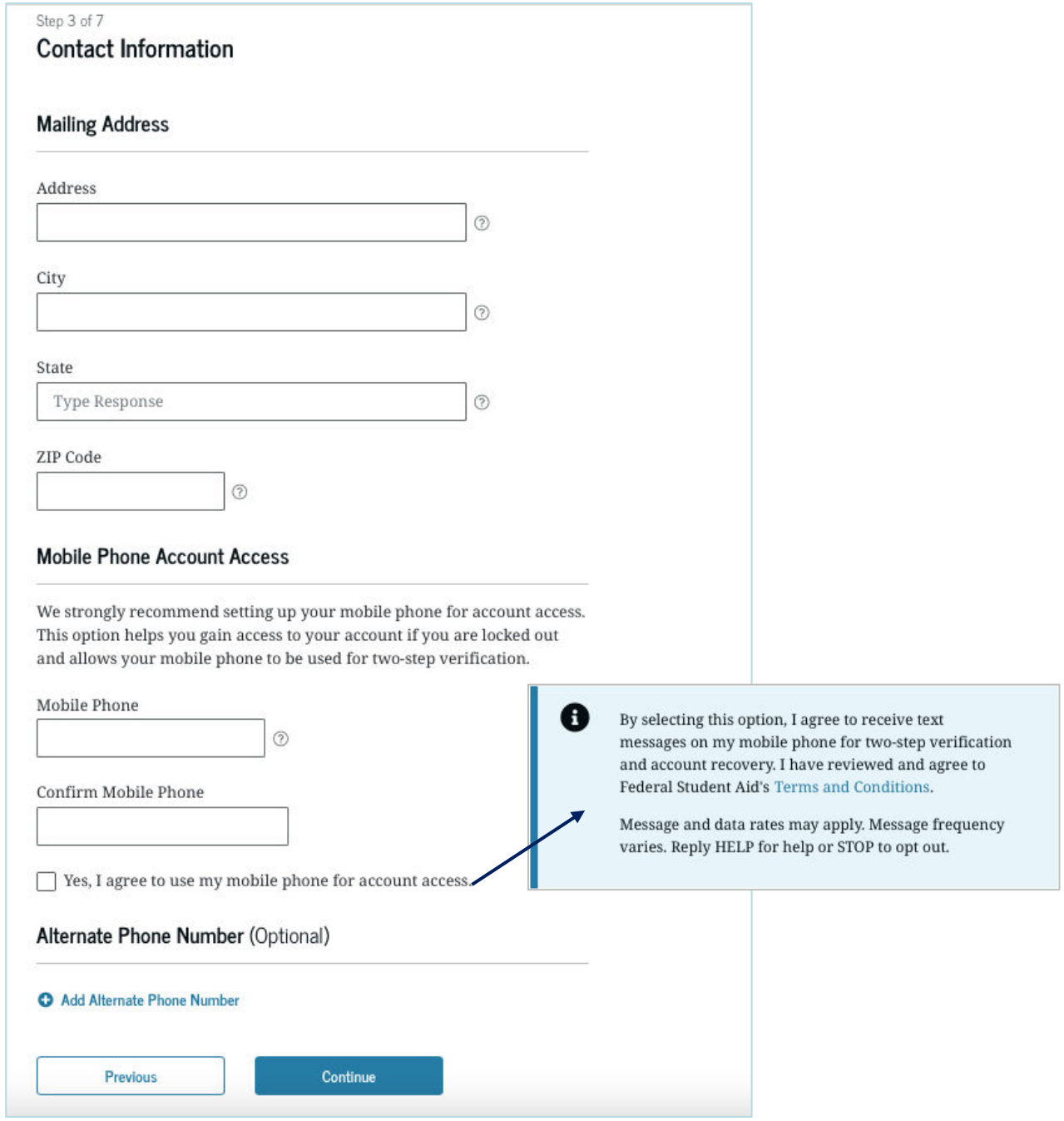


FSA ID: Step 3

Entering a mailing address and mobile phone number are optional.

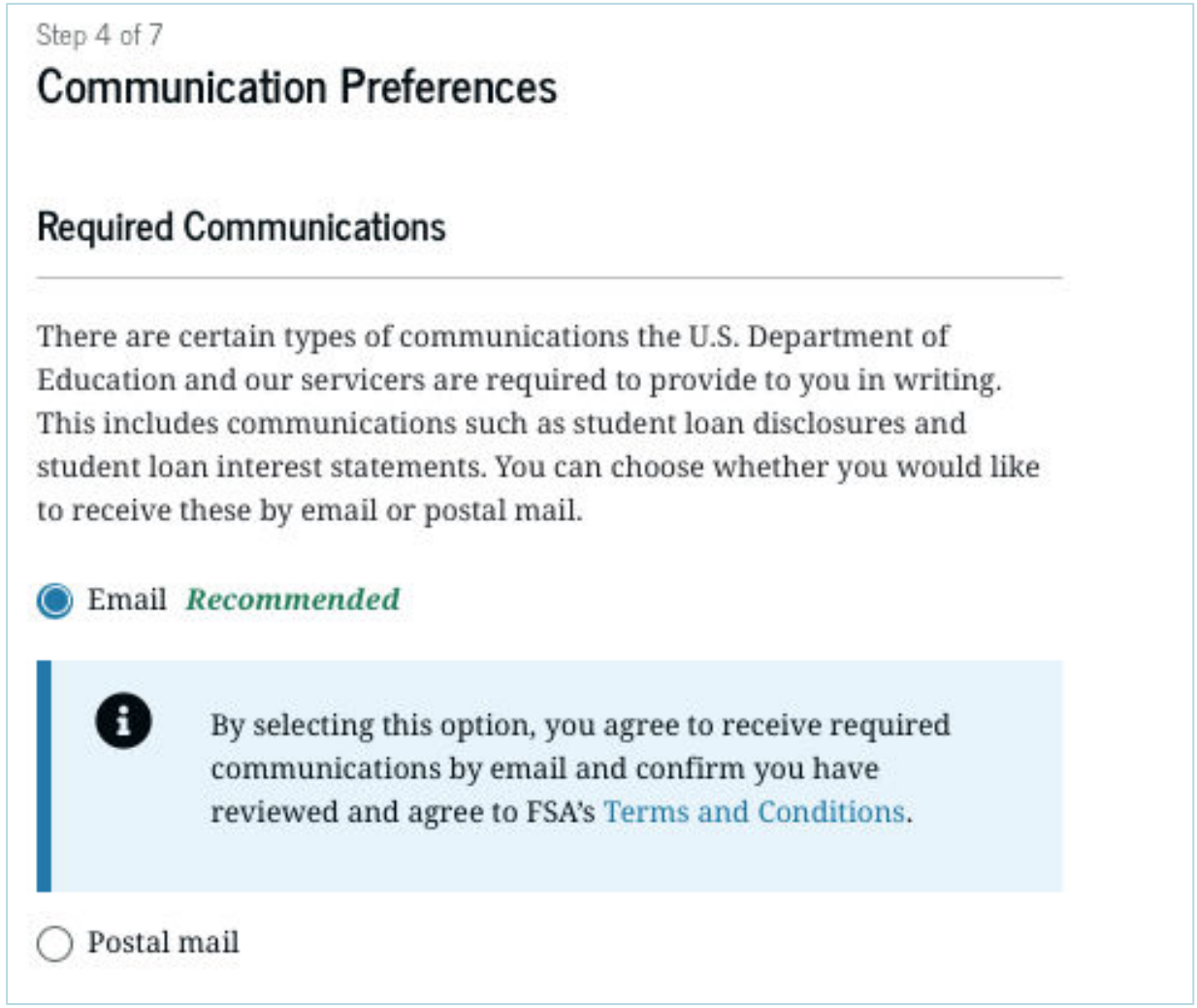
Providing a phone number is recommended in case you are locked out and need to recover your username or password. This also allows you to use text for two-step verification.

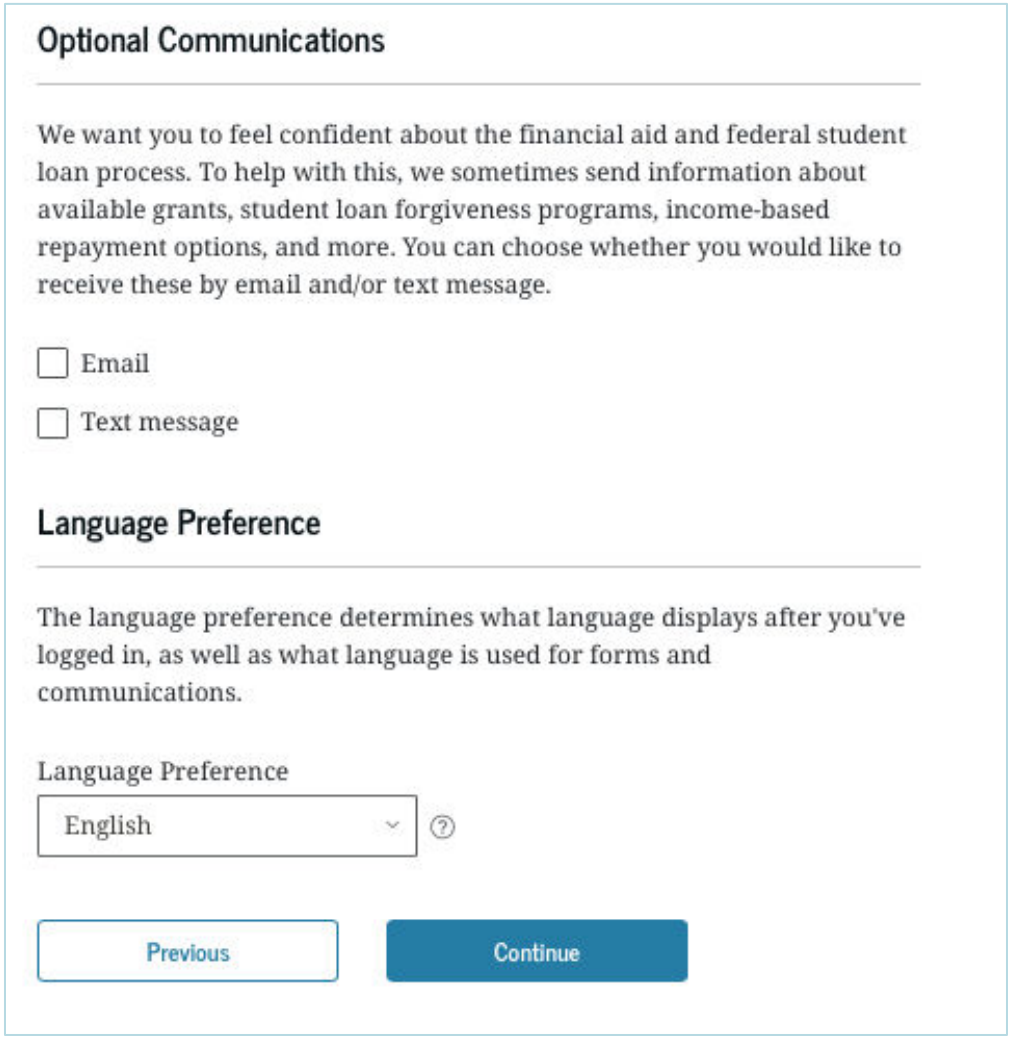
Entering an alternate number is also optional.



FSA ID: Step 4

Indicate how you would like to receive future communications and your preferred language (English or Spanish). If you select Spanish, the FAFSA will display in Spanish.

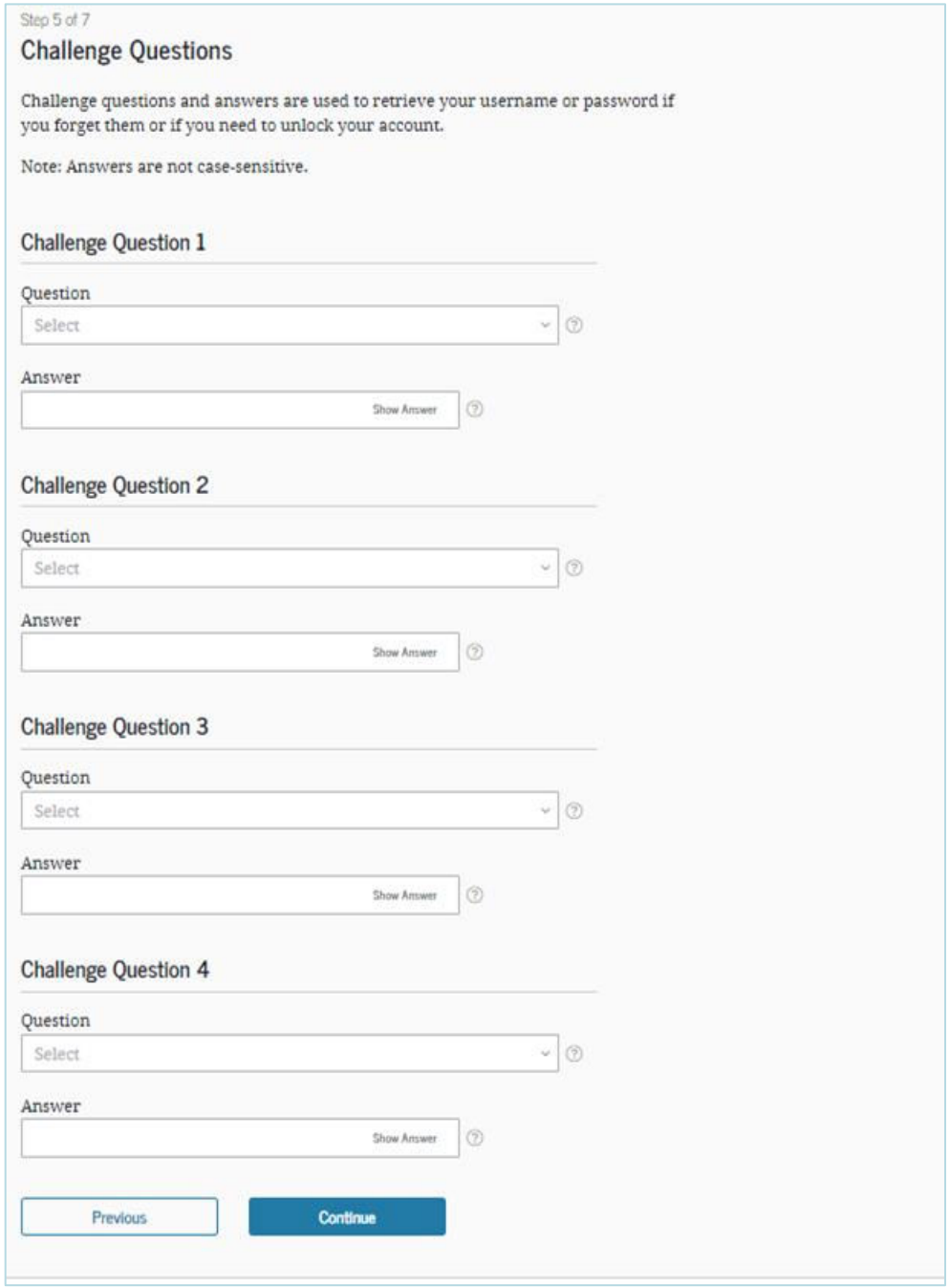




FSA ID: Step 5

Choose “Challenge Questions” and answers that can easily be remembered in case you forget your FSA ID username or password.

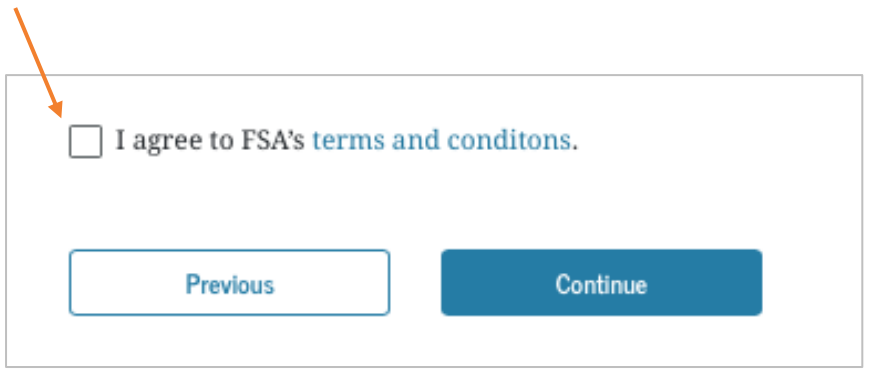
You must provide answers for all four questions.

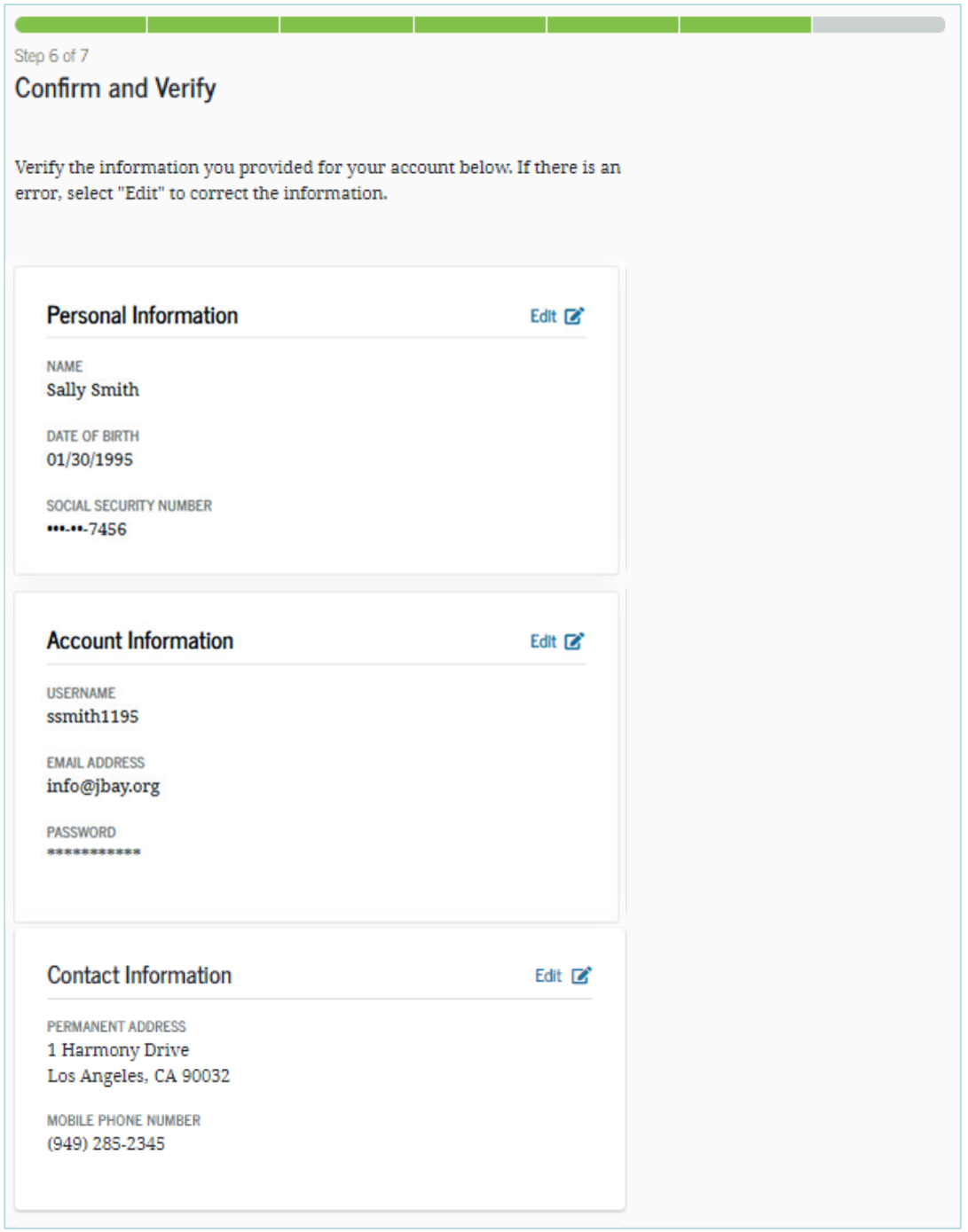


FSA ID: Step 6

Confirm and verify that all the information provided is correct. If you discover an error, you can use the edit buttons to make changes.

Check the box at the bottom of the page agreeing to the terms and conditions to continue.



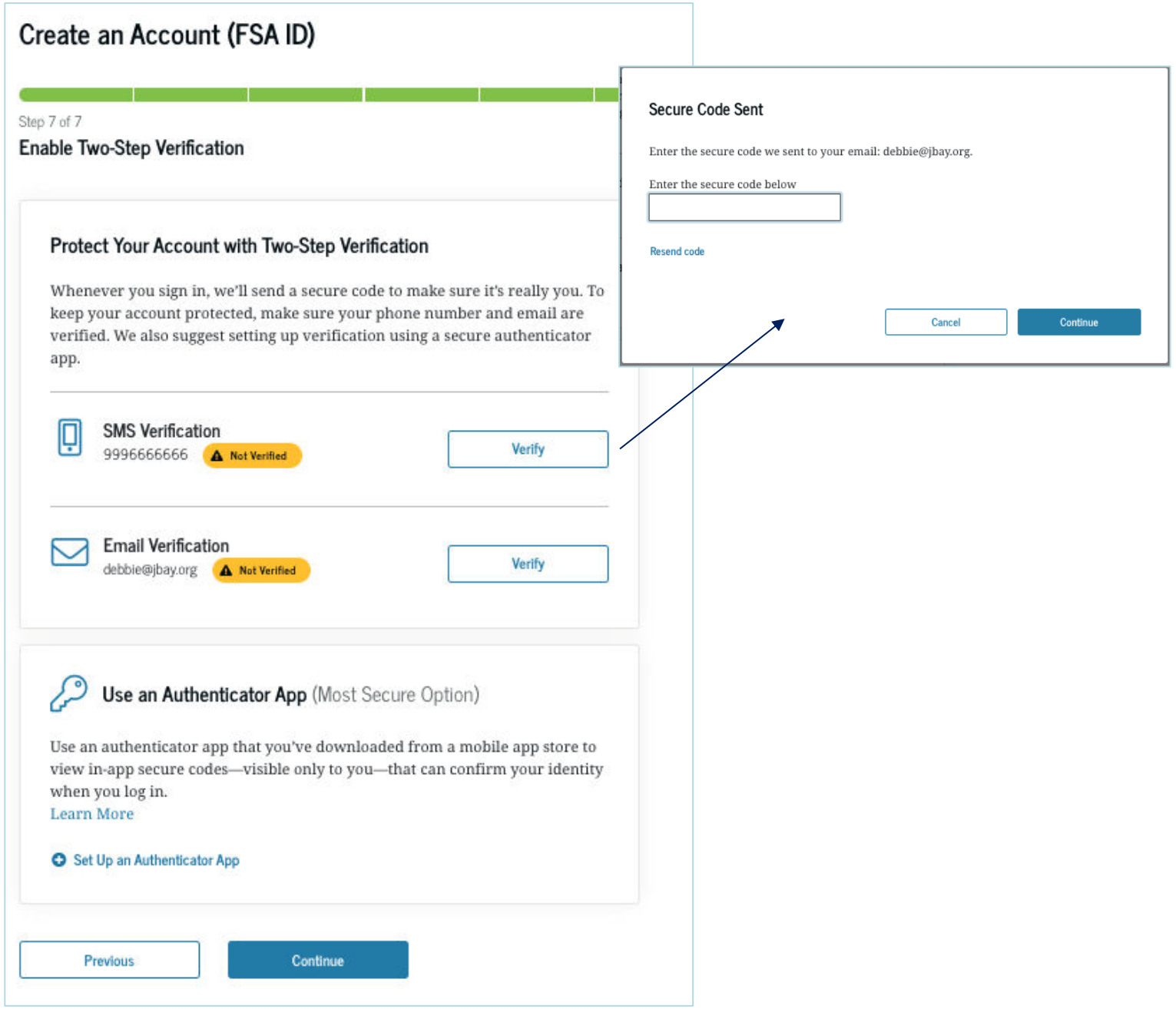


FSA ID: Step 7

When you click the “Verify” button, a screen will pop up where you can input the code sent to your email or phone. **The code must be entered within 30 minutes.**

You also have the option to use an authenticator app. If you select this option, instructions will appear.

Click Continue once complete.

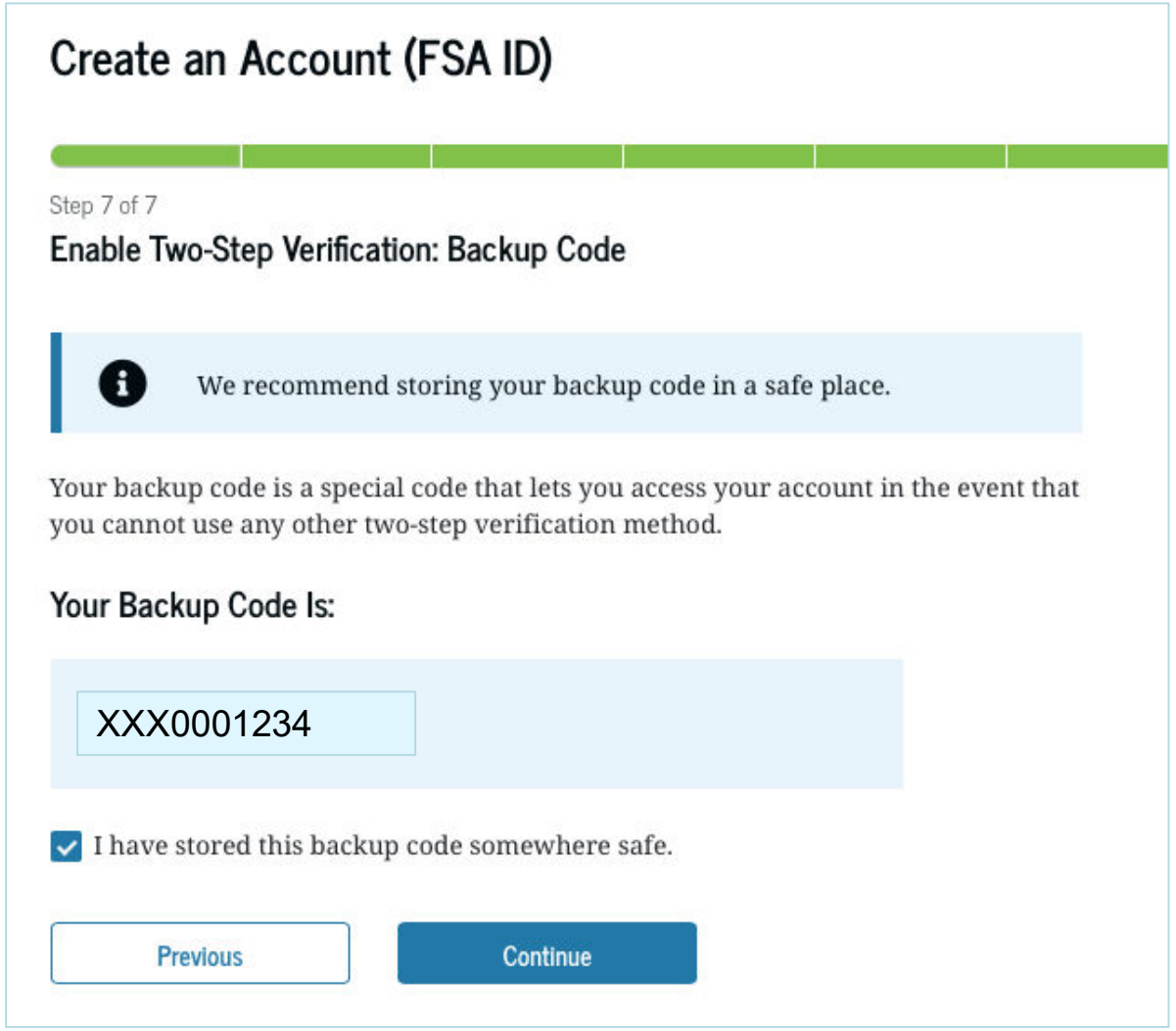


FSA ID: Step 7 (continued)

You will then be provided a unique backup code. You should copy this code and save it someplace safe as an alternative method of accessing your FSA ID and password if necessary.

If you get multiple backup codes, the most recent backup code will be the only one that is valid.

Follow any final instructions to complete the process.





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
- ❑ Backup Code

2.
Starting the FAFSA

What a student needs to apply



List of at least one and up to 20 colleges



FSA ID log-in information



Information about current assets, such as cash checking and savings accounts

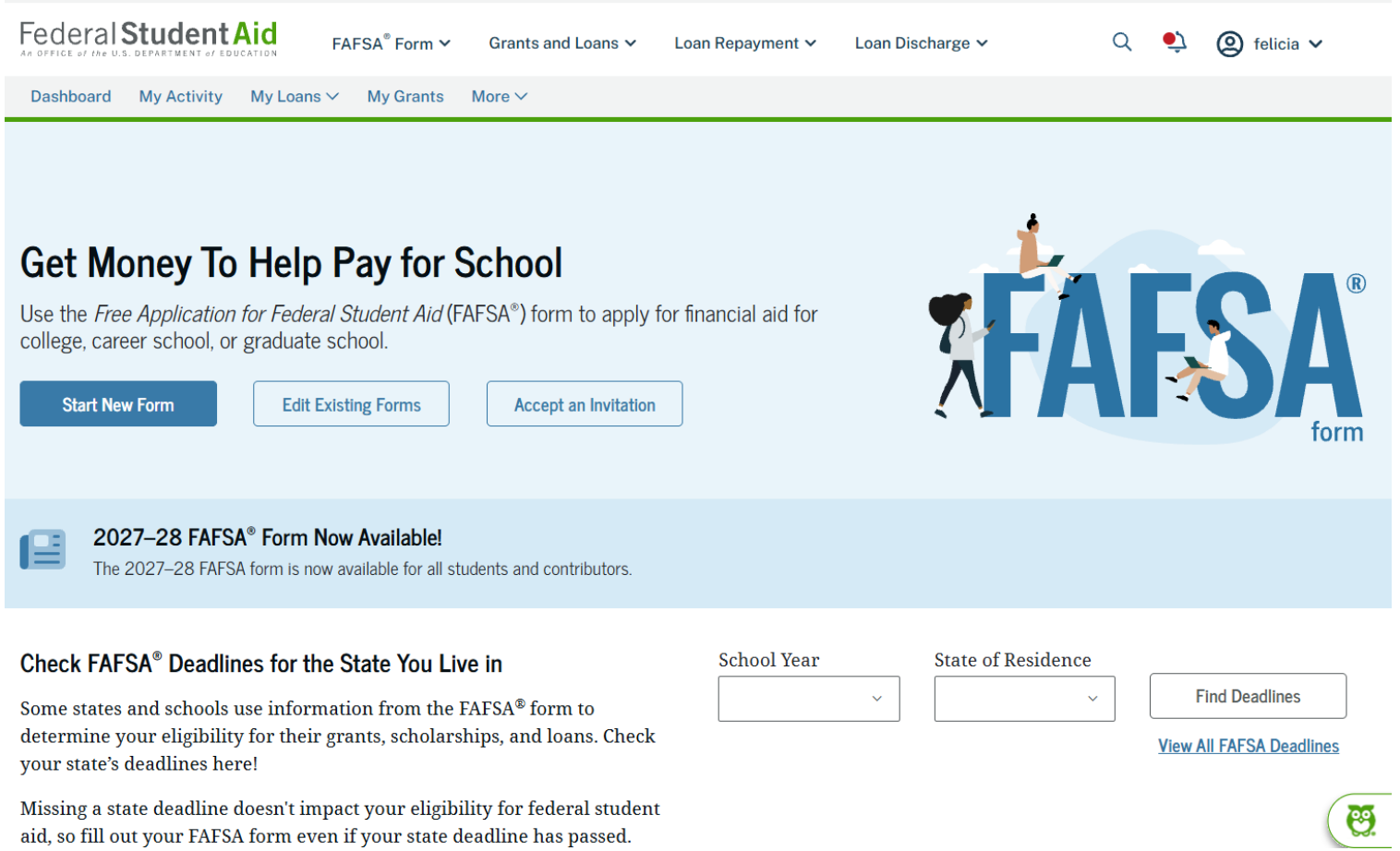


A copy of their tax return if the student filed taxes in 2025 and received grants, scholarships, or AmeriCorps that was reported on their tax return, or their filing status changed (e.g. married to divorced).

Landing Page

Begin at **fafsa.gov** which can be used on a computer or phone. You can "Start a New Form" or "Edit Existing Forms."

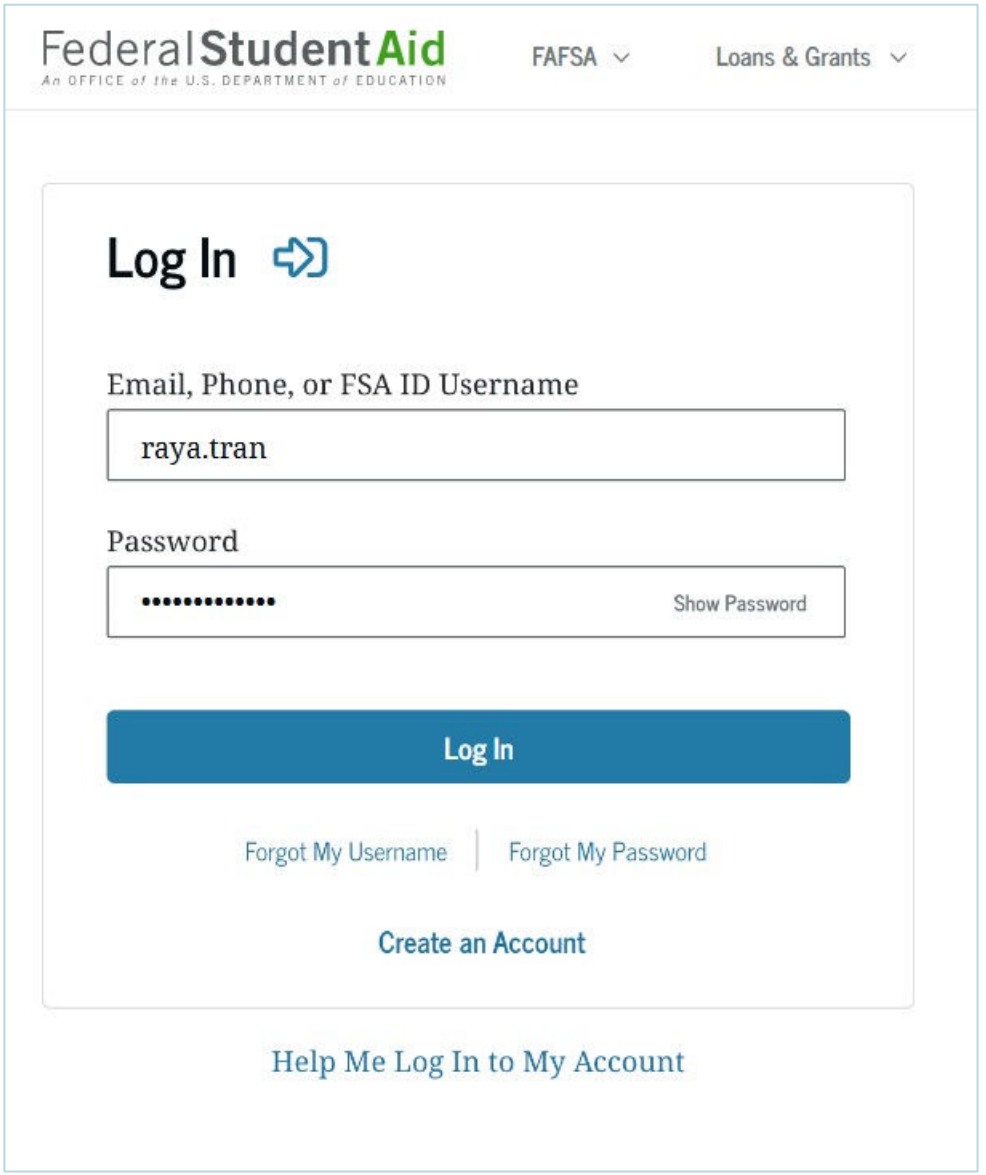
Note that incomplete FAFSAs are deleted 45 days after the most recent activity.



Student Log In

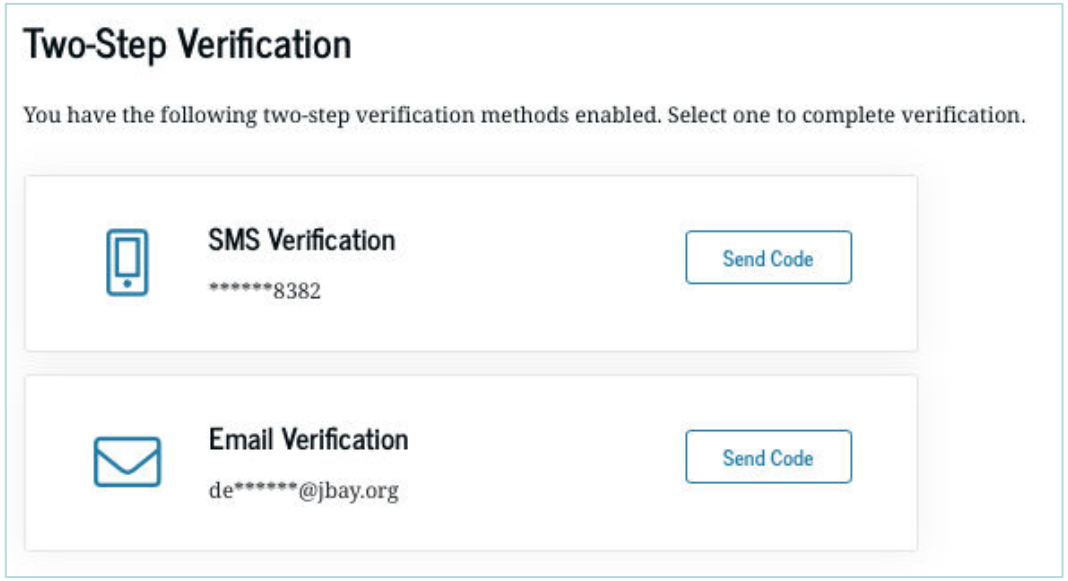
If you select "Start a New Form" you are taken to the "Log In" page to enter your log-in credentials (FSA ID username and password).

If you don't have an FSA ID, you can select "Create an Account" to create an FSA ID. (See section 1 for details on how to create an FSA ID).



Two-Step Verification

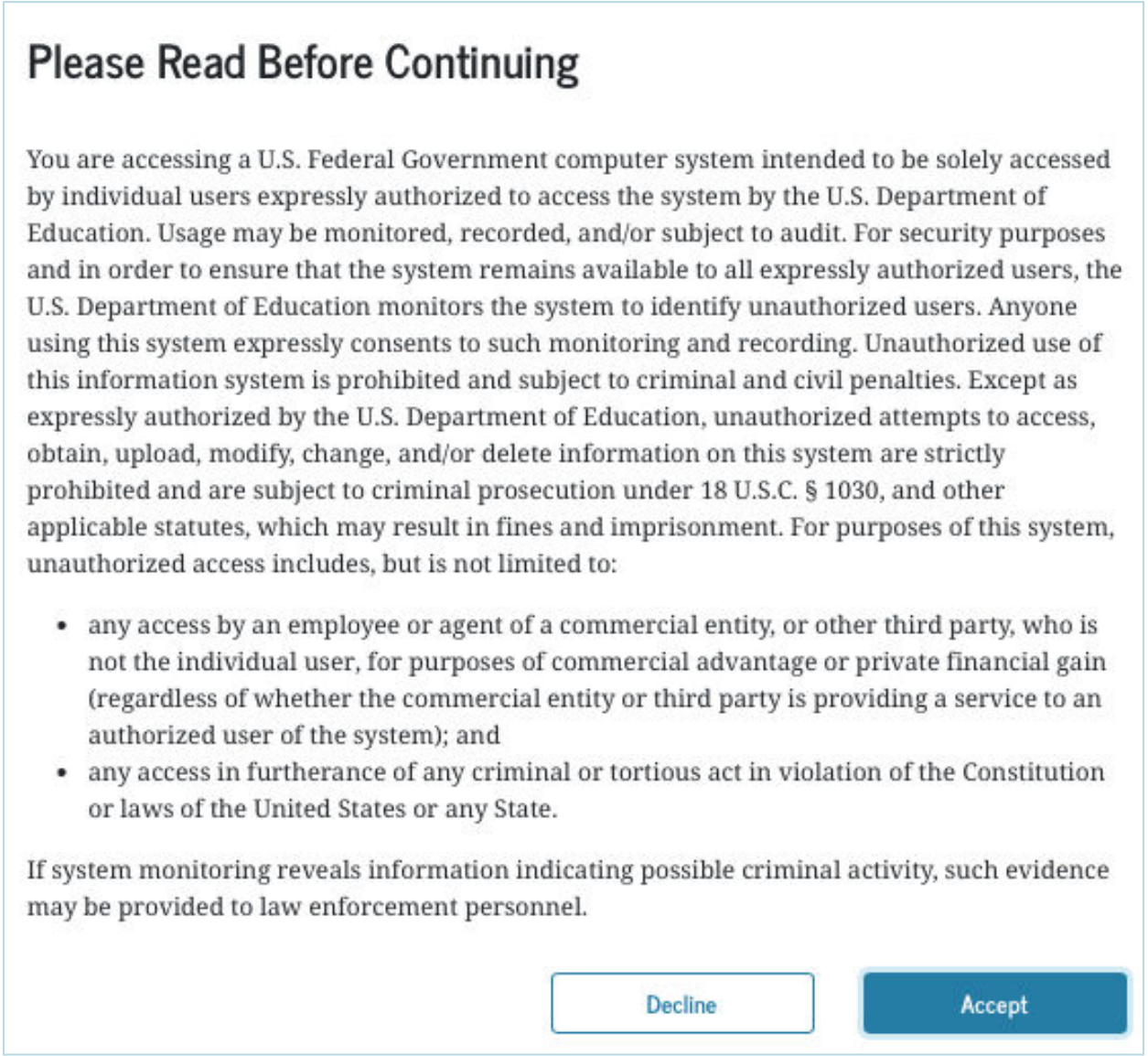
Select if you want a code sent via text (SMS Verification) or via email and enter the code provided. You can also choose to verify through an authenticator app.





Student Log In

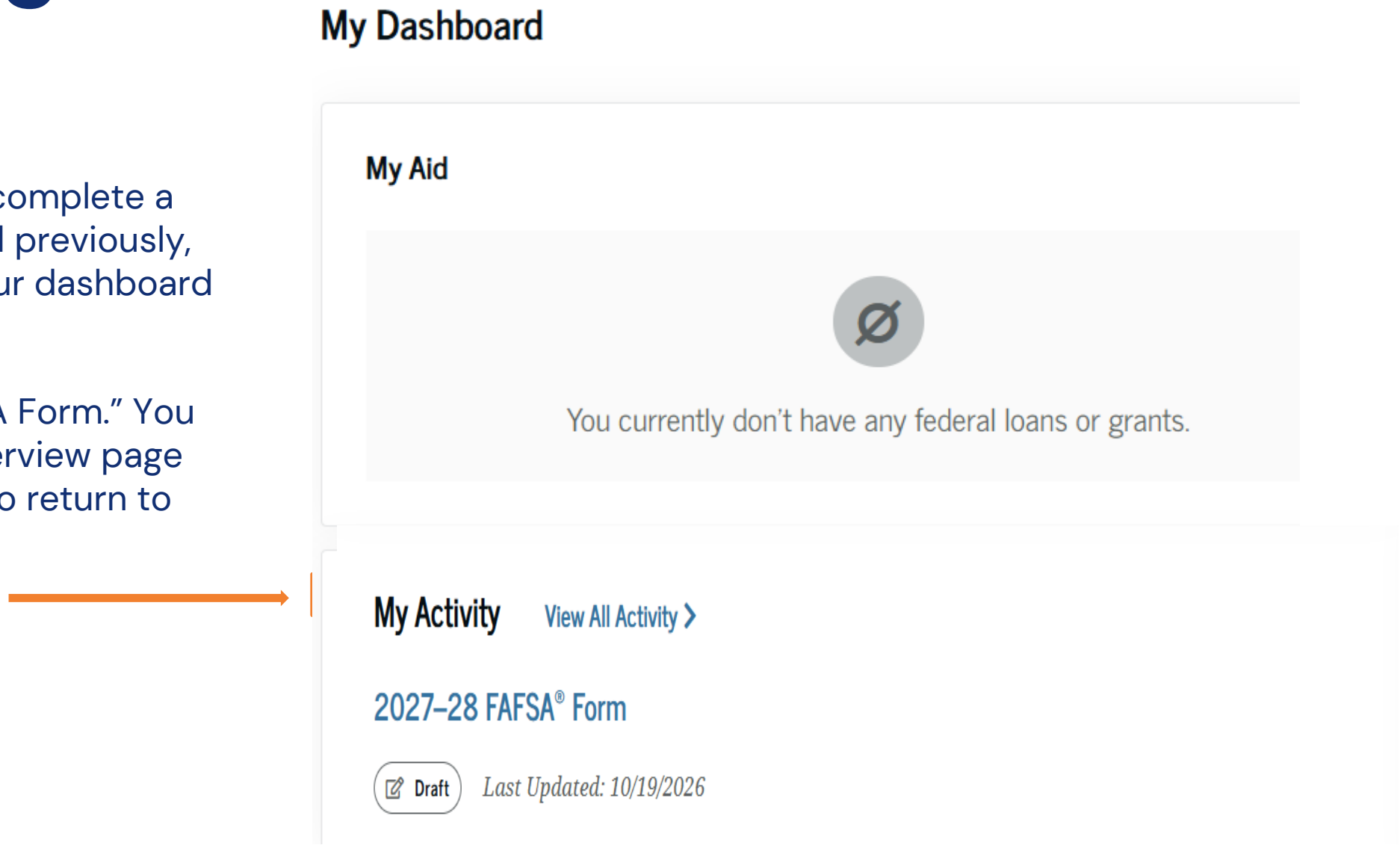
Accept the disclaimer that pops up to continue.



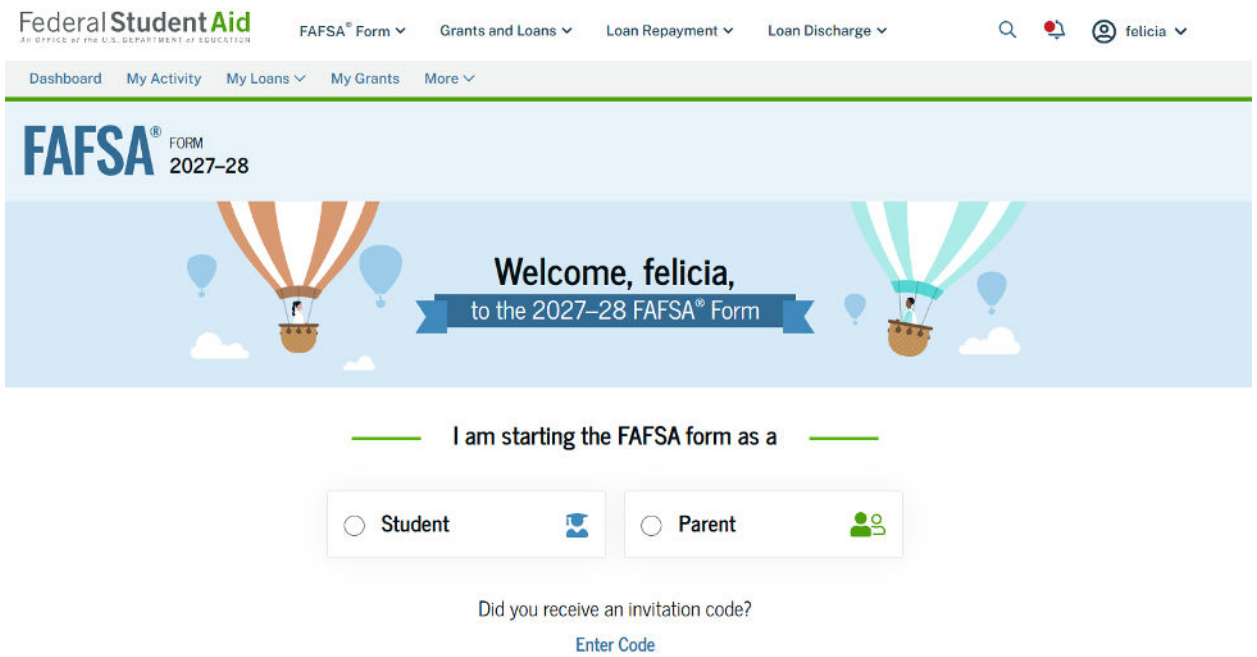
Returning Users

If you are returning to complete a FAFSA that you started previously, you will be taken to your dashboard when you log in.

Select “2027-28 FAFSA Form.” You will be taken to the overview page where you can select to return to where you left off.



Starting Page



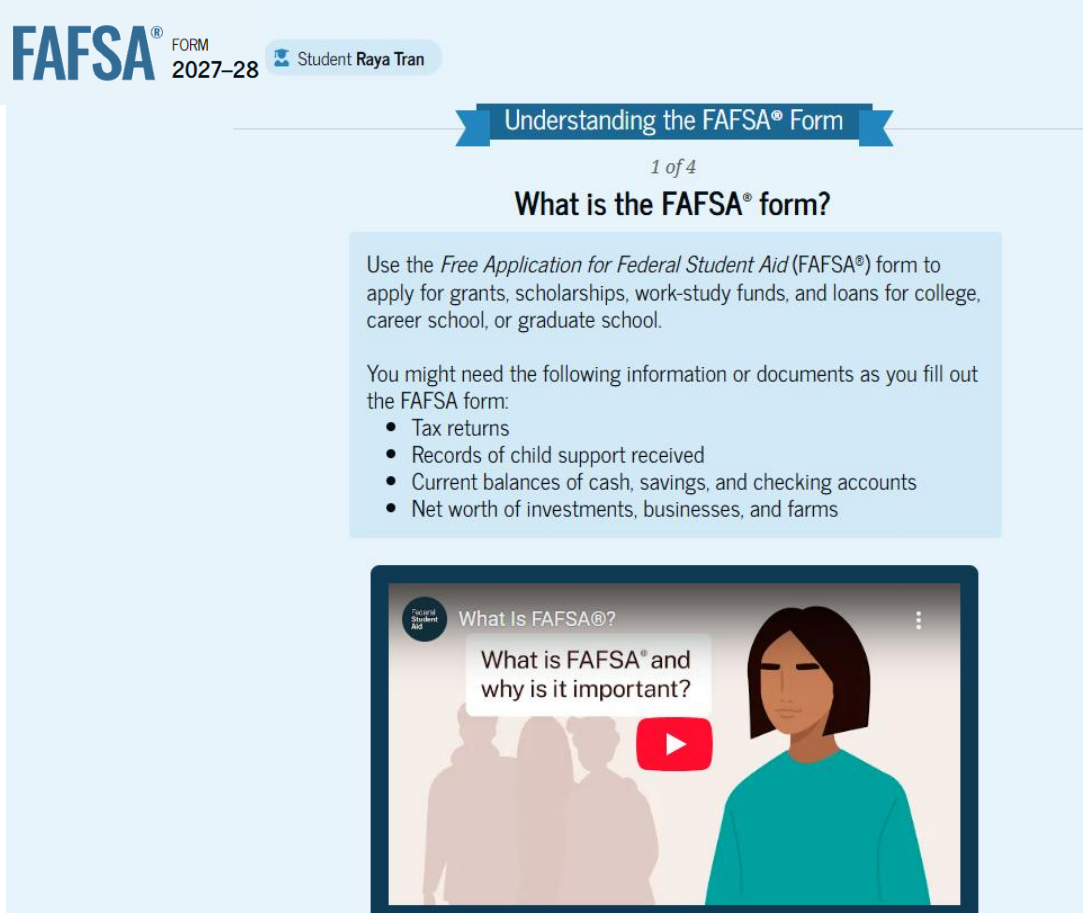
New users will be taken to the starting page. Select “Student” as your role.

Students who are not independent will need to have parents fill out their portion of the form. A dependent student can invite parents to be contributors and thus, to provide their information by providing the parents’ email addresses. Screens for this process are not covered in this document.

Onboarding (1 of 4)

When a student starts the FAFSA form for the first time, they are taken through the FAFSA onboarding process. The first onboarding page provides an overview of the FAFSA form and an accompanying video.

Select Continue to move on.

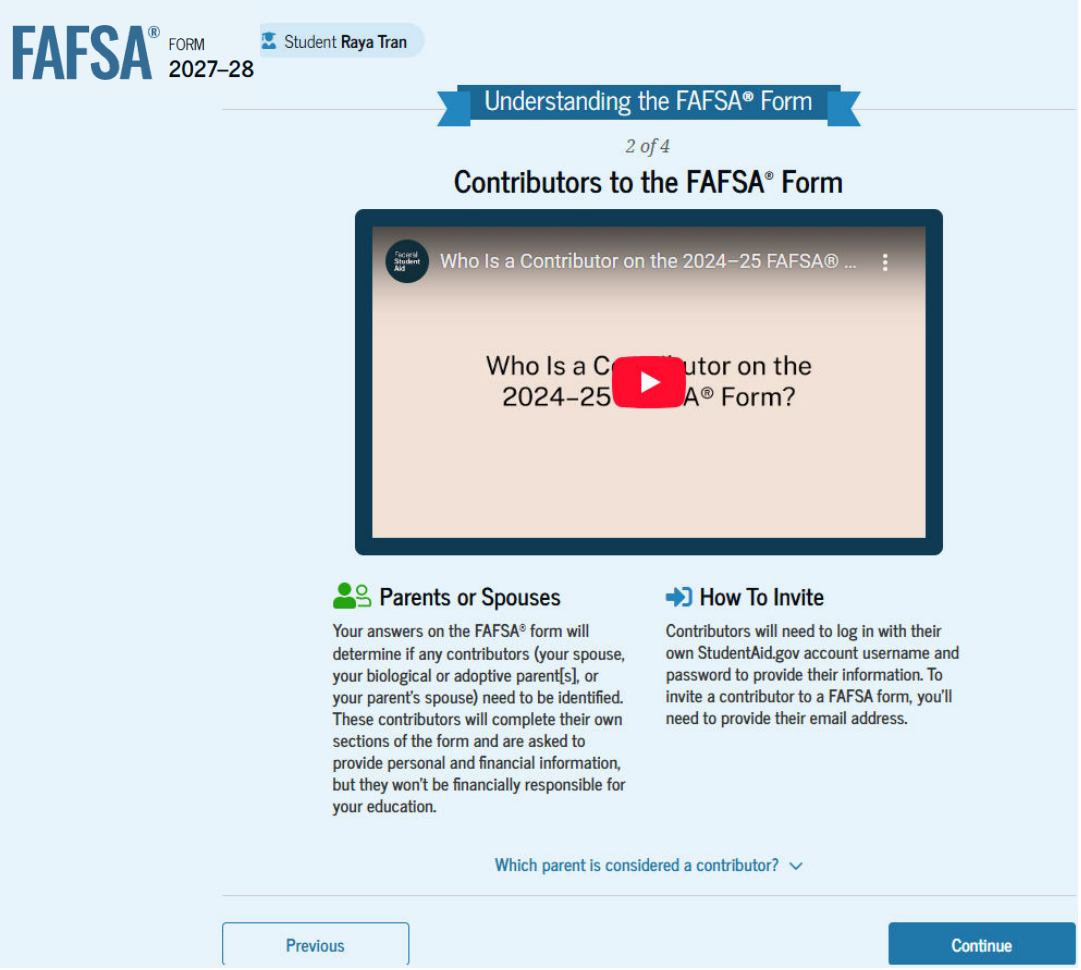


Onboarding (2 of 4)

The second FAFSA onboarding page provides information about the different roles that may be required to participate in the student's FAFSA form and documents that may be needed to fill out the form.

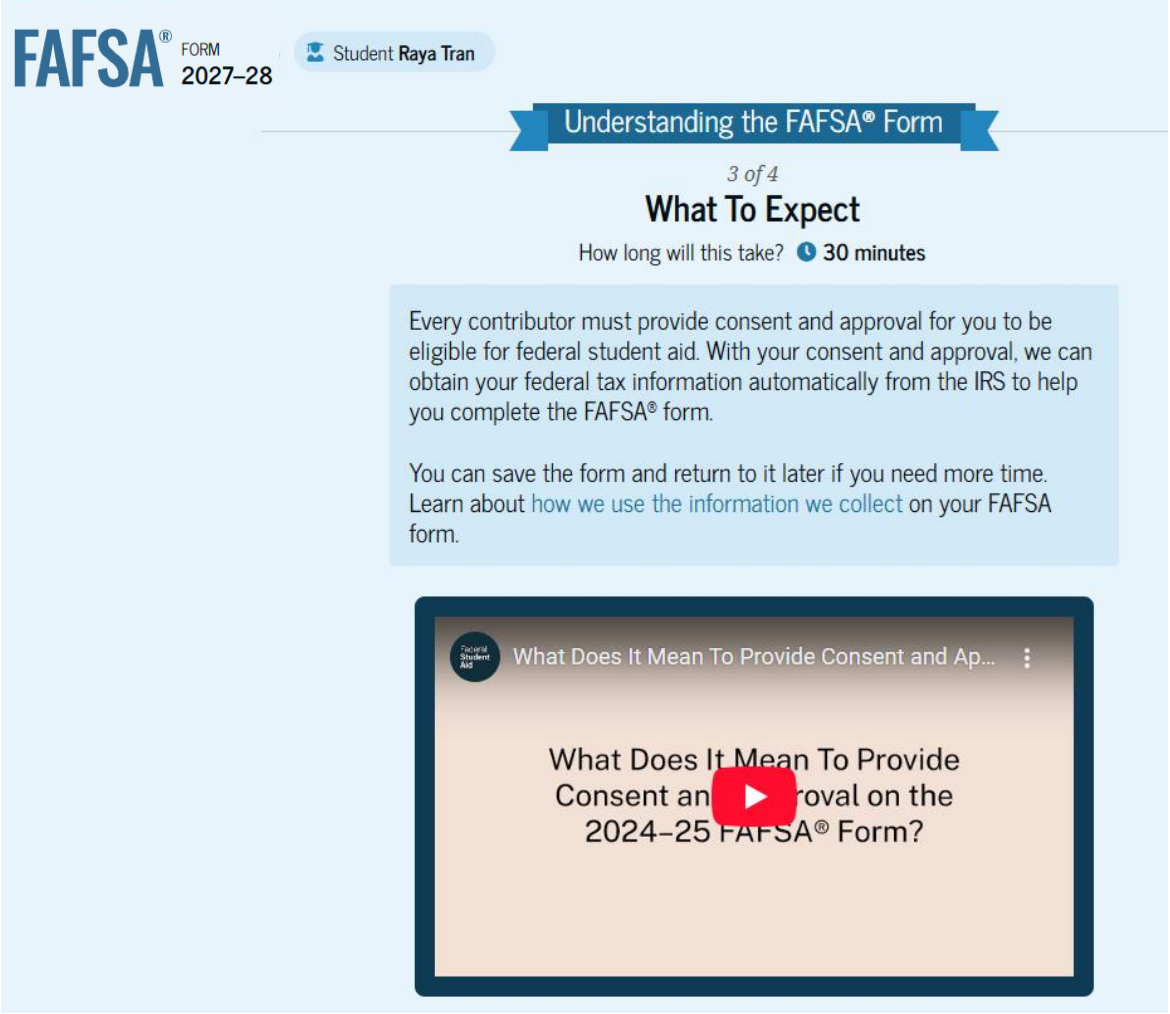
If you are not independent (see section 4) and need to provide parental information or are married and need to provide spouse information, this video provides instructions for this process.

Select Continue to move on.



Onboarding (3 of 4)

The third FAFSA onboarding page provides information about the types of questions the student can expect to see and how they can get additional help with filling out the FAFSA form.



Onboarding (4 of 4)

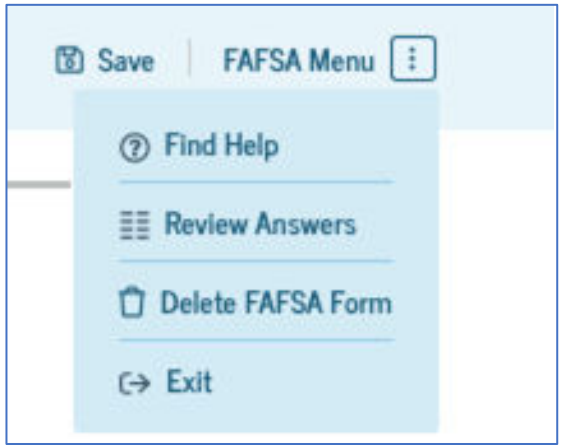
The last FAFSA onboarding page provides information about what to expect once the FAFSA form is completed and submitted.

Select "Start FAFSA form" to begin.

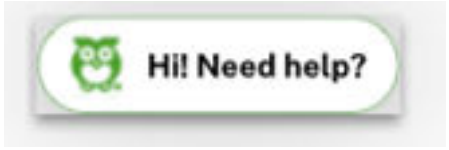


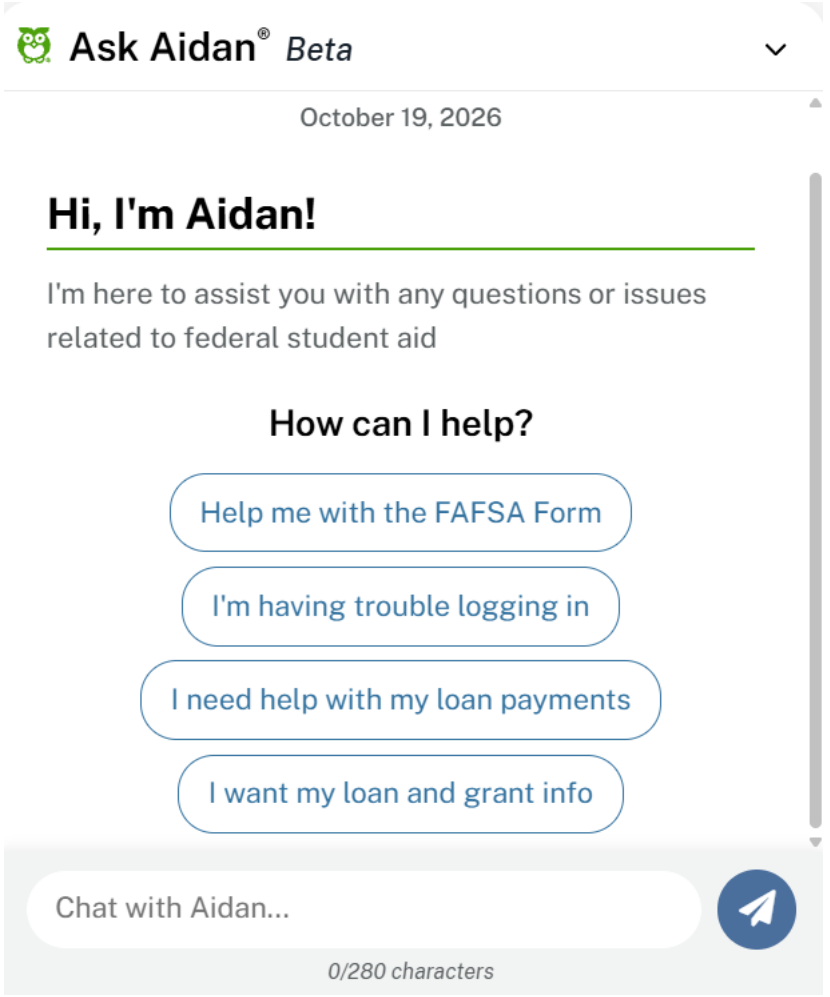
Using the FAFSA Form

- Use the dropdown menu at the top of the screen and click “Save” to save your responses. Responses will save automatically when you move to a new page.



- Help is available through the menu at the top of the screen or by clicking the ⓘ icon next to individual fields.
- You can also click the icon shown below to ask a question through the chatbot.



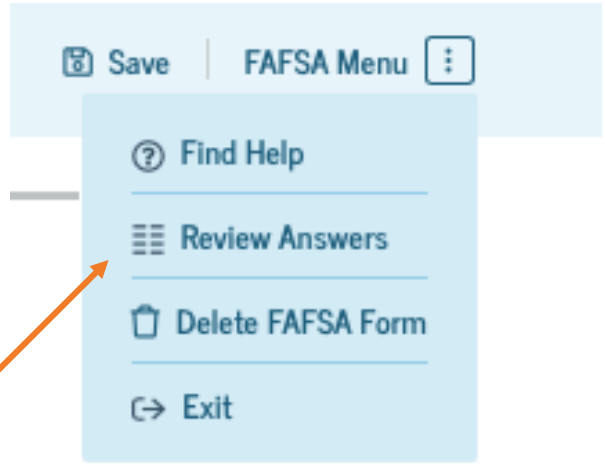


Using the FAFSA Form

- To move through the form, click 

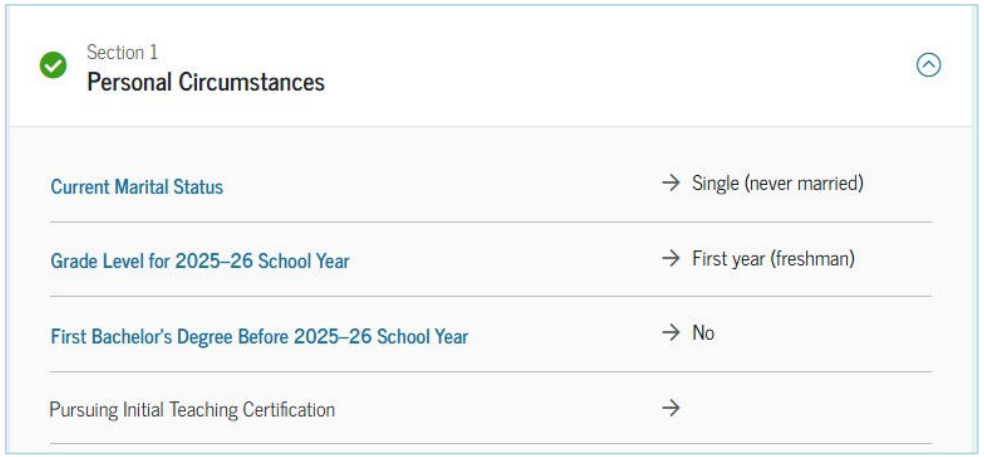
- To go to the previous screen, click 

  Do not use your computer's back button



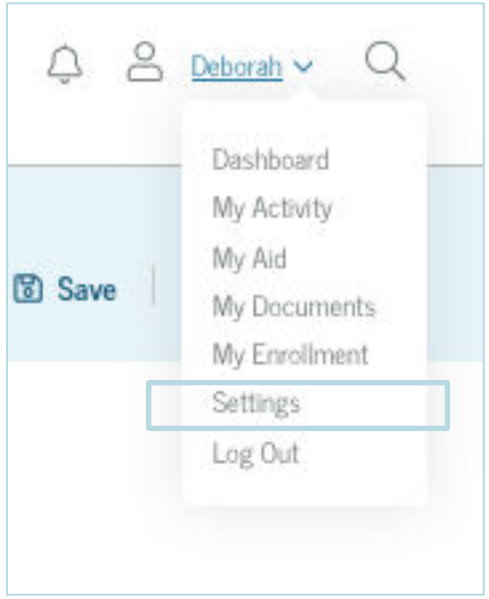
- To go back to a specific screen, select the dropdown menu at the top of the screen and Review Answers.

- You will be taken to the review page where you can expand any section and click on the link for any question already answered (shown in blue) to return to that question.

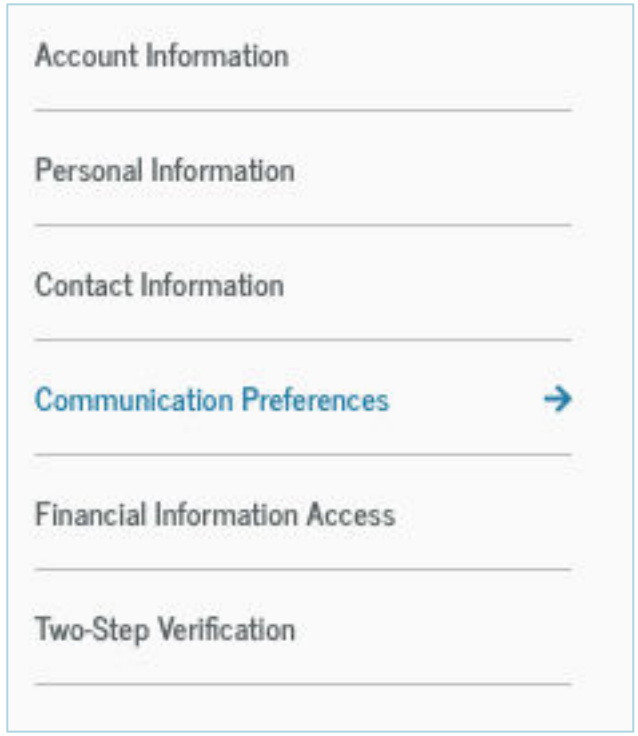


Language Options

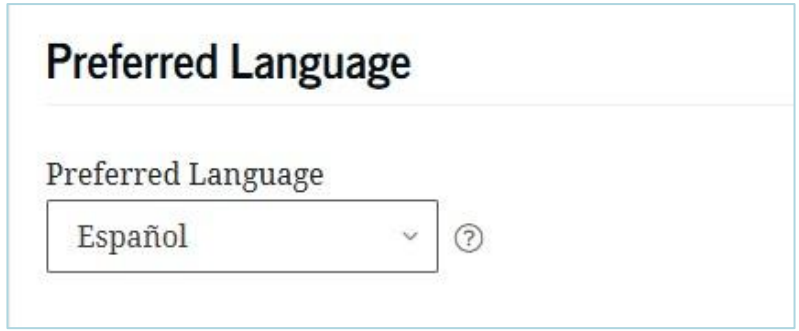
1. To access the Spanish language version, access your Account Settings, which are available through a dropdown menu under your name at the top of the screen.



2. Select "Communication Preferences" from the lefthand menu



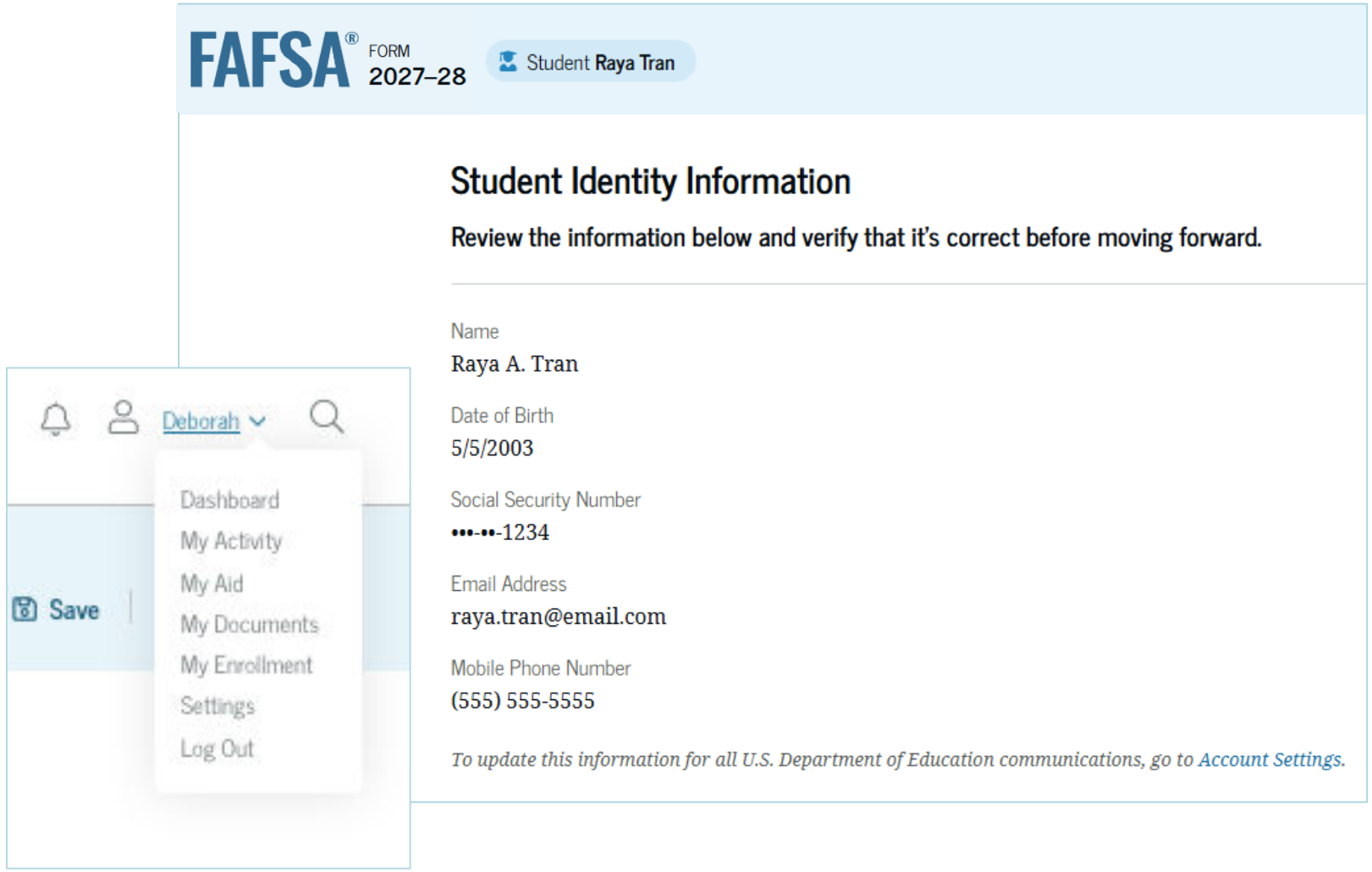
3. Select Español as your preferred language



3.
Identity Information and Consent to Import Tax Info

Identity Information

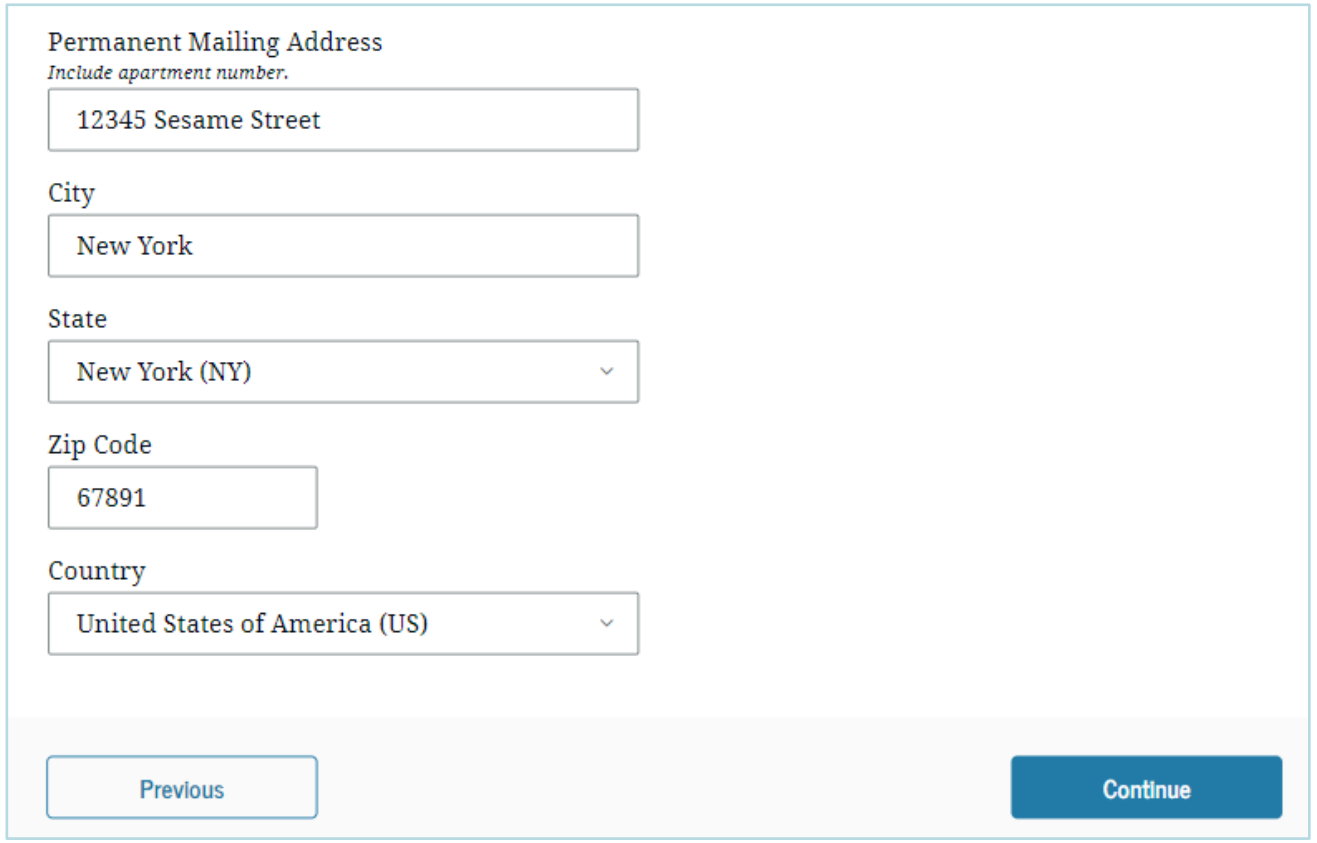
Review the information on the screen and verify that it is correct. To update any of this information, you must access your Account Settings, which are available through a dropdown menu under your name at the top of the screen.



Identity Information (Continued)

For fields related to your mailing address, you can edit them directly on this page. The address should be a place that you can receive mail.

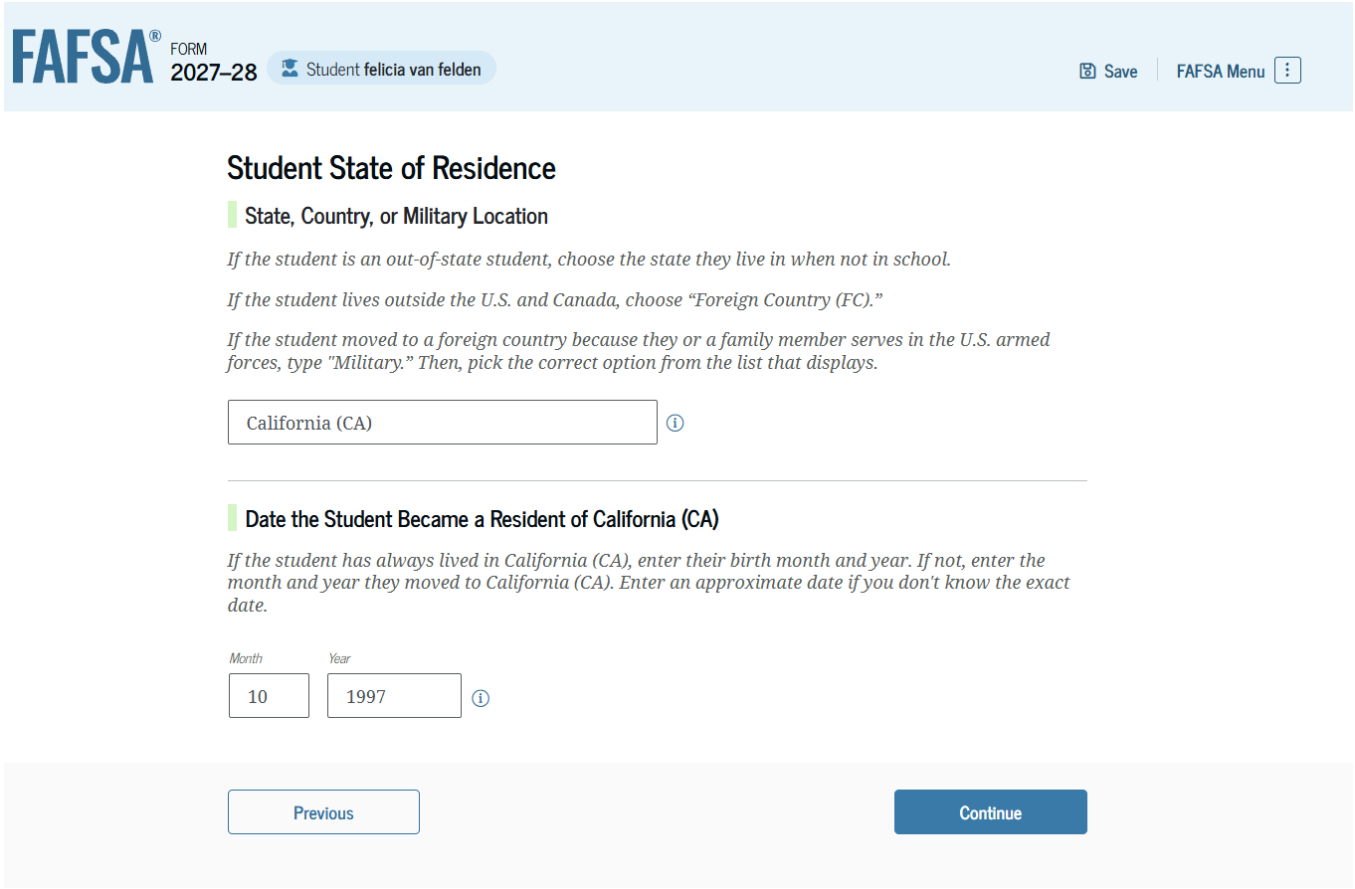
If you do not have a permanent mailing address, you can use an address where you can reliably receive mail, like the address of a friend, relative, or social service agency that has given you permission to use their address.



State of Legal Residence

Select your state of legal residence from a dropdown box and provide the month and year when you began living in the state. If you have lived in the same state since birth, enter your date of birth.

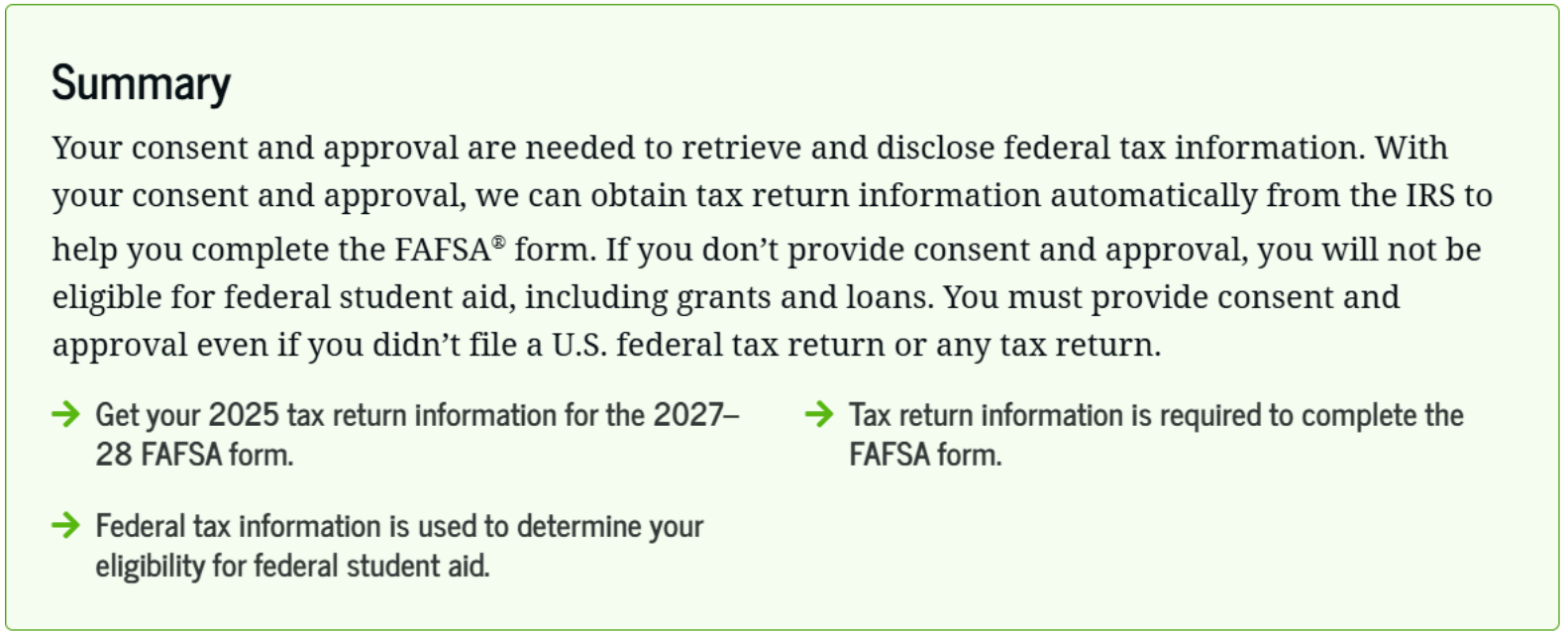
This information is used to determine eligibility for state aid. If you are unsure if you are considered a California resident, consult your college.



Federal Tax Information (FTI)

This page informs the student about consent and their federal tax information. By providing consent, your federal tax information is transferred directly into the FAFSA from the IRS.

(Only the summary, and not the full text on the screen, is shown here.)



Summary

Your consent and approval are needed to retrieve and disclose federal tax information. With your consent and approval, we can obtain tax return information automatically from the IRS to help you complete the FAFSA® form. If you don't provide consent and approval, you will not be eligible for federal student aid, including grants and loans. You must provide consent and approval even if you didn't file a U.S. federal tax return or any tax return.

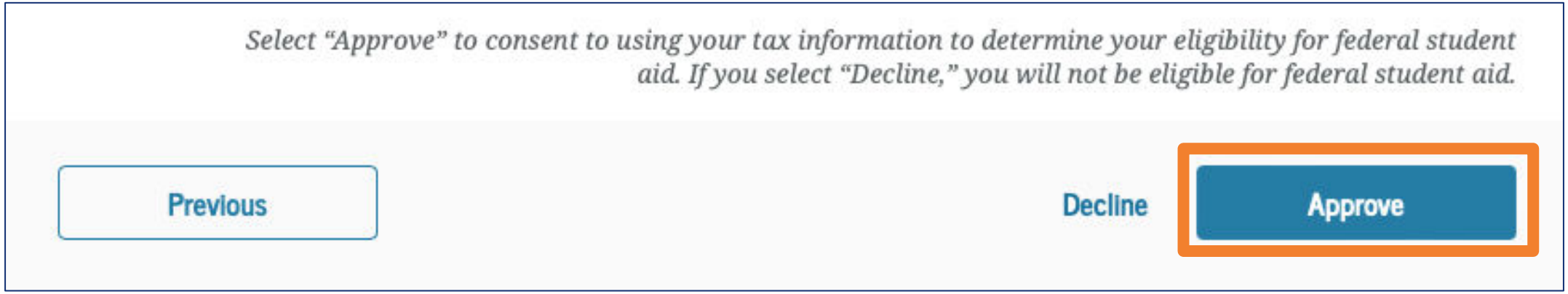
- Get your 2025 tax return information for the 2027–28 FAFSA form.
- Tax return information is required to complete the FAFSA form.
- Federal tax information is used to determine your eligibility for federal student aid.

Federal Tax Information (FTI)

Students must approve & consent to importing data from the Federal Tax Information (FTI) (even if no tax return was filed).

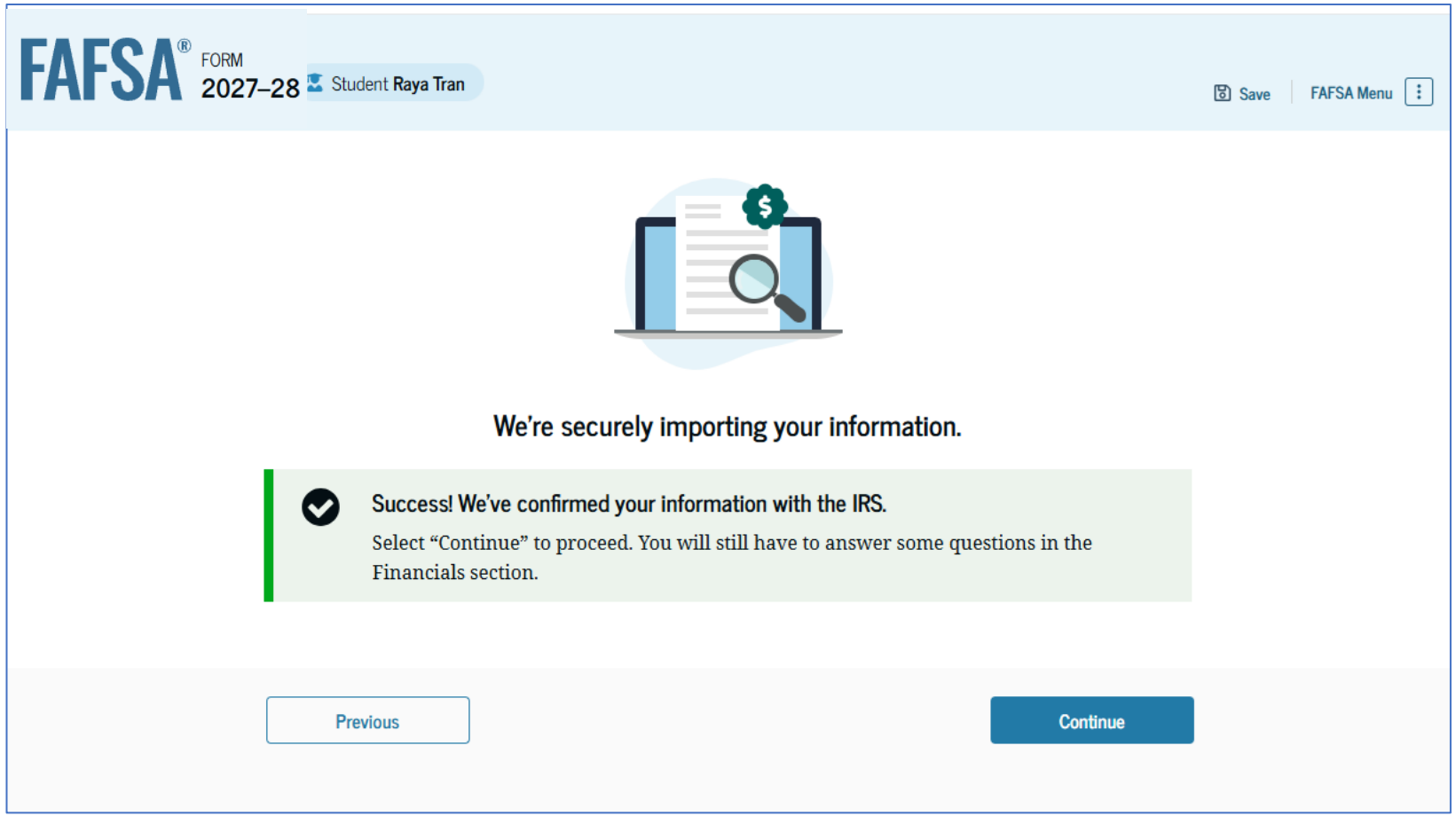
The application looks at income information from the "prior-prior" year. If applying for the 2027-2028 school year, this would be from 2025.

If you decline the FTI transfer, you will be ineligible for federal and state student aid.



Federal Tax Information (FTI)

After submitting “Approve”, students will see a processing screen, indicating that their tax information is being imported. If you did not file a tax return in 2025, you will see a message stating “Data Not Received”.





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

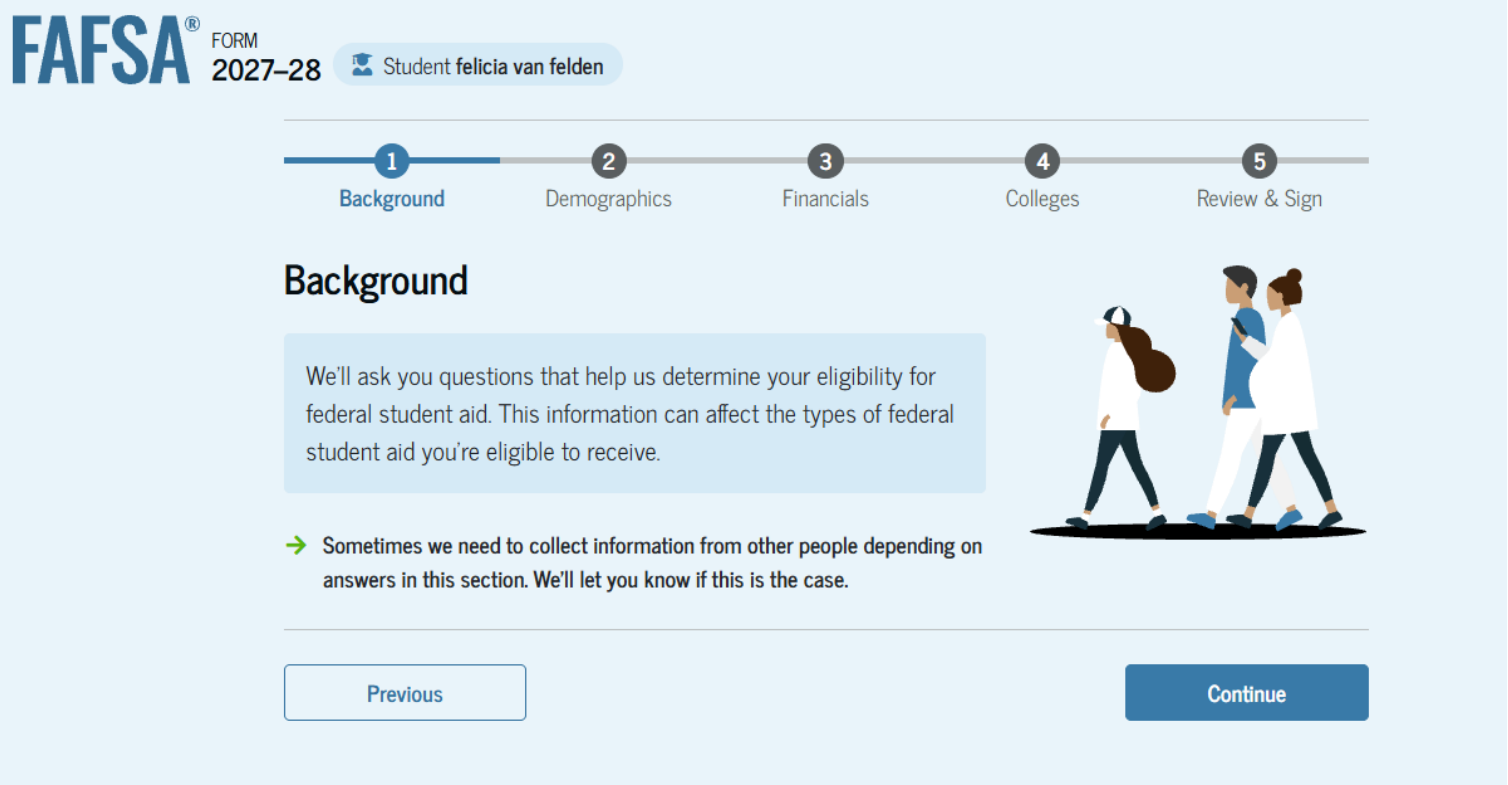
- Examples of special circumstances may include the following:
  - significant changes to your financial situation, such as loss of employment or pay cuts
  - tuition expenses at an elementary or secondary school
  - high amounts of medical or dental expenses not covered by insurance
  - a family member 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 FAFSA information.

4.
Personal Circumstances

Personal Circumstances

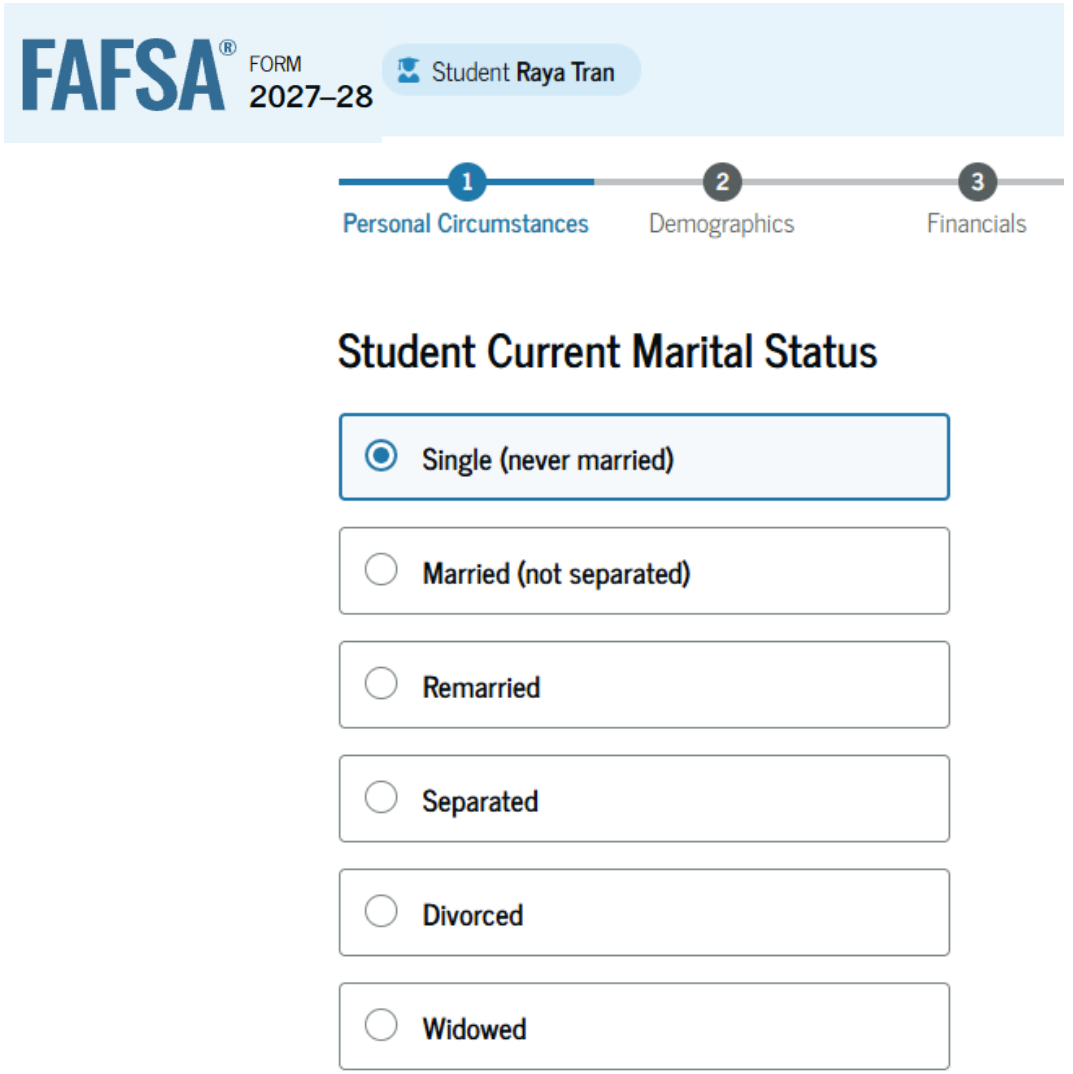
The first page within the Student Personal Circumstances section provides an overview of the section.



Marital Status

You are first asked about your marital status. Your legal 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.



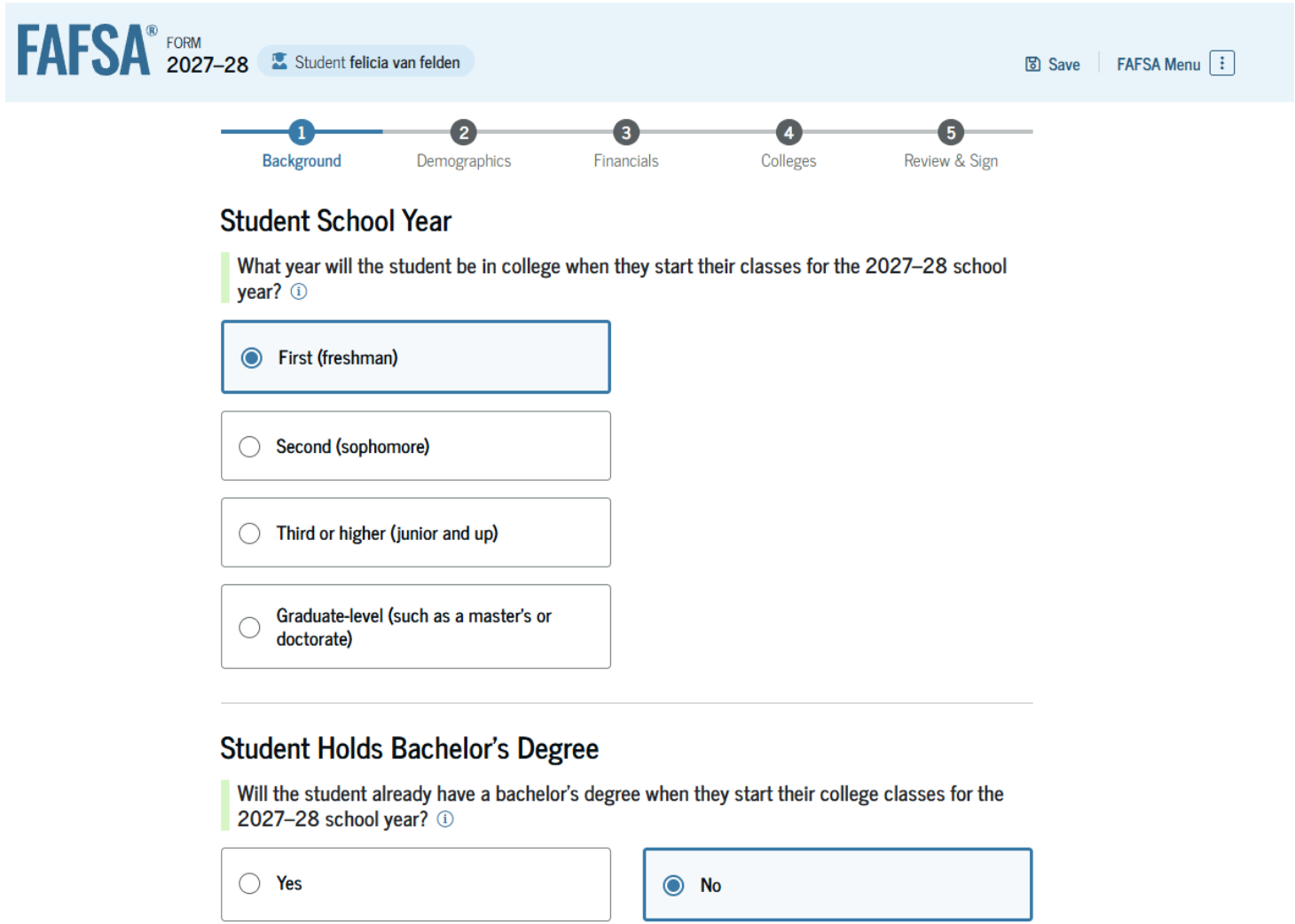
Student College or Career School Plans

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).”

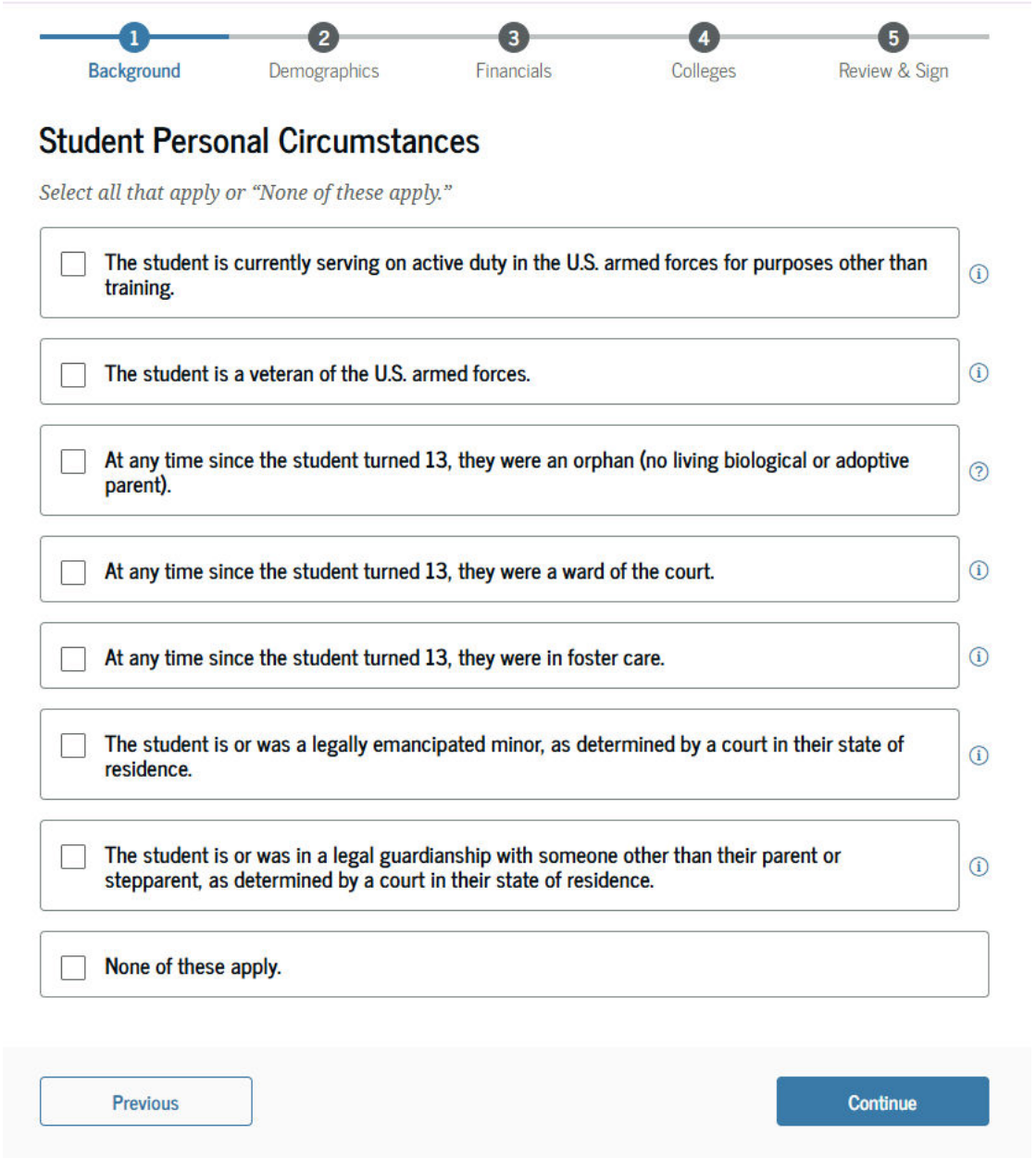
You should answer NO regarding whether you will have your first bachelor’s degree unless you have already COMPLETED a bachelor’s degree program.



Student 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 parents and eligibility for financial aid is based on the student’s income only (and spouse if applicable).

- Students should <u>select all that apply.</u>

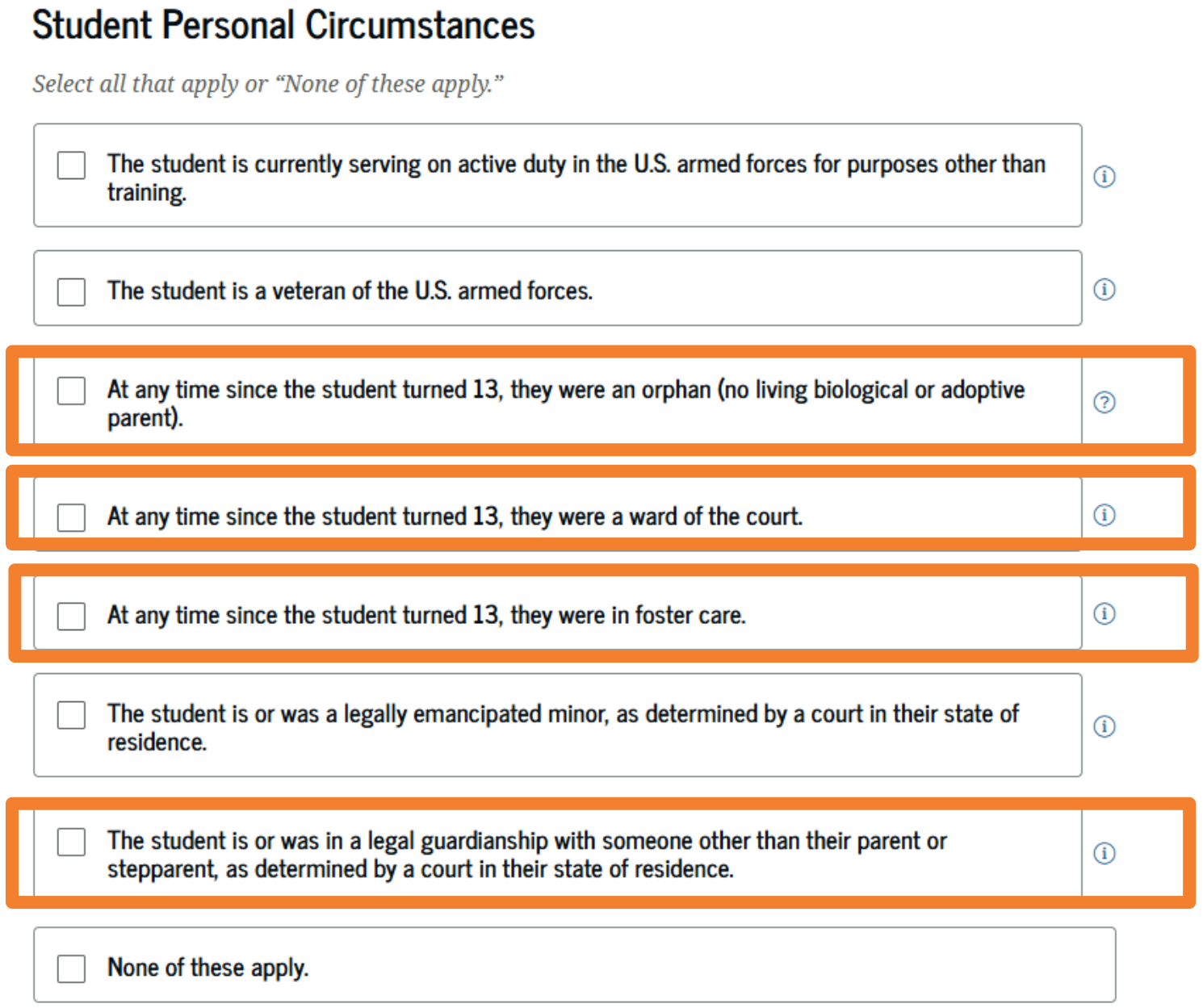


4a.
Current & Former Foster Youth

Current & 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 FAFSA 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:

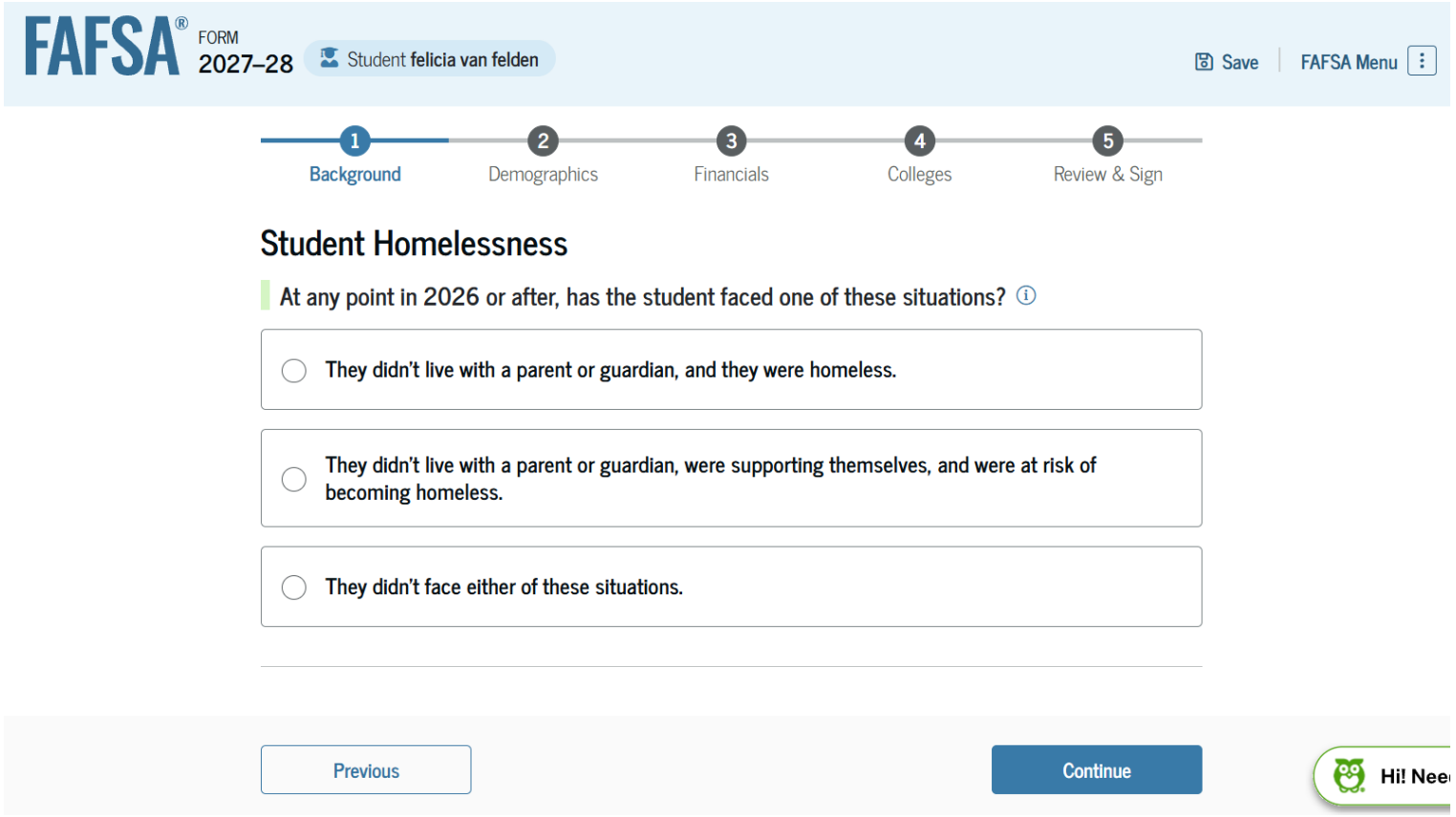
✓ **Current foster youth**: Contact your social worker or Independent Living Program (ILP) representative

✓ **Former foster youth:** May also contact the Office of the California Foster Care Ombudsperson: 877-846-1602 or fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov/verification-request-form

4b.
Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Unaccompanied Homeless Students

Students are then asked about their homelessness status.



Definition of Homeless Youth on the FAFSA

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



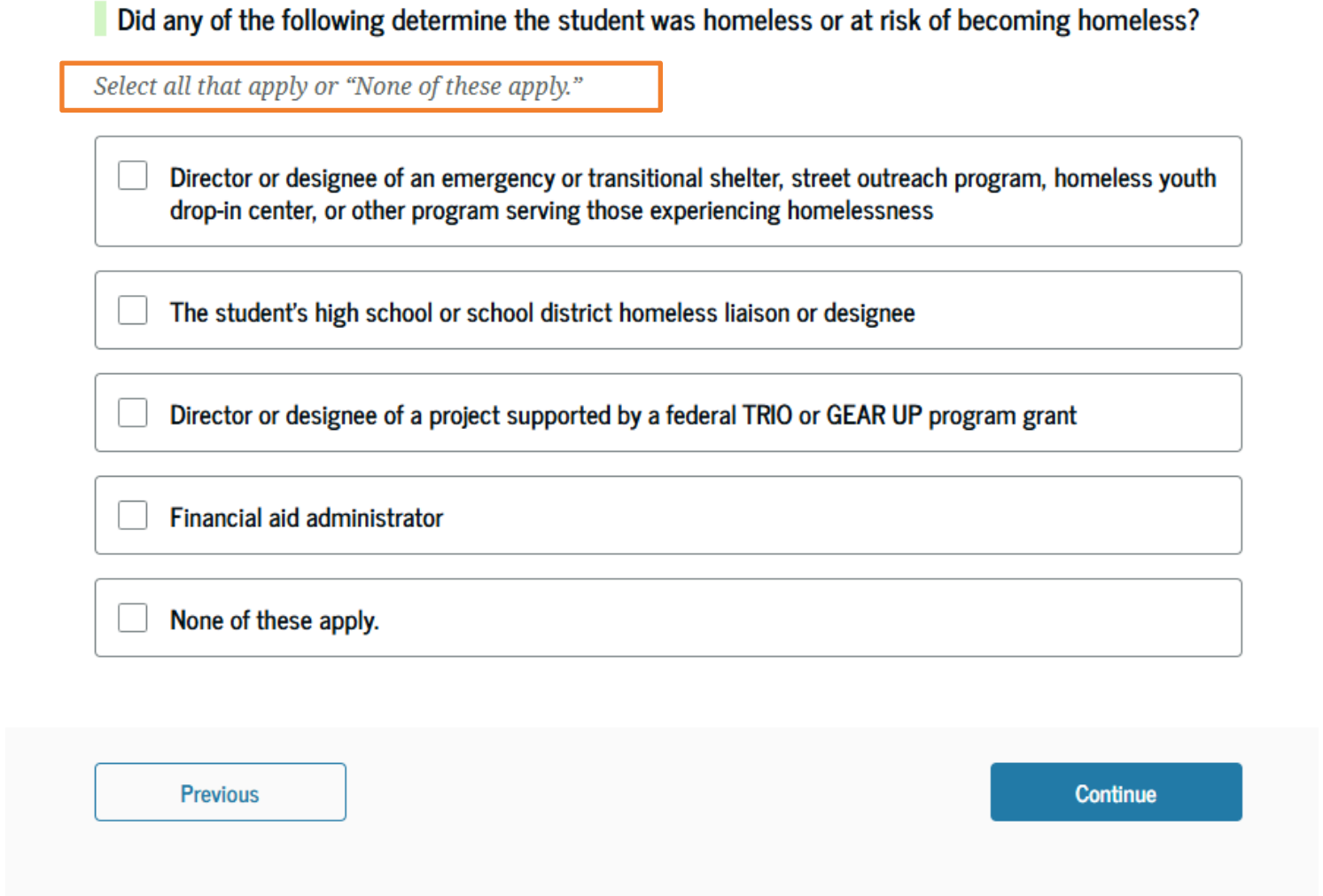
Are living in emergency shelters



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

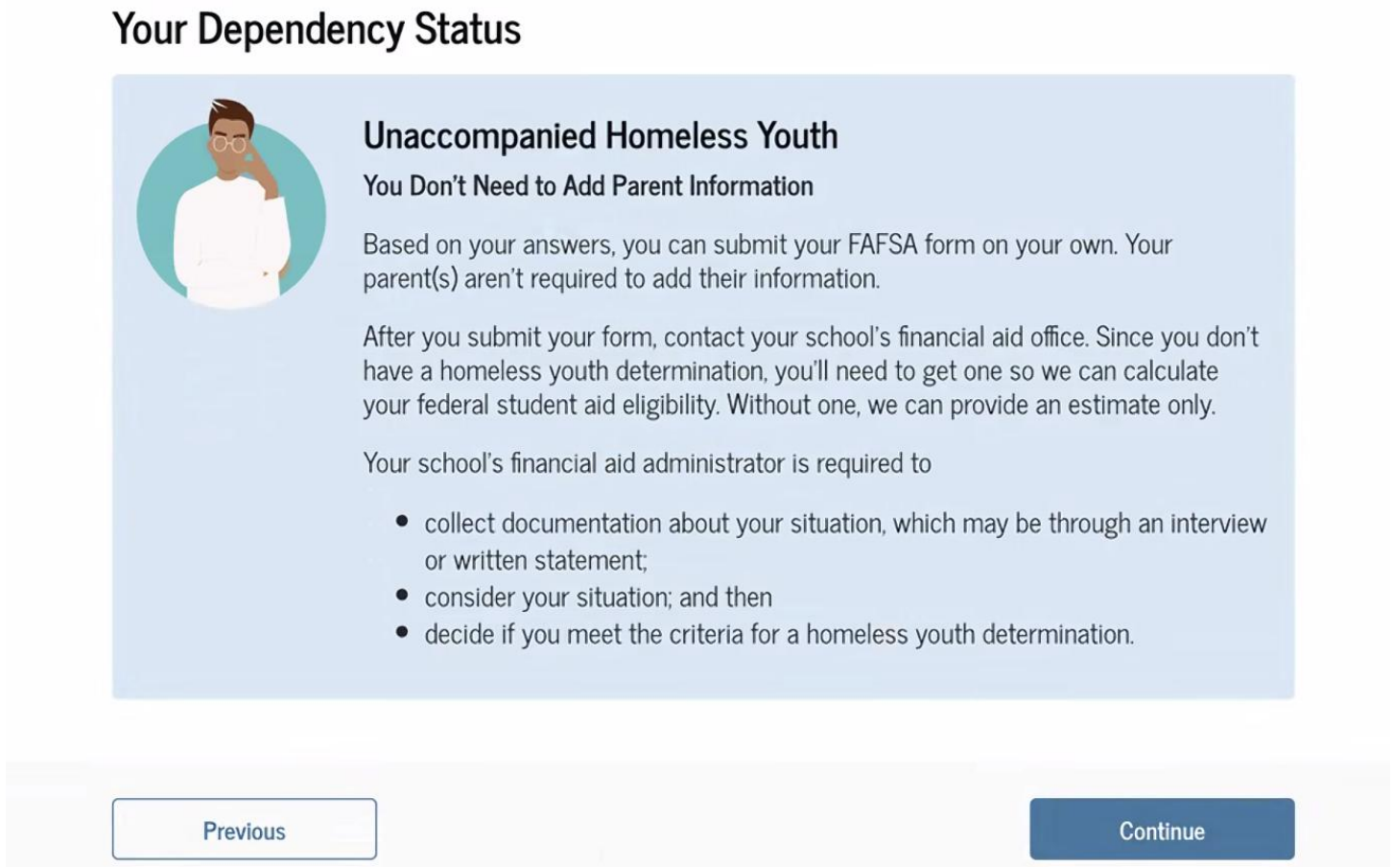
Homelessness Determinations

- If you select “yes,” you will be asked who will provide a homeless youth determination. Select all that apply.
- Financial aid administrators must accept documentation, including a documented phone call from these entities unless there is “documented conflicting information.”
- Status does not need to be redetermined every year if the student is at the same institution unless the student informs the institution that circumstances have changed, or the institution has specific conflicting information about the student’s independence and has informed the student of this information.
- If you don’t have verification from one of the listed entities, select “none of these apply.”



Homelessness Determinations

If “None of these apply,” you can complete the FAFSA as an independent student but must contact the financial aid office for a determination.



Homelessness Determinations

- Financial aid administrator's
  - **MUST** make a determination based on a written statement, or documented interview, with a student.
  - **MUST** make the determination without regard to the reasons why the student is unaccompanied and/or homeless.
- Once a determination is made by a financial aid administrator you may need to update your FAFSA. See next slide for details.
- Different rules apply to determinations of provisional independence (see next section “Unusual Circumstances”).

FAFSA Correction to Homeless Determination

John Burton Advocates for Youth

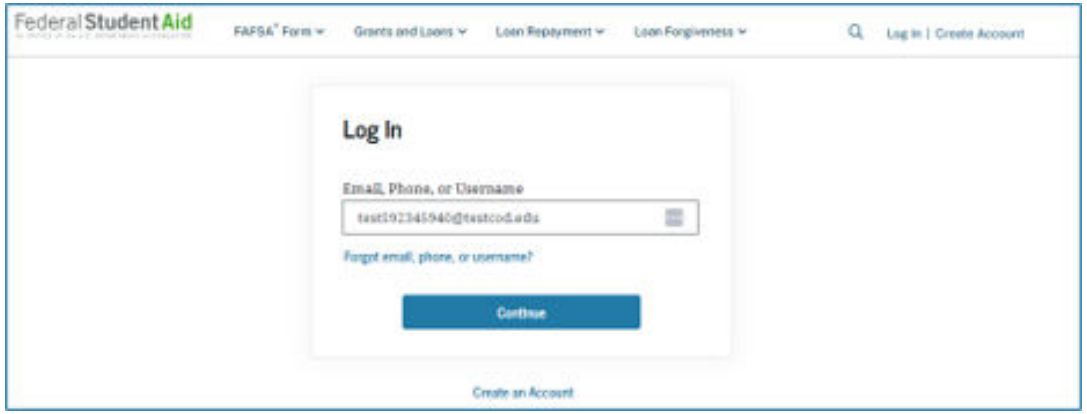
Homeless Determination Correction

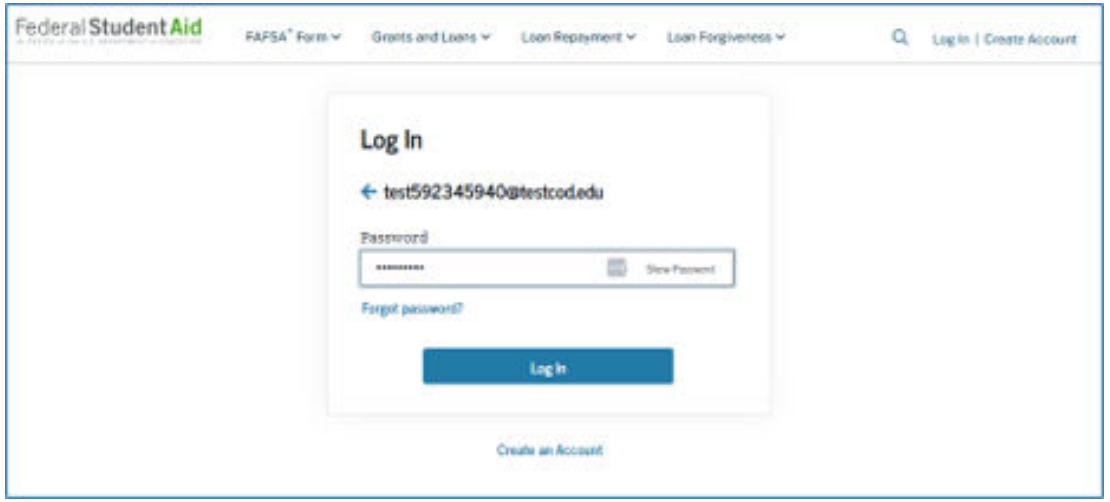
If you answered "yes" to the homelessness status question and selected “none of the above” in response to the homelessness determination question, once a financial aid administrator makes a determination regarding your homeless status, a correction will have to be made to your FAFSA.

Financial Aid Administrators may update the application after making a determination, in which case no action is required. They may, however, request that you make the correction on your FAFSA. The following slides provide guidance on how you can make that correction.

Homeless Determination Correction: Log-in

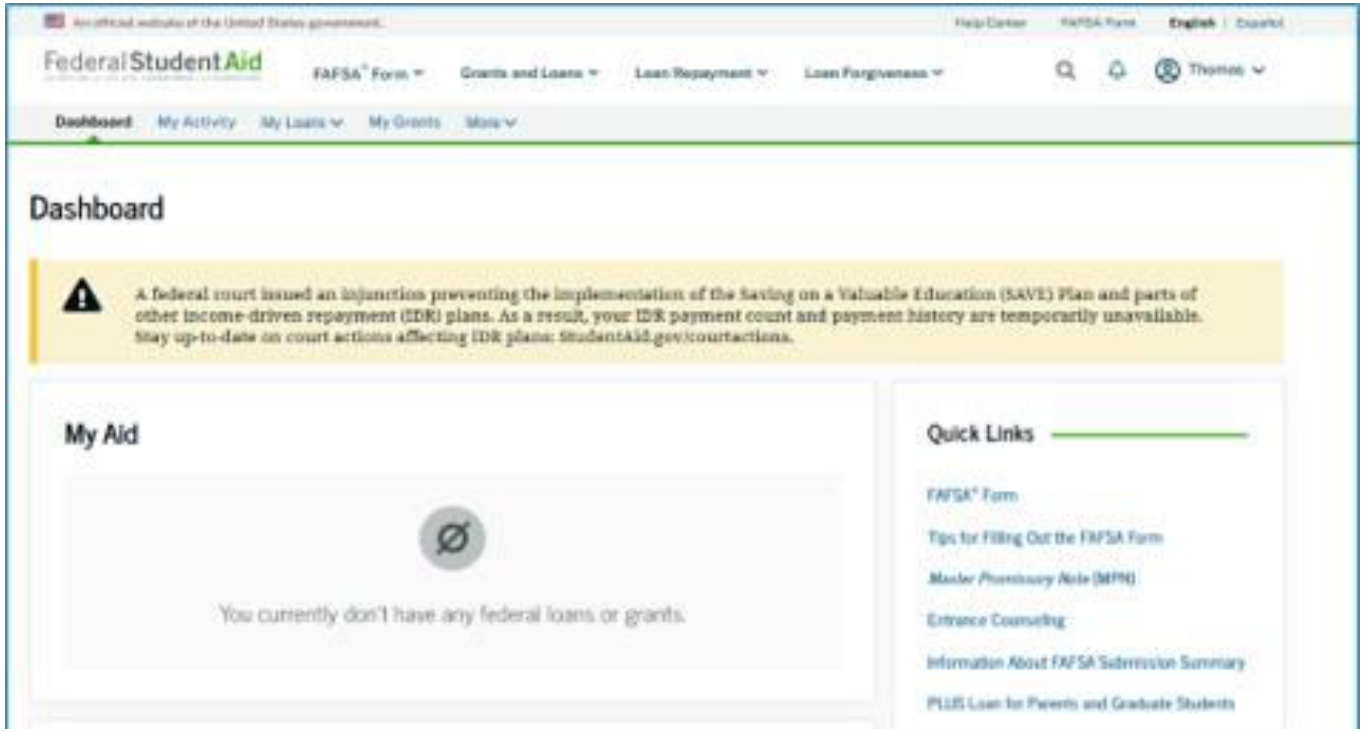
To access an existing FAFSA form, log in to your StudentAid.gov account.





Homeless Determination Correction: Dashboard

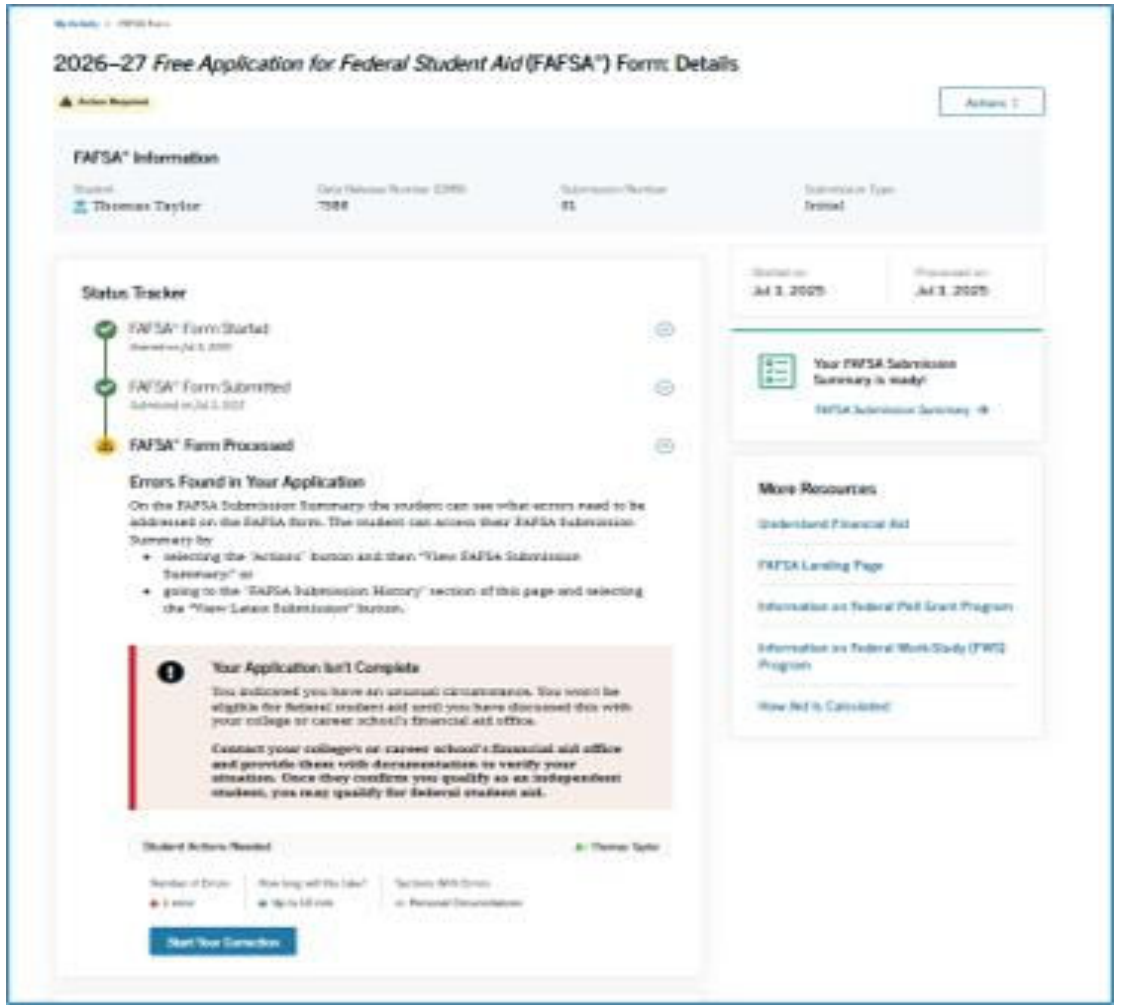
On the account Dashboard, you will see your most recent 2027-28 FAFSA activity under the "My Activity" Section. Select the application to be taken to a "Details" page.





Homeless Determination Correction: Details

On the "Details" page, you will see information about your FAFSA. An error notification will appear in this scenario informing you to contact your school's financial aid office to provide documentation. Select "Start Your Correction."



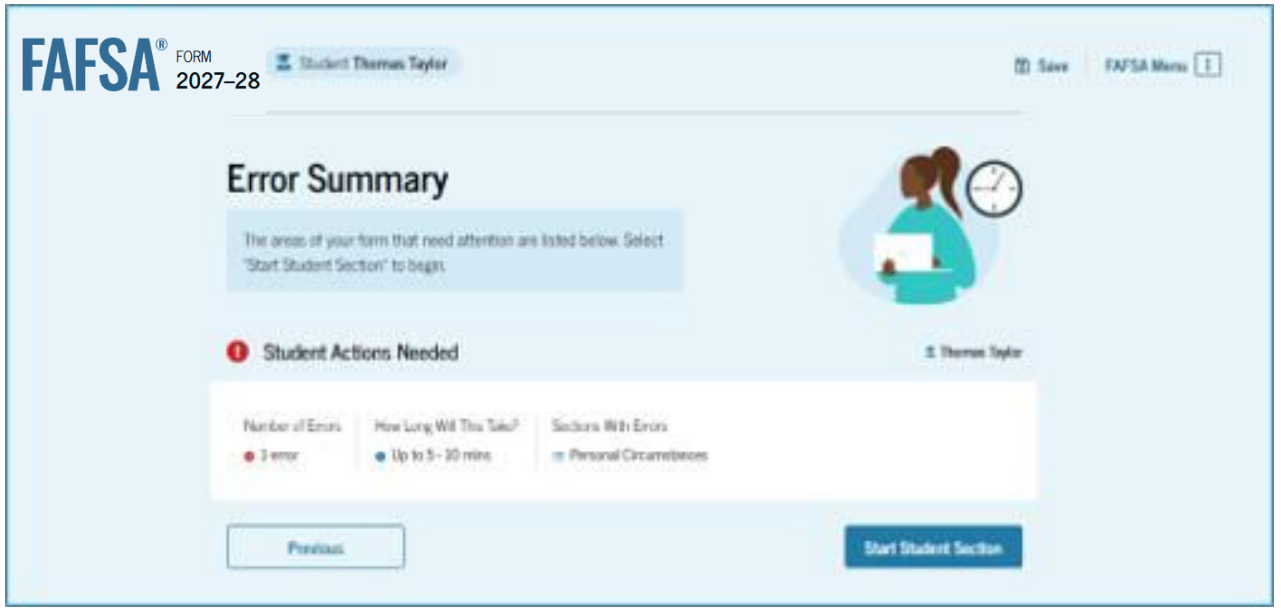
Homeless Determination Correction: Onboarding

When you start a correction, you are taken through an onboarding process. Corrections should only be submitted if critical information was missing or had incorrect information



Homeless Determination Correction: Error Summary

Review the Error Summary page to check the number of errors on your form. Select "Start Student Section" to begin FAFSA correction.

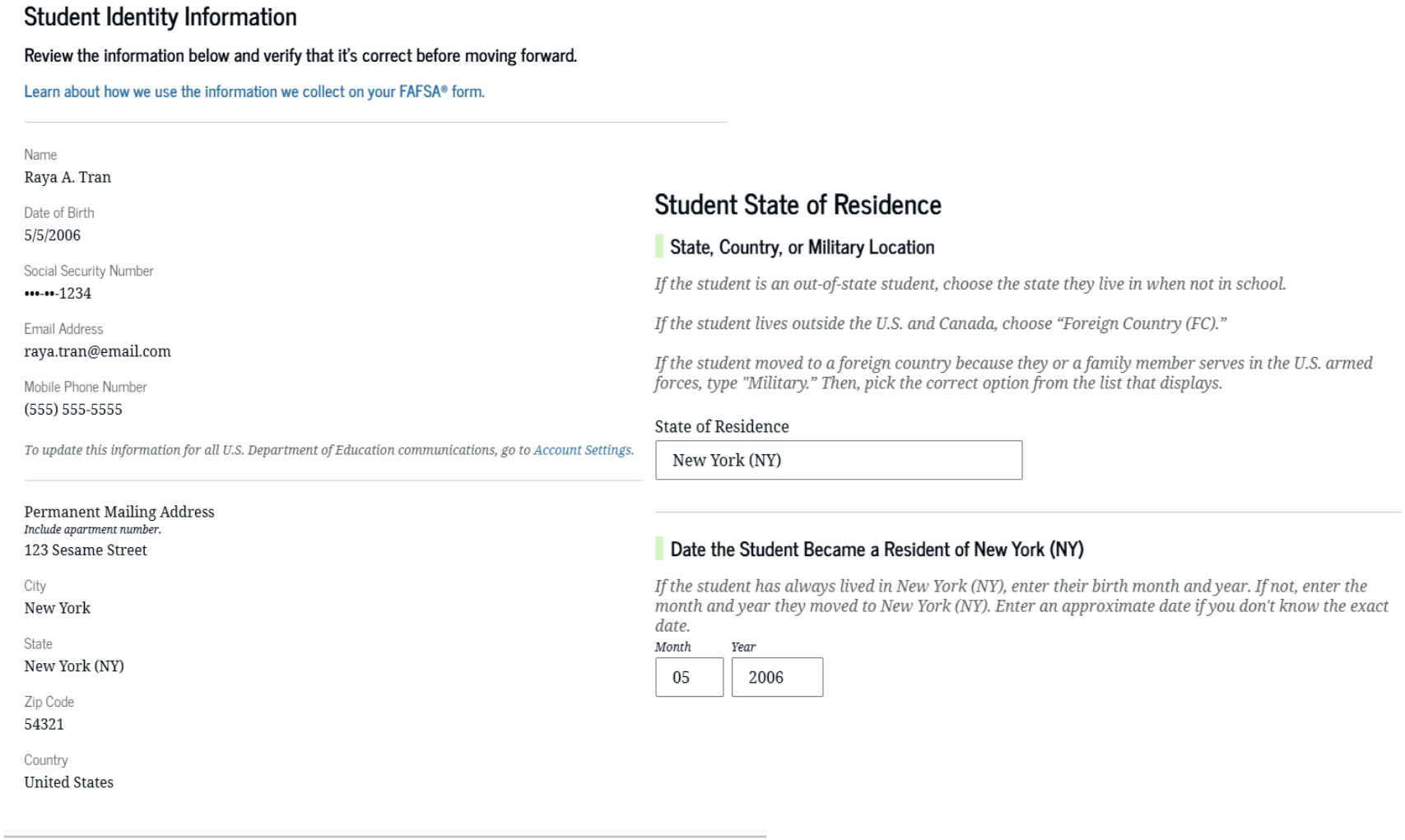


Homeless Determination Correction: Updates

You will then be taken through the pages on:

- Student Identity
- State of Residence
- Marital Status
- College or Career School Plans
- Personal Circumstances

Confirm that each section remains accurate



Student Identity Information

Review the information below and verify that it's correct before moving forward.

Learn about how we use the information we collect on your FAFSA® form.

Name
Raya A. Tran

Date of Birth
5/5/2006

Social Security Number
•••-••-1234

Email Address
raya.tran@email.com

Mobile Phone Number
(555) 555-5555

To update this information for all U.S. Department of Education communications, go to Account Settings.

Permanent Mailing Address
Include apartment number.
123 Sesame Street

City
New York

State
New York (NY)

Zip Code
54321

Country
United States

Student State of Residence

State, Country, or Military Location

If the student is an out-of-state student, choose the state they live in when not in school.

If the student lives outside the U.S. and Canada, choose "Foreign Country (FC)."

If the student moved to a foreign country because they or a family member serves in the U.S. armed forces, type "Military." Then, pick the correct option from the list that displays.

State of Residence
New York (NY)

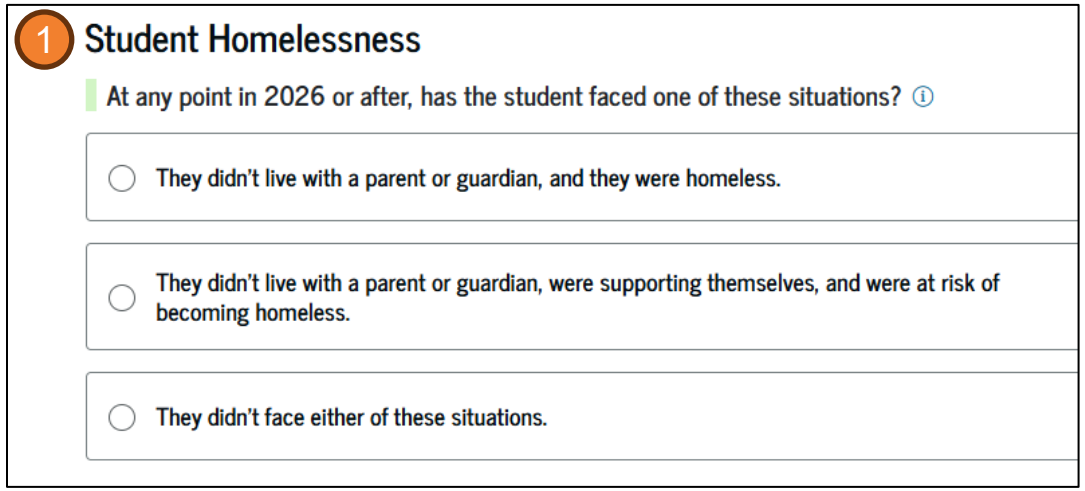
Date the Student Became a Resident of New York (NY)

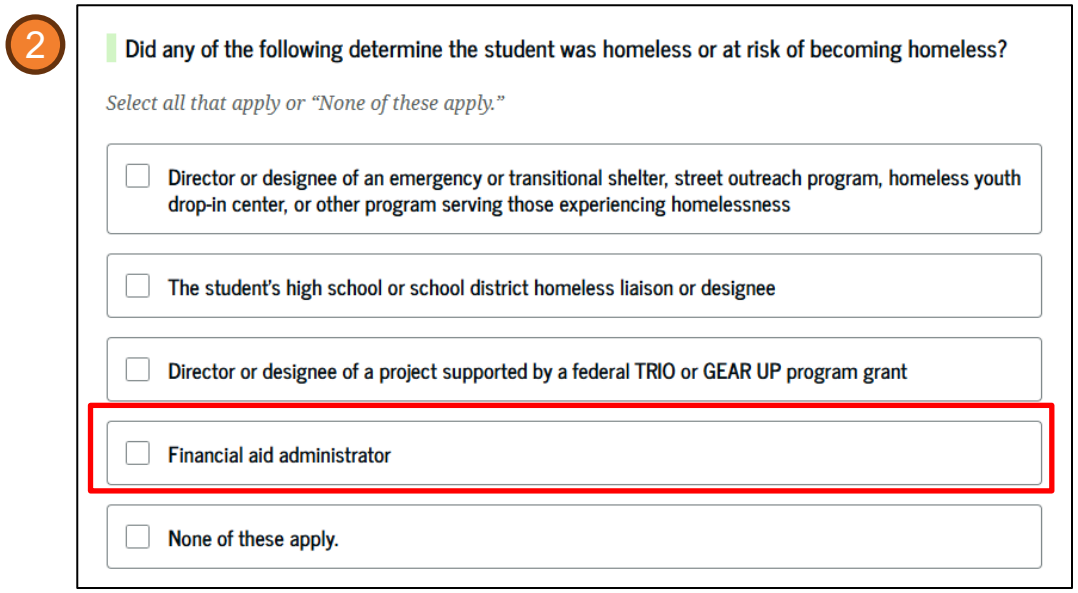
If the student has always lived in New York (NY), enter their birth month and year. If not, enter the month and year they moved to New York (NY). Enter an approximate date if you don't know the exact date.

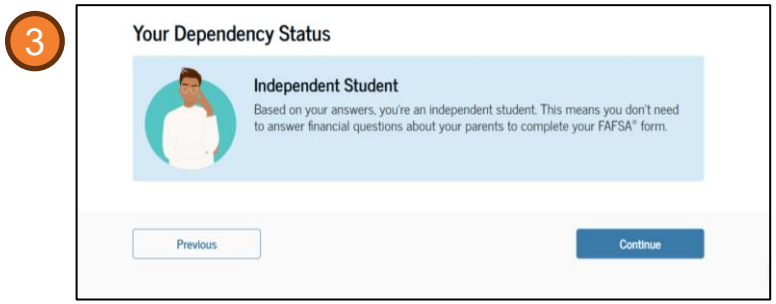
Month 05 *Year* 2006

Homeless Determination Correction

1. You will be asked if you are homeless or at risk of being homeless. Maintain the response as one of the first two options.
2. You will be asked who made the homelessness determination. You can update this answer from "None of these apply" to "Financial aid administrator."
3. You will see a notification that you are considered independent. Select "Continue."

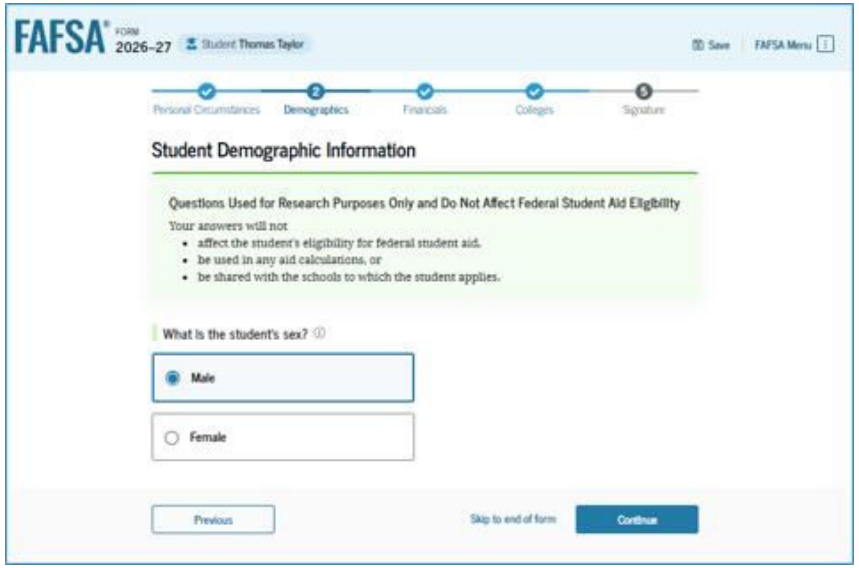


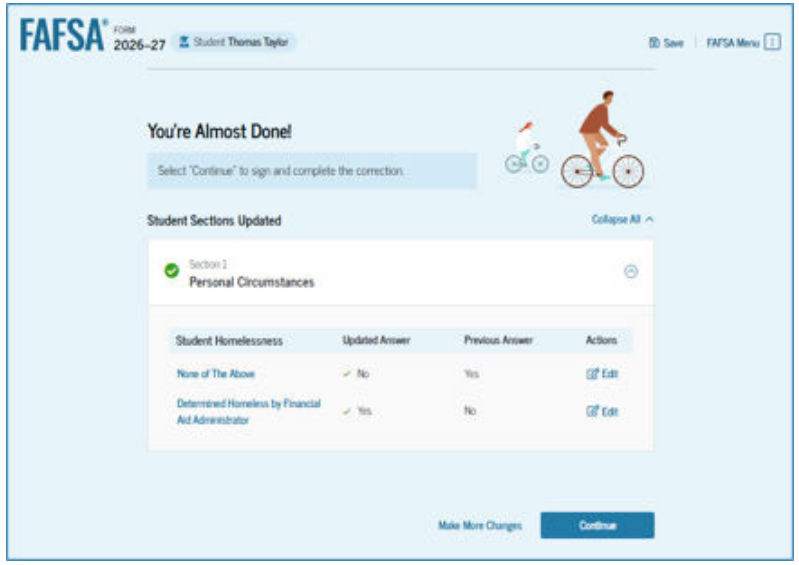


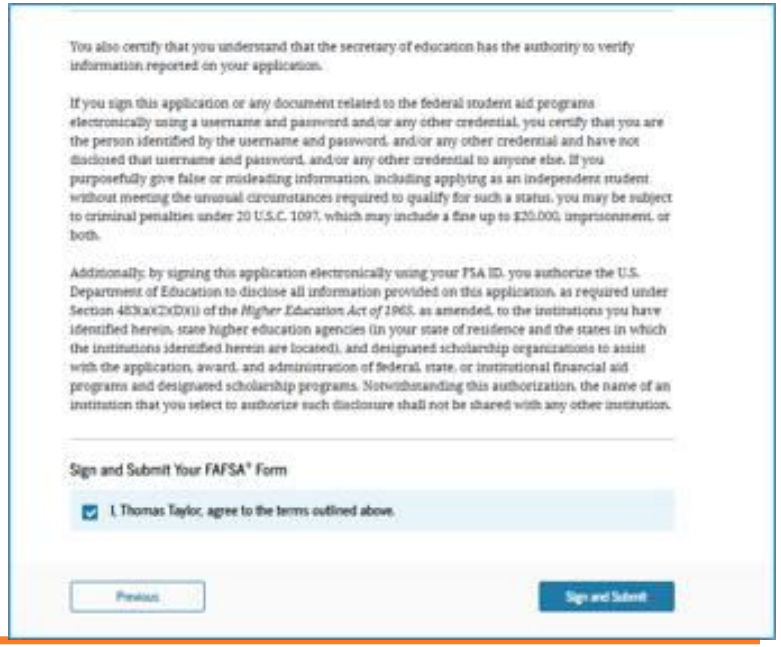


Homeless Determination Correction: Submission

- You will then be routed to "Student Demographic Information" where you can select "Skip to end of form."
- On the next page, select "Continue" if ready to submit.
- After confirming changes, you will digitally sign and submit.
- You will see the confirmation page after signing.







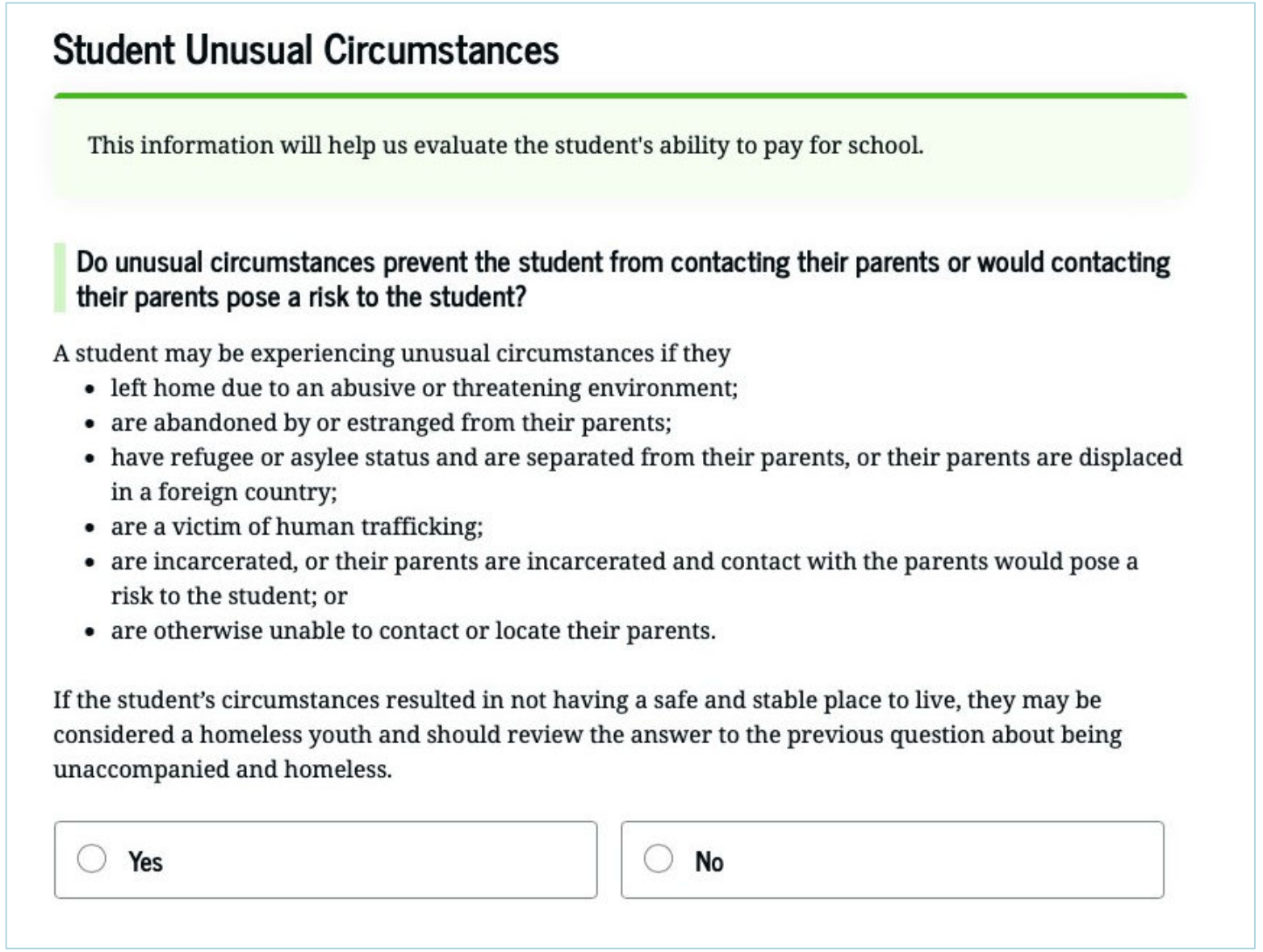
4c.
Unusual Circumstances

Student Unusual Circumstances

Students may complete the FAFSA 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.

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.

Colleges have discretion to use professional judgement when evaluating whether to consider unusual circumstances.



Student Unusual Circumstances

This information will help us evaluate the student's ability to pay for school.

Do unusual circumstances prevent the student from contacting their parents or would contacting their parents pose a risk to the student?

A student may be experiencing unusual circumstances if they

- left home due to an abusive or threatening environment;
- are abandoned by or estranged from their parents;
- have refugee or asylee status and are separated from their parents, or their parents are displaced in a foreign country;
- are a victim of human trafficking;
- are incarcerated, or their parents are incarcerated and contact with the parents would pose a risk to the student; or
- are otherwise unable to contact or locate their parents.

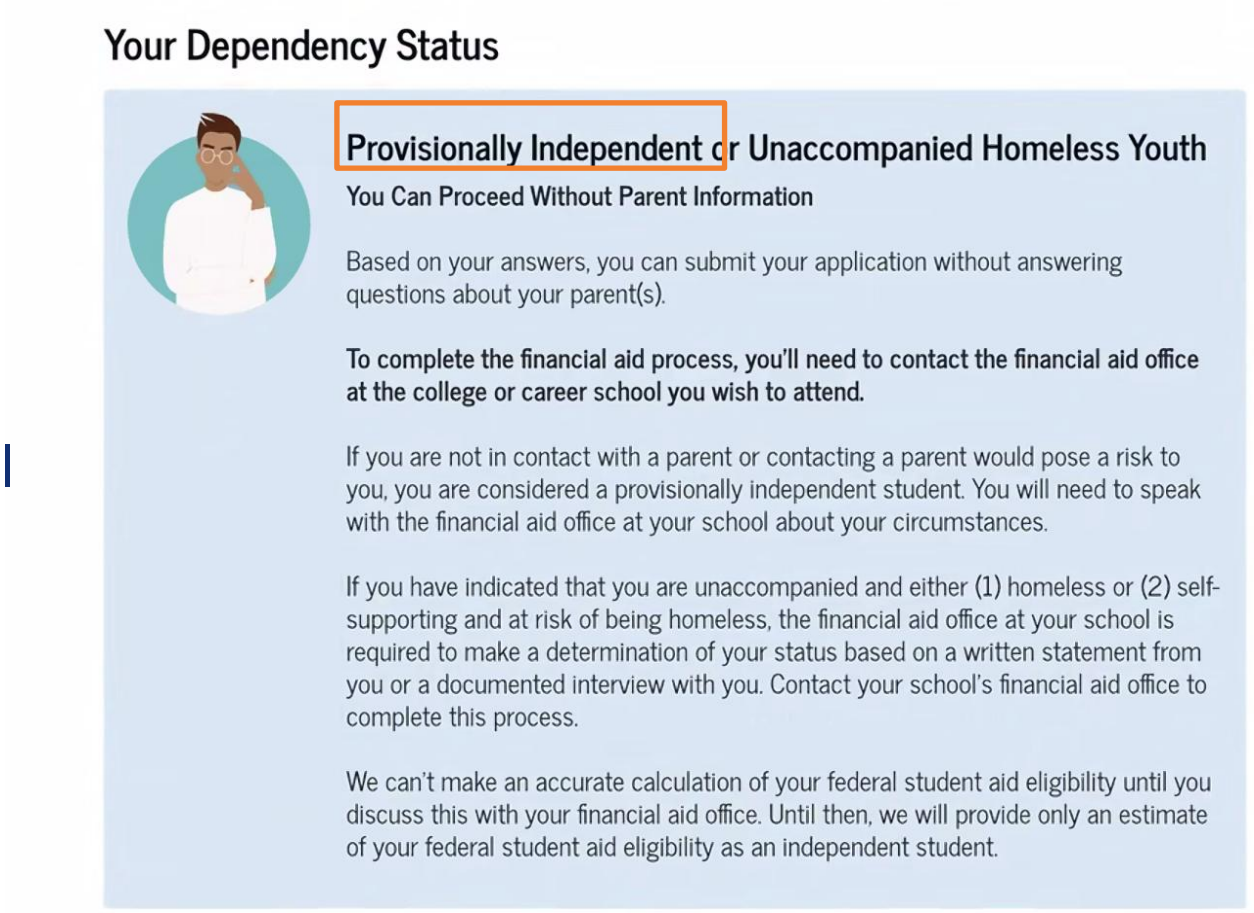
If the student's circumstances resulted in not having a safe and stable place to live, they may be considered a homeless youth and should review the answer to the previous question about being unaccompanied and homeless.

○ Yes ○ No

Impact of Provisionally Independent Status

If a student has “unusual circumstances”, they will be “Provisionally Independent.”

The student can sign and submit their FAFSA 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.


Your Dependency Status

Provisionally Independent or Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

You Can Proceed Without Parent Information

Based on your answers, you can submit your application without answering questions about your parent(s).

To complete the financial aid process, you'll need to contact the financial aid office at the college or career school you wish to attend.

If you are not in contact with a parent or contacting a parent would pose a risk to you, you are considered a provisionally independent student. You will need to speak with the financial aid office at your school about your circumstances.

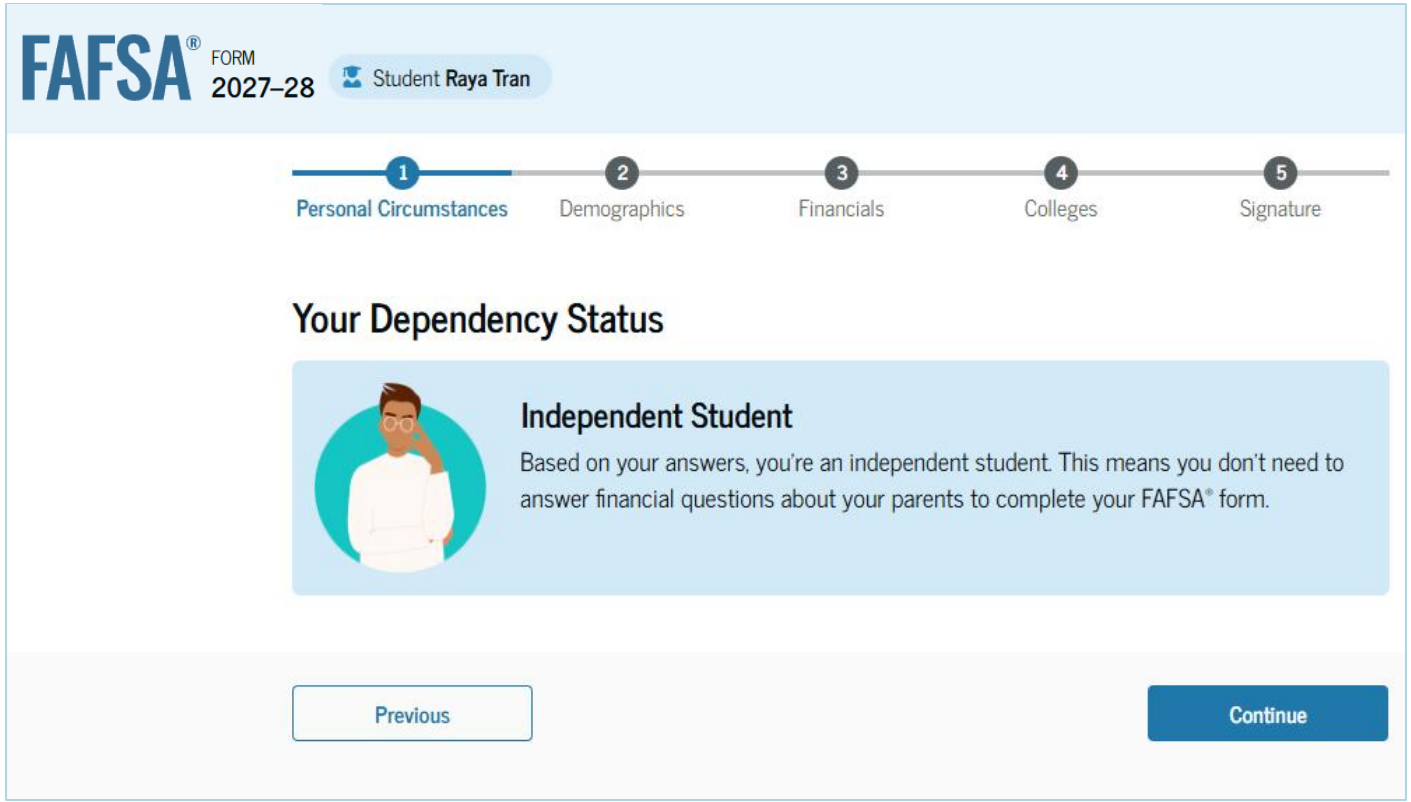
If you have indicated that you are unaccompanied and either (1) homeless or (2) self-supporting and at risk of being homeless, the financial aid office at your school is required to make a determination of your status based on a written statement from you or a documented interview with you. Contact your school's financial aid office to complete this process.

We can't make an accurate calculation of your federal student aid eligibility until you discuss this with your financial aid office. Until then, we will provide only an estimate of your federal student aid eligibility as an independent student.

4d.
Independent Status Confirmation

Independent Status Confirmation

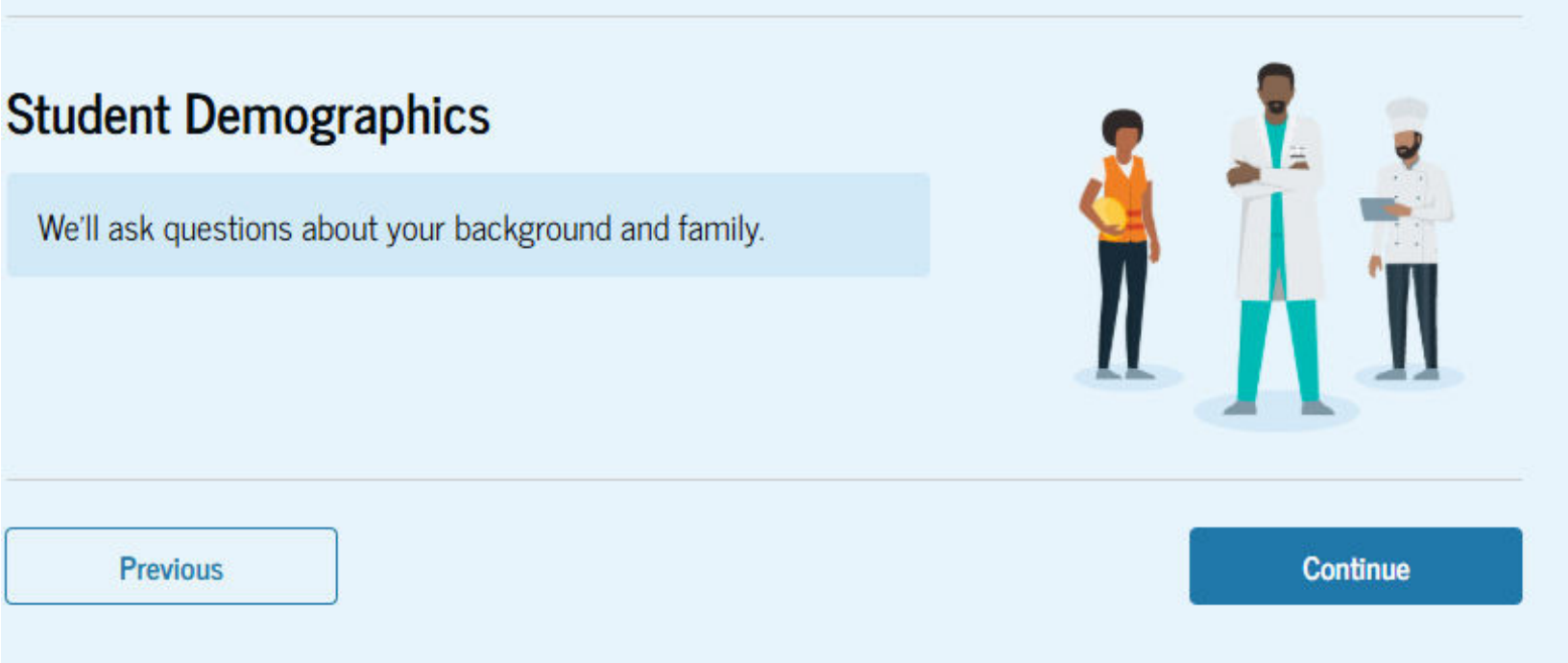
If you indicated that you meet one or more of the criteria for independent status, this screen will appear.



5.
Student Demographics

Student Demographics

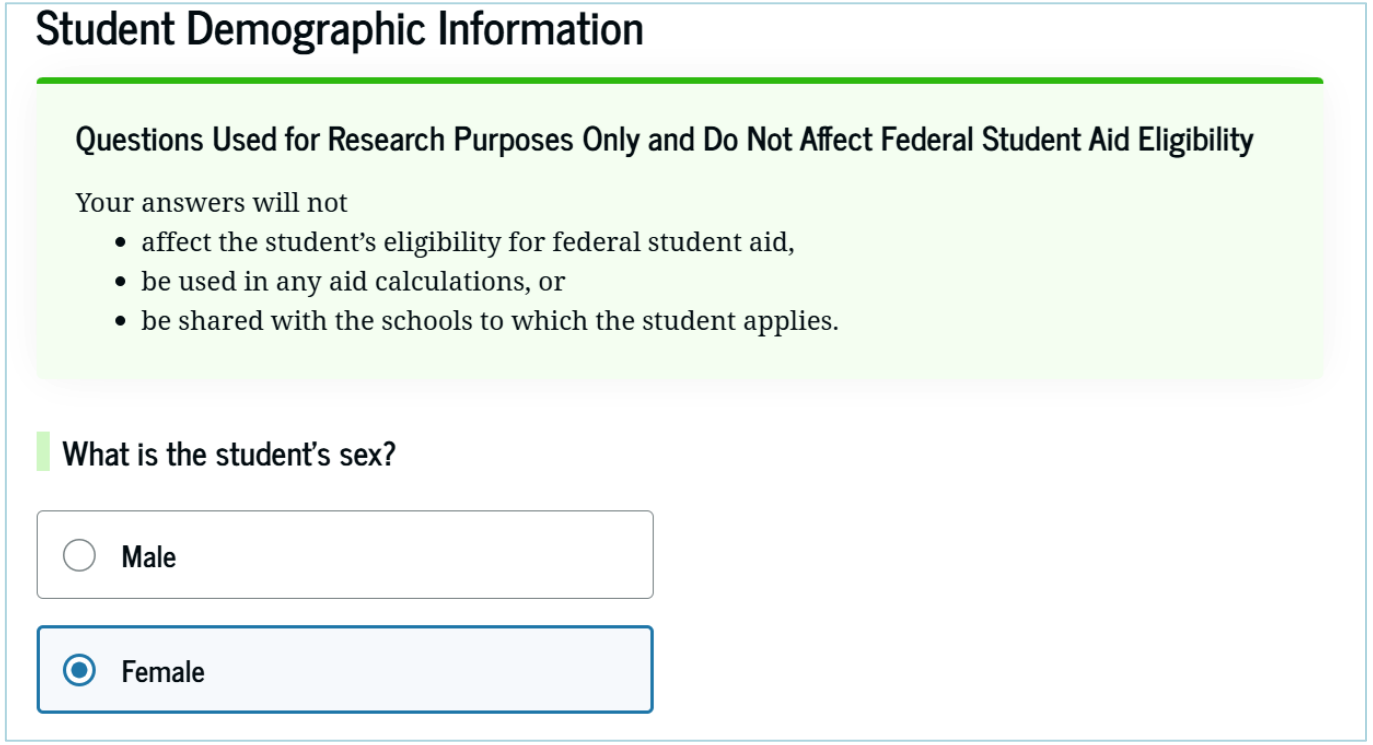
This is the first view within the Student Demographics section. It provides an overview of the section.



Demographic Information

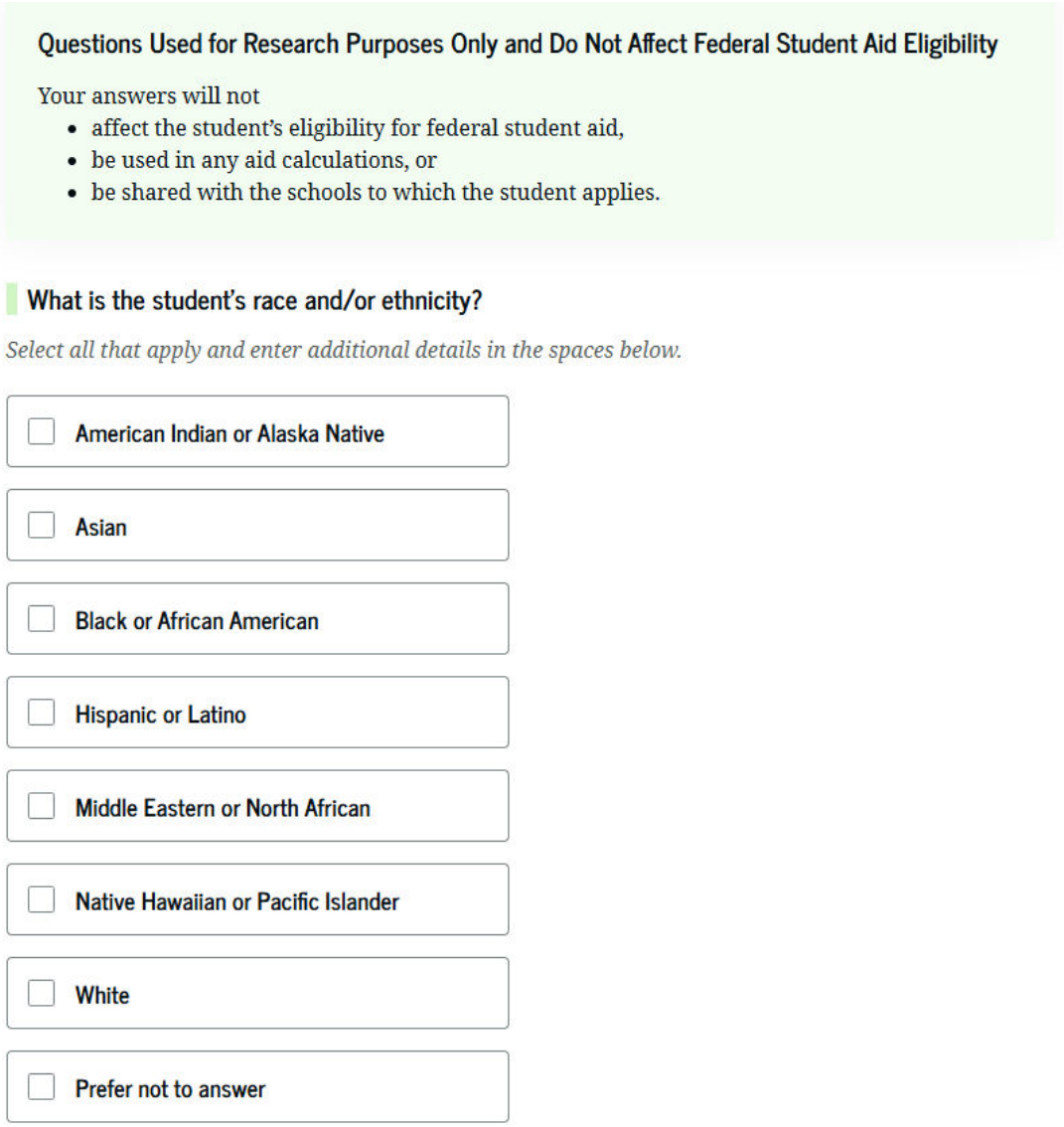
You are asked about your sex. Select your response from the options.

The answers are not shared with the colleges and are for research purposes only.



Race and Ethnicity

You are asked to identify your race and/or ethnicity. You can select multiple options. For each selection, a pop up will appear that allows you to select a subcategory. 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.



Citizenship Status

You are asked about your citizenship status. If you are an eligible non-citizen, you will be asked to enter your Alien Registration Number.

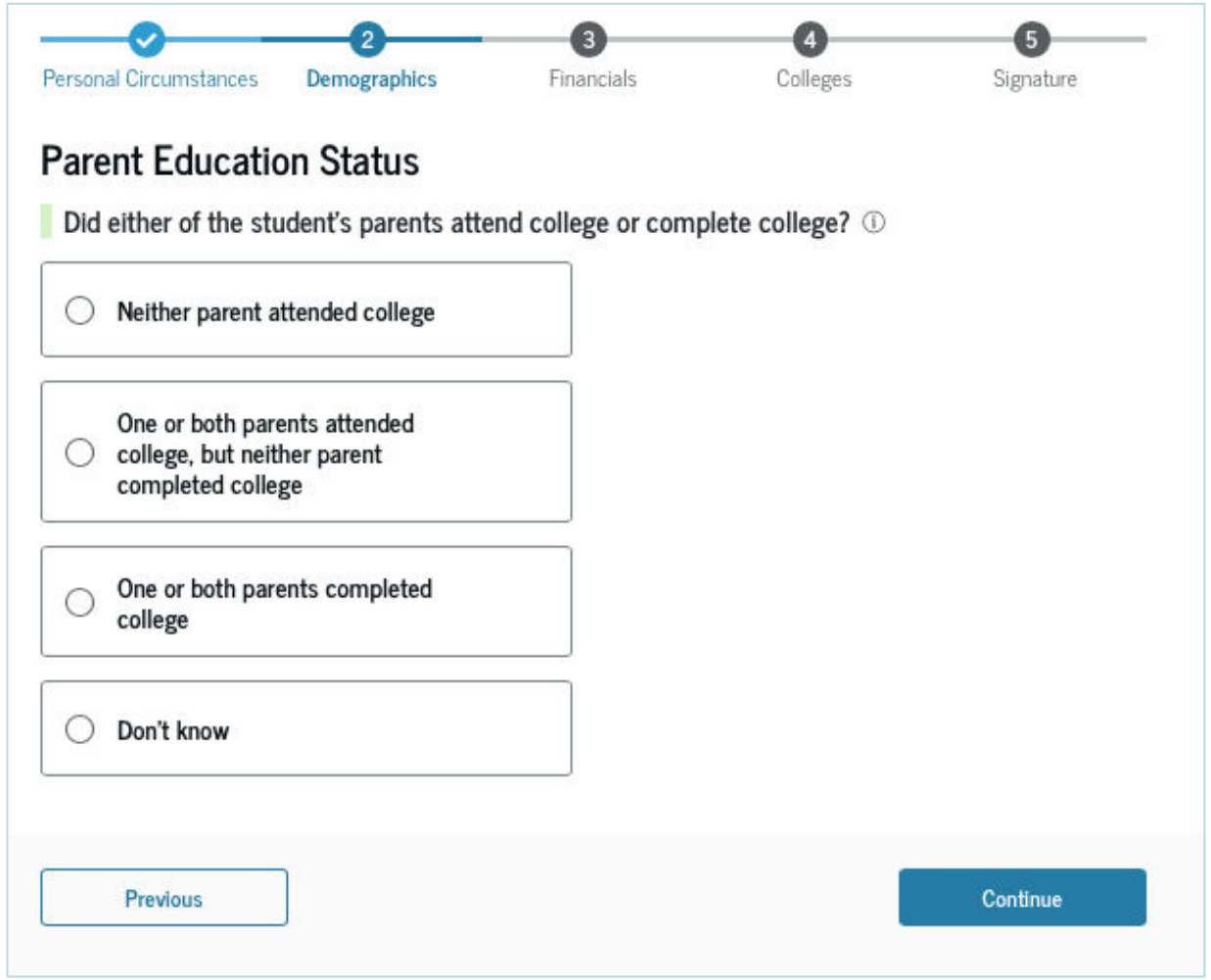
If you select that you are not a US citizen or eligible non-citizen the form will allow you to continue, however you are not eligible for federal aid and should complete the CADAA instead.



Parent Education Status

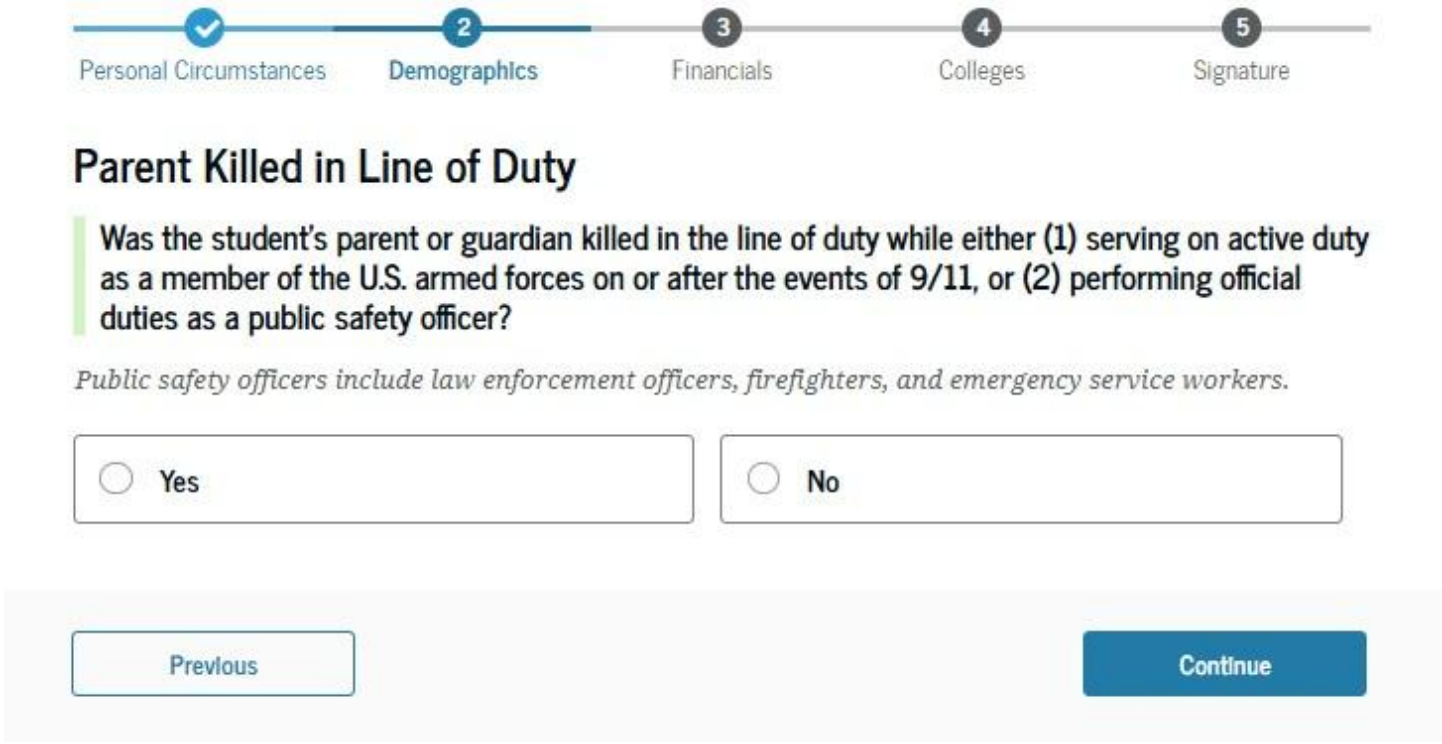
You are asked if either of your parents attended or completed college. This information is used to identify first-generation college students and is for statistical purposes only.

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



Parent Killed in Line of Duty

All students under the age of 33 are asked if their parent or guardian was killed in the line of duty in the armed forces or as a public safety officer. If you do not know, select “no.”



High School Completion Status

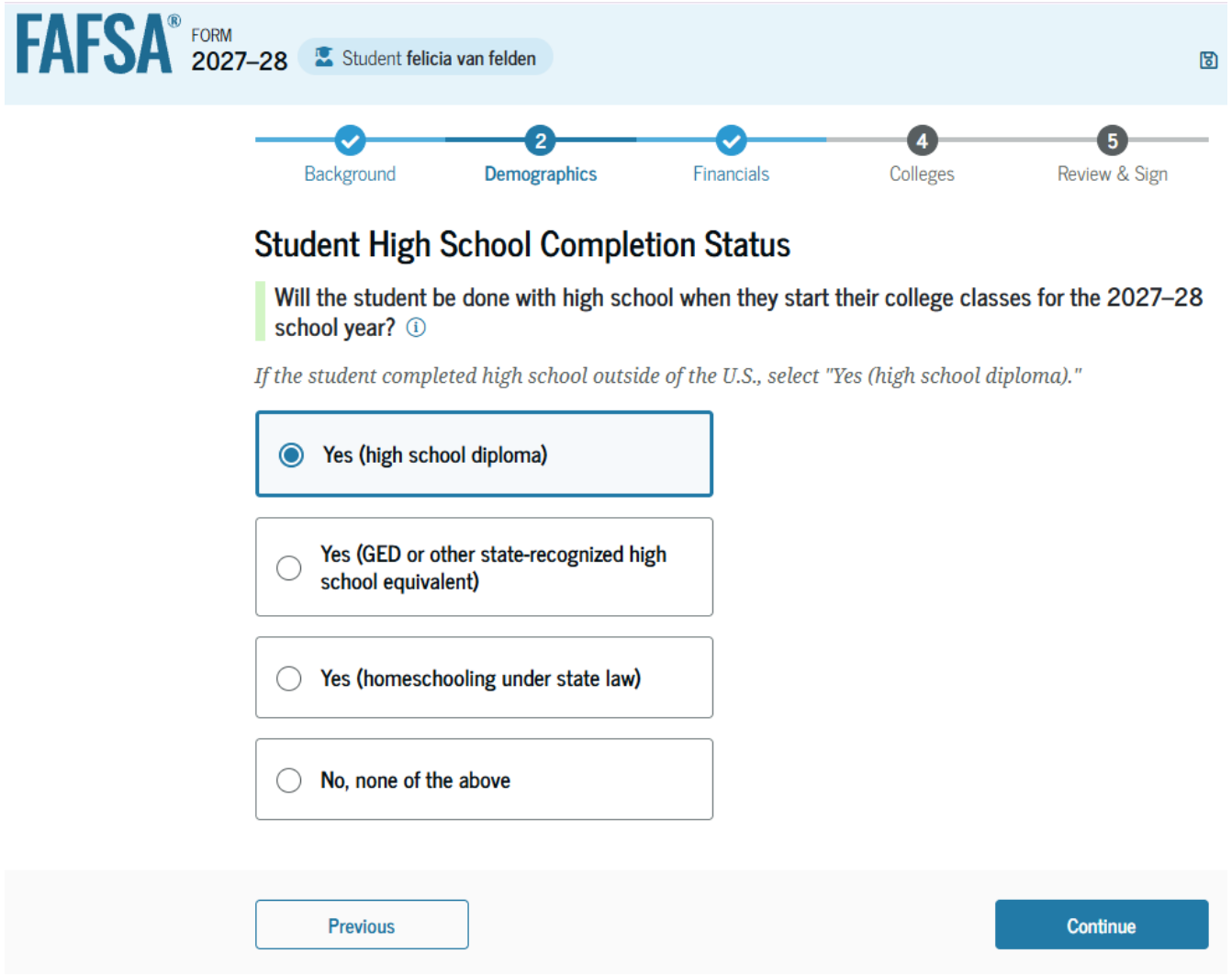
You are asked what your high school completion status will be when you start the 2026–27 school year.

Students who were home-schooled or received a high school equivalency certificate (i.e., GED) are eligible for aid.

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

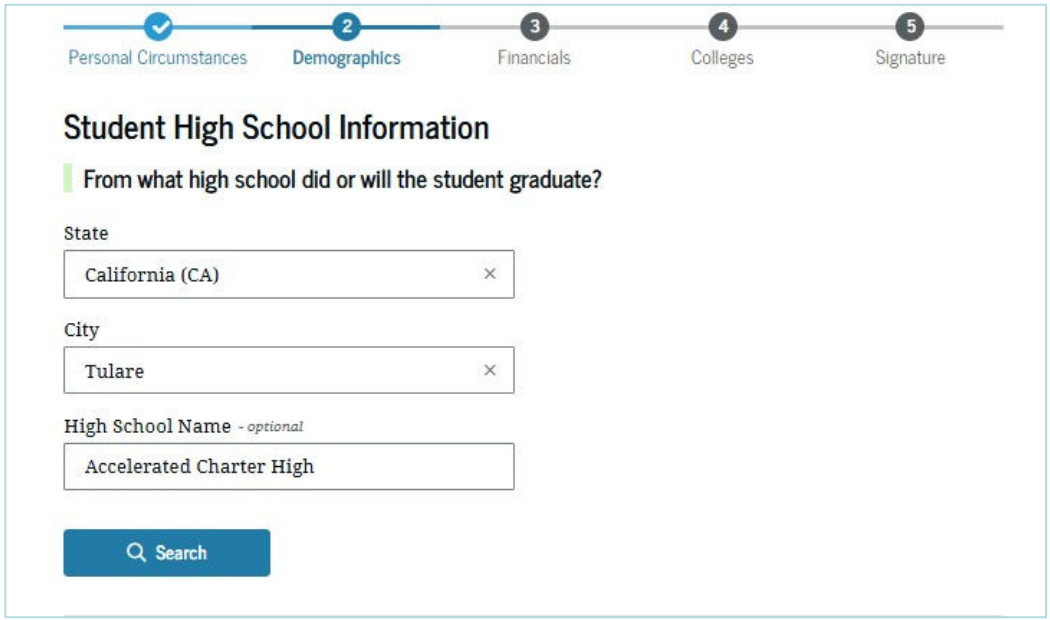
If you select “None of the above” you will be allowed to continue to complete the form. However, aid is available only under extremely limited “ability to benefit” criteria* or for eligible foster youth through the Chafee Grant.

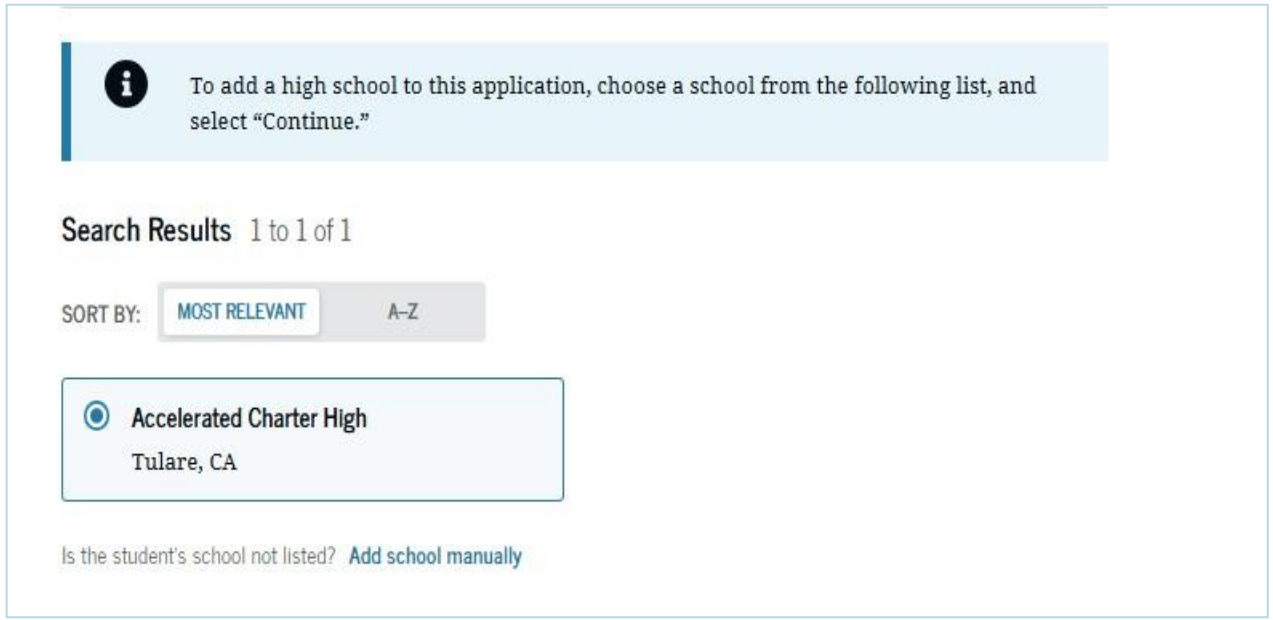
*https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements#ability-to-benefit.



High School Information

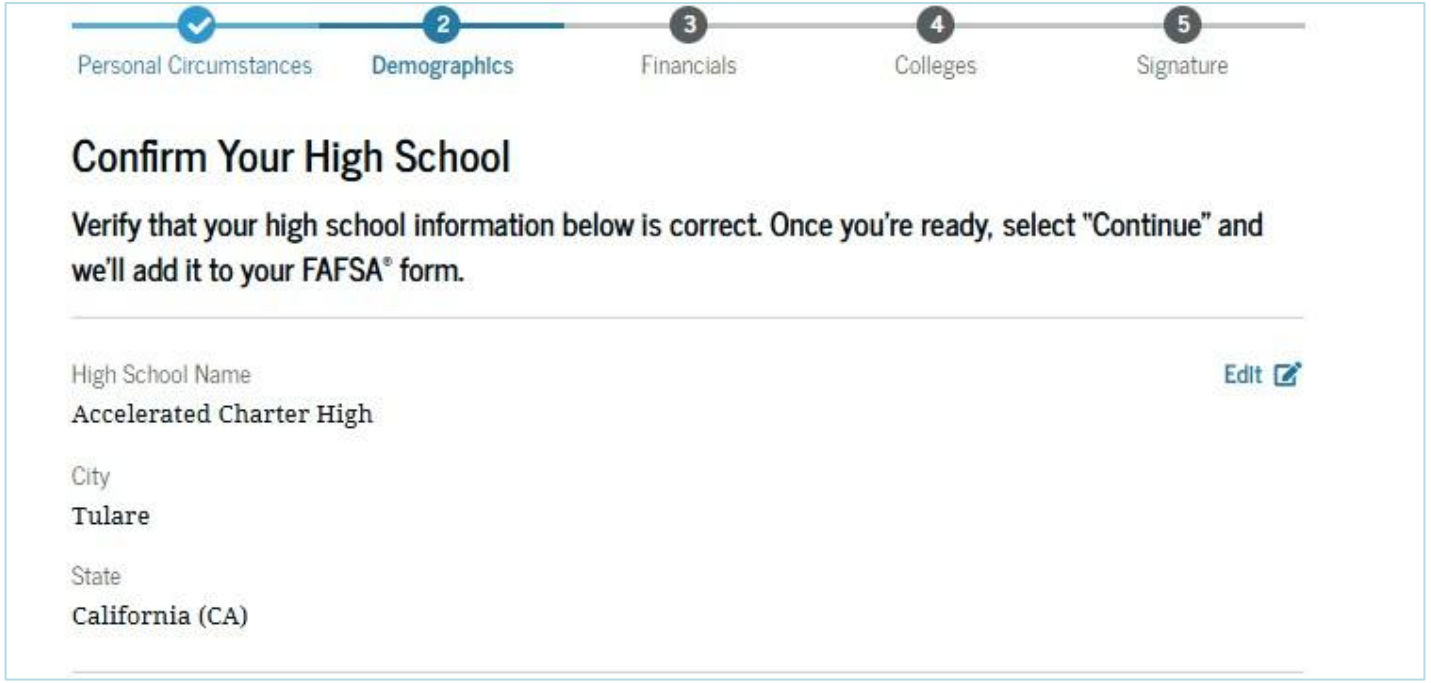
If you select ”High school diploma”, you are asked which high school you did or will graduate from. Enter your high school’s state and city. After selecting "Search," select the correct high school from the search results and select continue.





Confirm High School

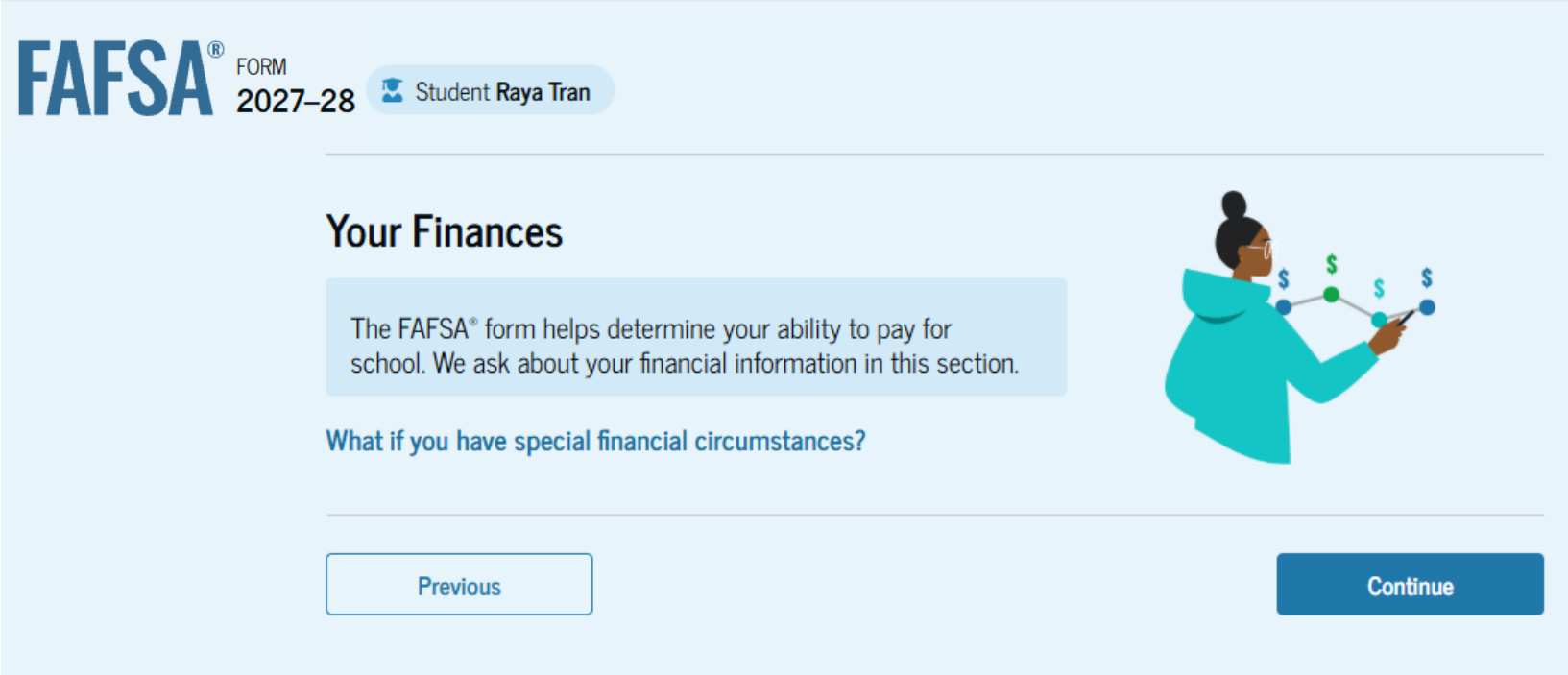
You have the option to edit the high school information presented on this page by selecting "Edit," which will return you to the high school information page. If the information is correct, select "Continue" to proceed to the next section.



6.
Student Financials

Introduction: Financials

This is the first page within the Student Financials section. It provides an overview of the section.



Financials Section: Federal Benefits Received

Students are asked if they received certain means-tested public benefits at any time in 2025 or 2026.
If you answer yes to any of these, you will be able to skip the question about your current assets.

In California:

Medicaid = MediCal
SNAP = Cal Fresh
TANF = CalWorks

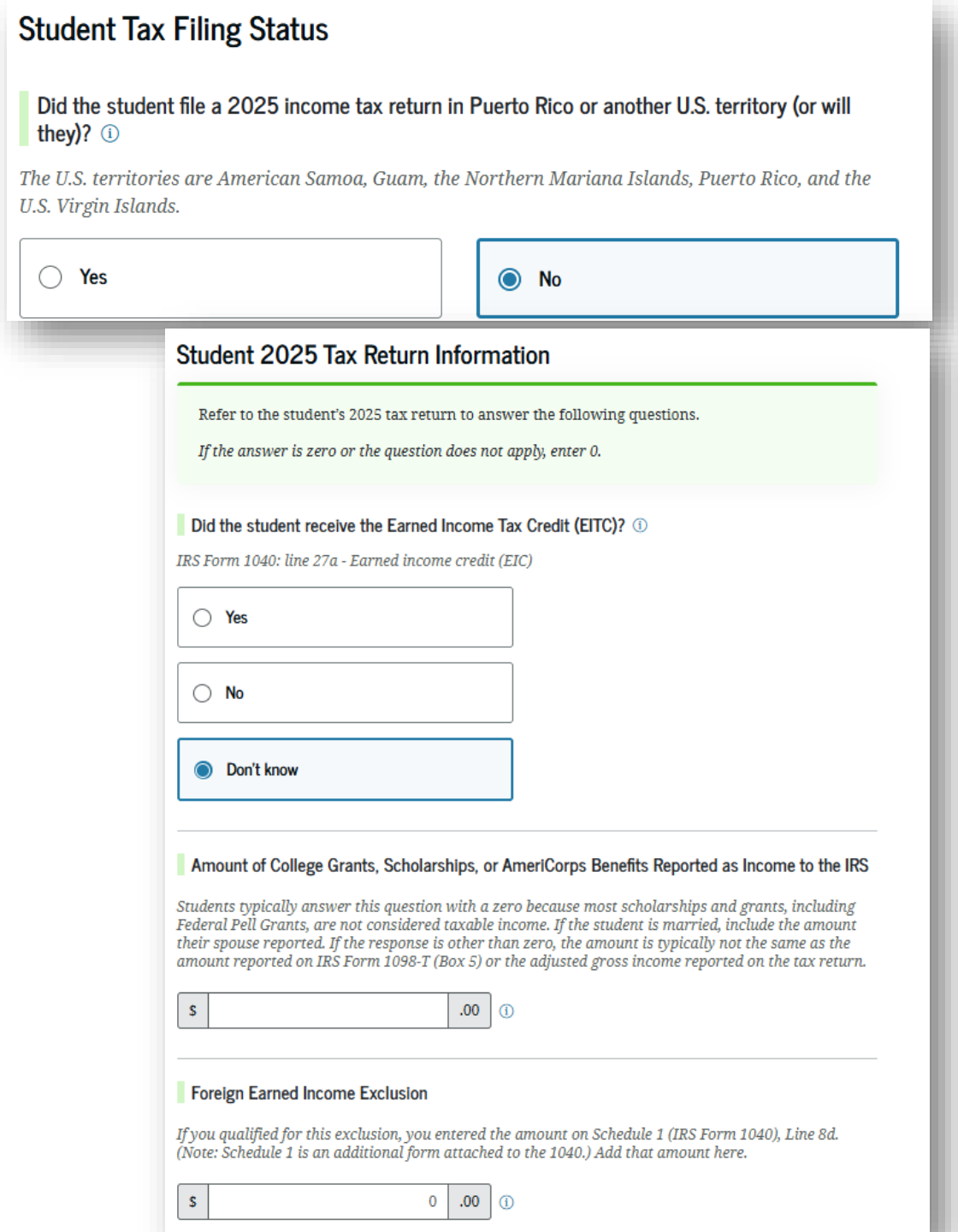
- [ ] Medicaid
- [ ] Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- [ ] Free or Reduced Price School Lunch (based on income)
- [ ] Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- [ ] Lower Premiums for a Plan Purchased Through the Health Insurance Marketplace
- [ ] Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- [ ] Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- [ ] Federal Housing Assistance (for example, Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) or public housing)
- [ ] Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- [ ] None of these apply.

Tax Filing Status

These questions only appear if you do not consent to import your Federal Tax Information (FTI) from the IRS.

If you indicated that you are married, these questions look slightly different.

If you respond no to the first question, you will be asked about any foreign income and a couple other unlikely scenarios.

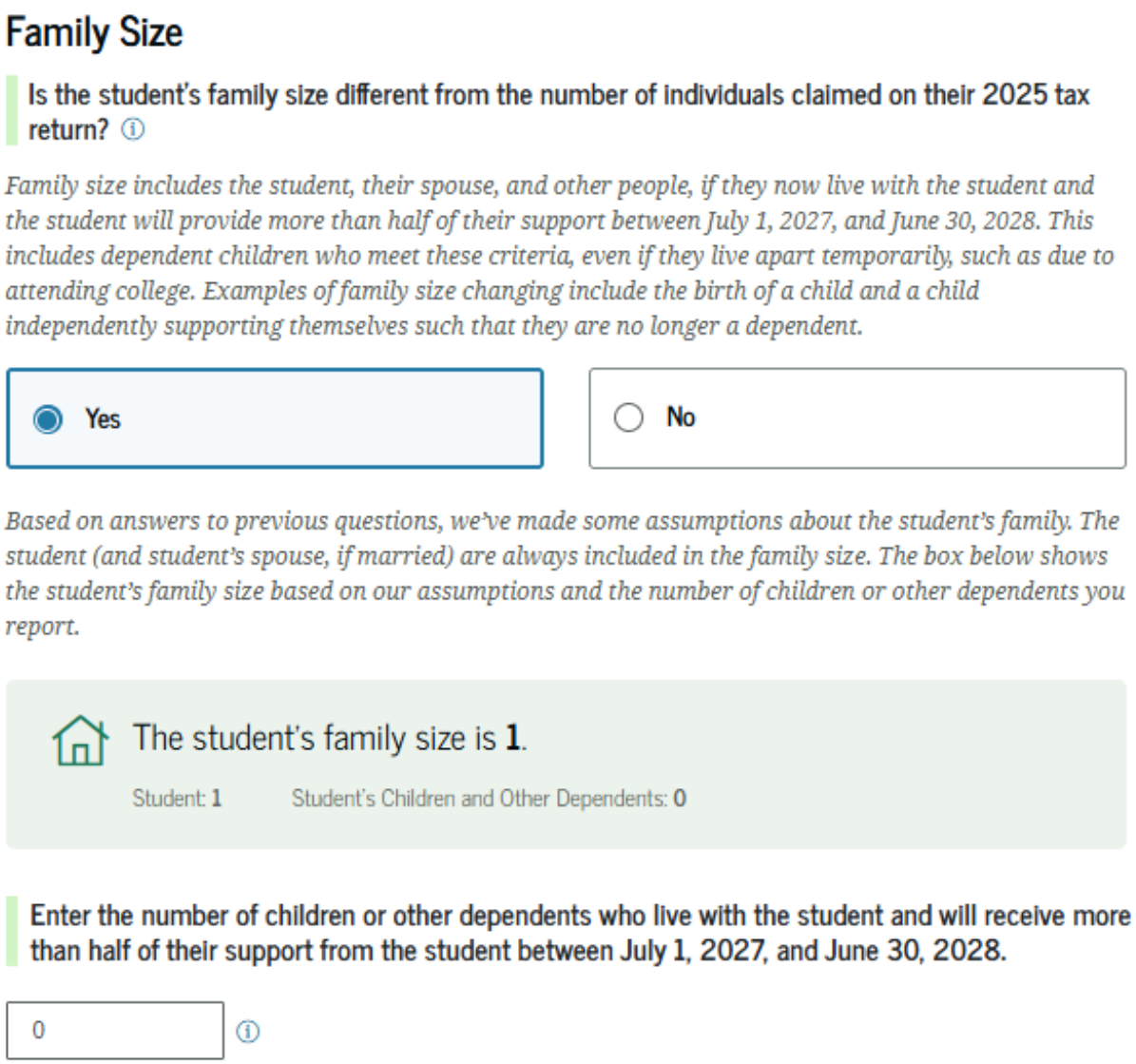


Family Size

This screen appears if the student's family size is different than what is reported on their 2025 tax return.

For most independent students, your family size will be 1 and will likely not have changed.

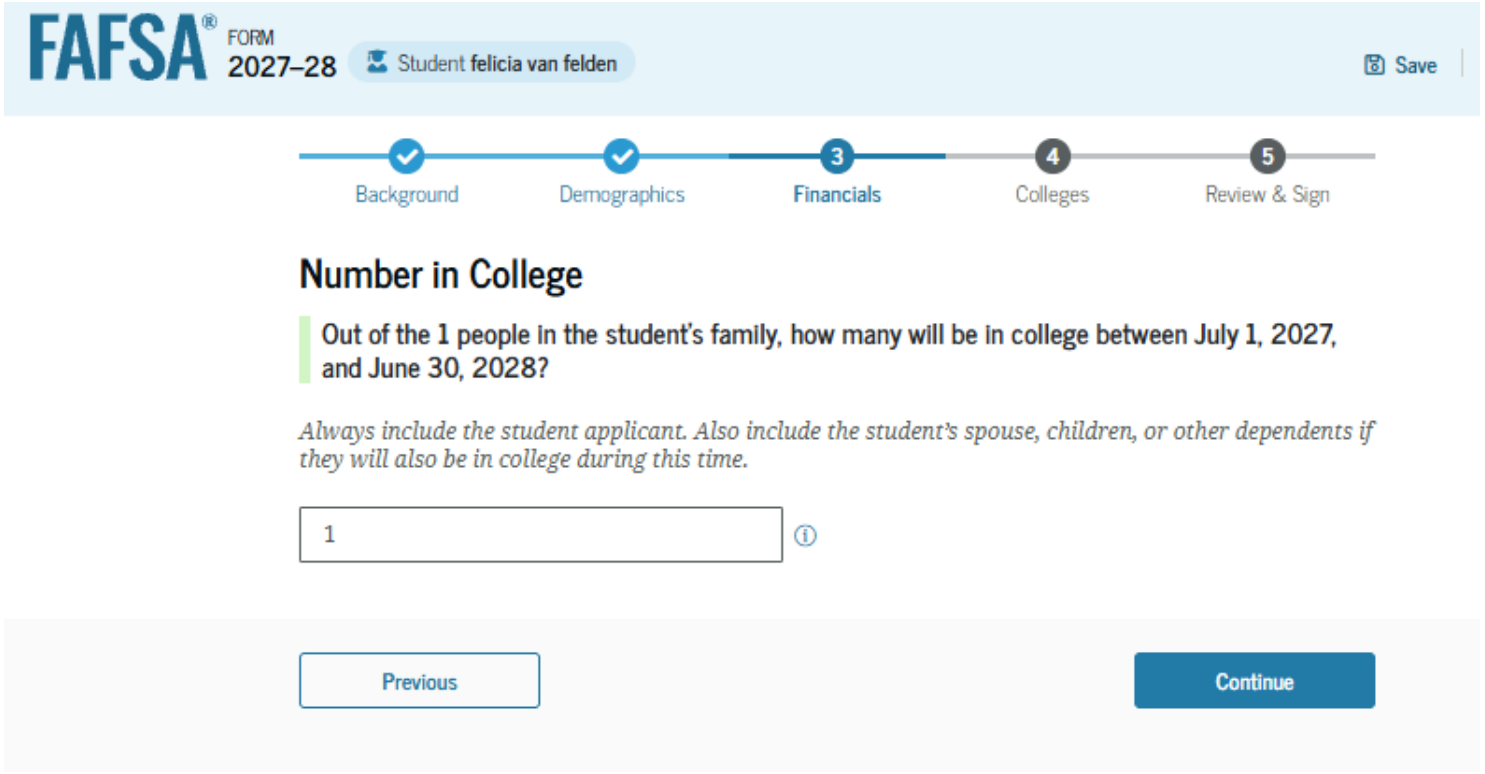
However, if you got married or have dependents who live with you and will receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2027, and June 30, 2028, and you did not report them on your 2025 tax return, you would update your family size here.



Number in College

You are asked how many people in your family will be in college between July 1, 2027, and June 30, 2028, 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).

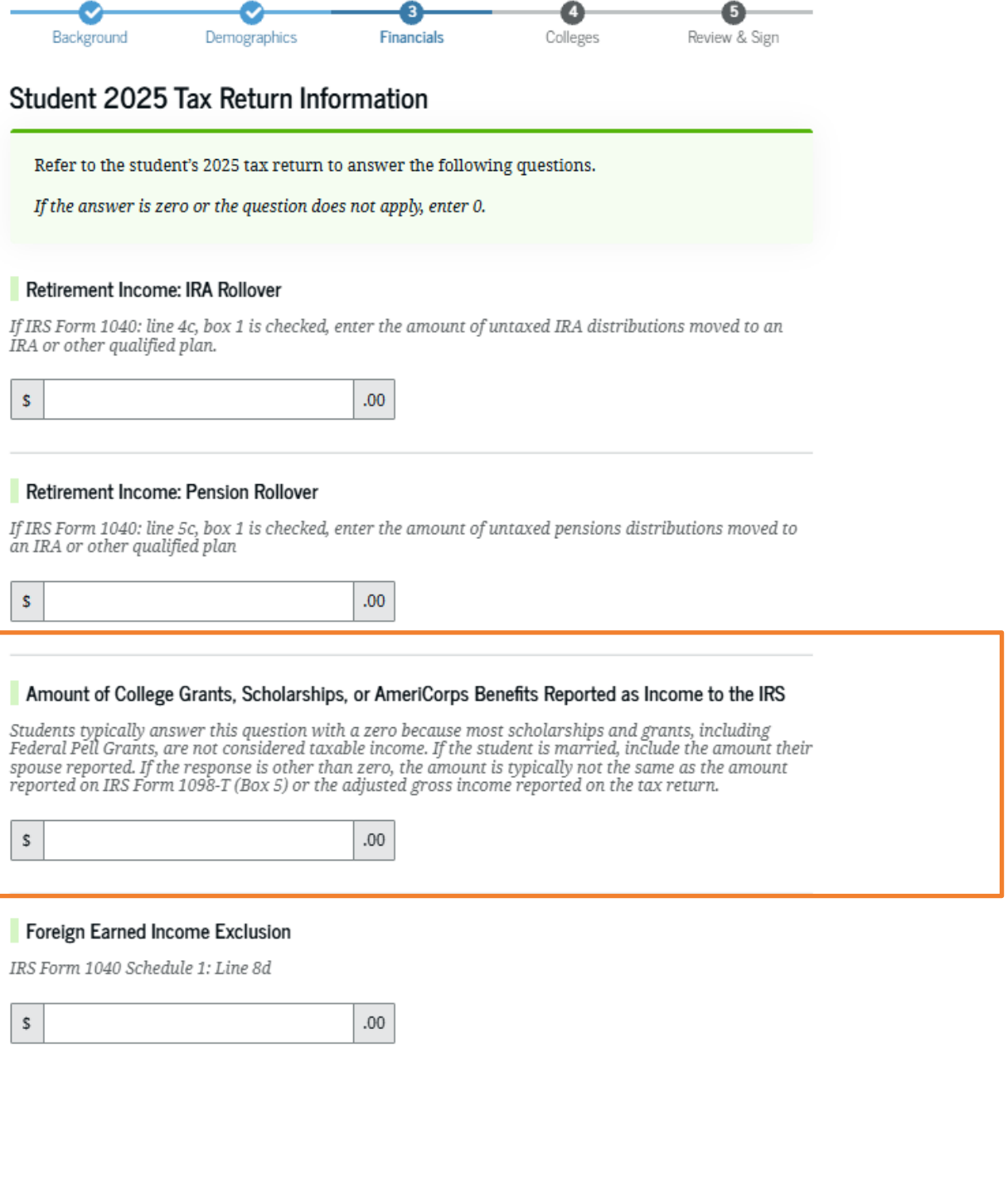


Tax Information

If you answered yes to whether you filed taxes or had foreign income, you will be asked to answer two tax-related questions.

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 FAFSA. The amount reported will be **DEDUCTED** from your total income and could result in eligibility for more aid.

If your tax return shows that you are married and you report a different marital status on the FAFSA (e.g., single, divorced) you will be asked to provide additional detailed information from your tax return (not shown here).

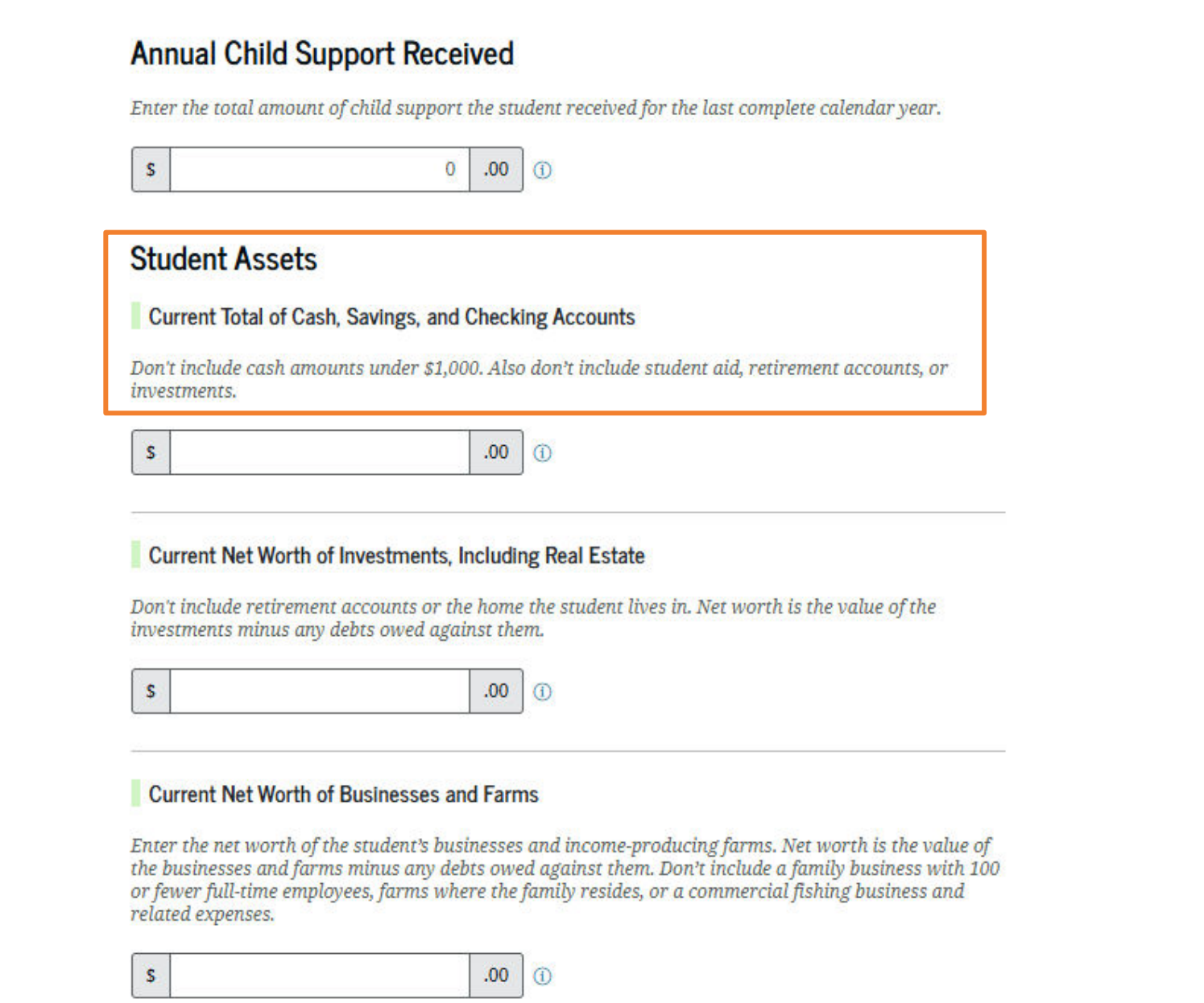


Student Assets

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.

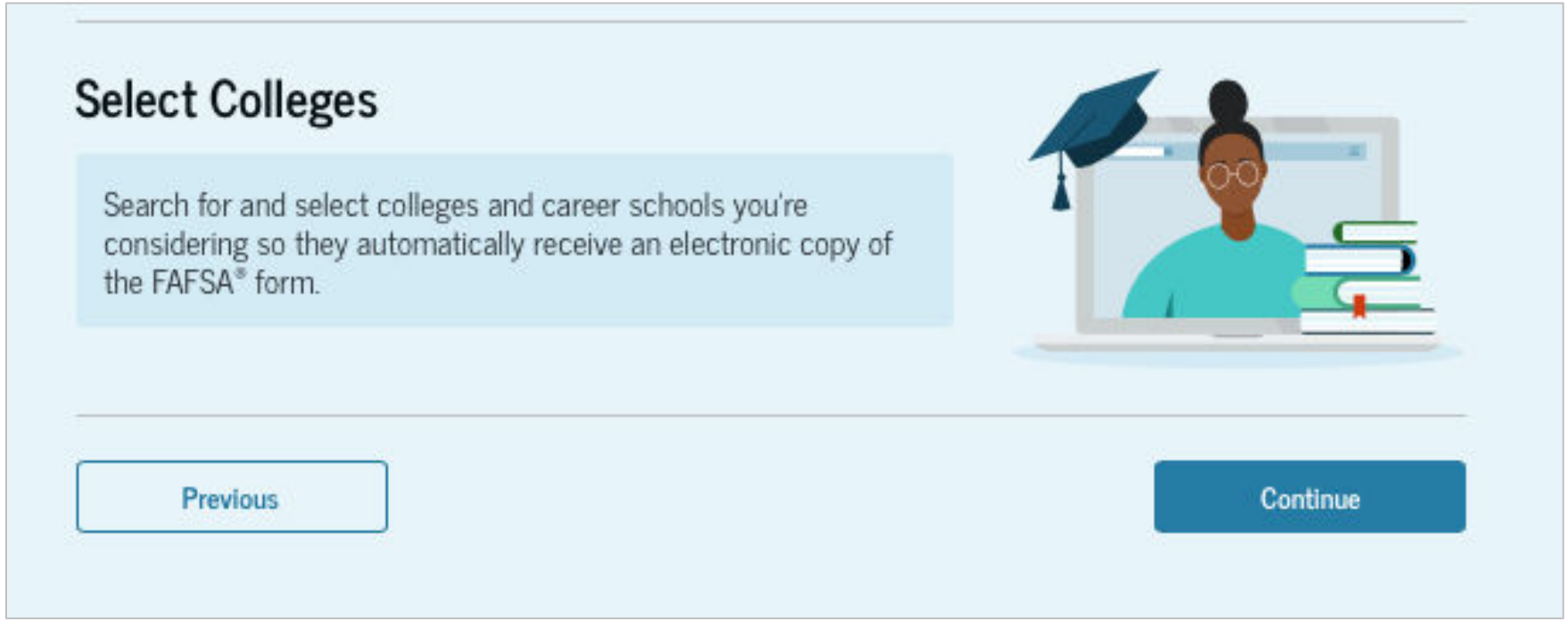
If you indicated that you receive public benefits on a previous screen, this question will not appear.



7.
College Selection

Introduction: Select Colleges

This is the first page within the College Selection section. It provides an overview of the section.

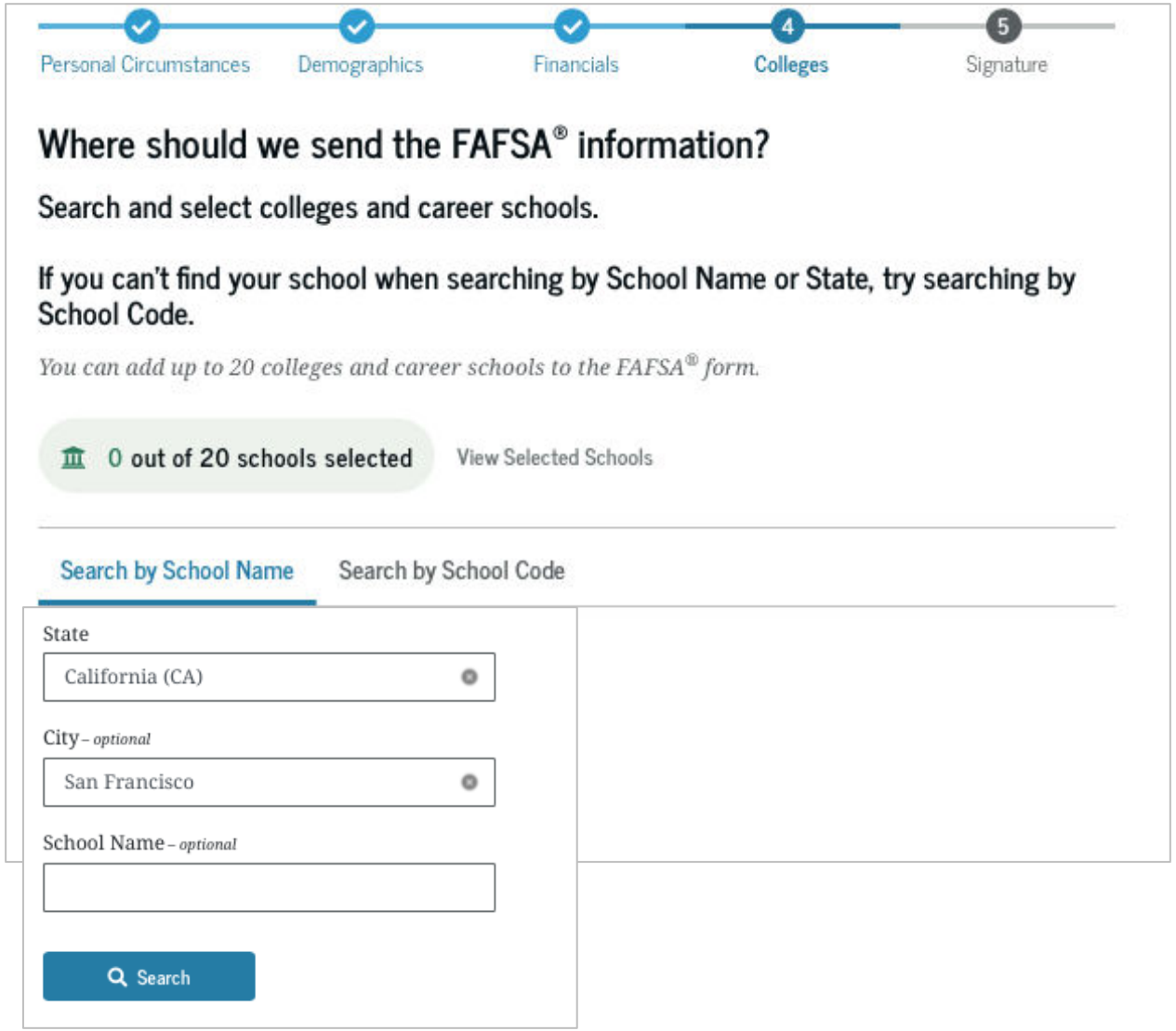


College Search

You are asked to search for the colleges and/or career schools you would like to receive your FAFSA information.

You can search for a school by entering a state, city, and/or school name.

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



College Search

After selecting "Search," select the correct school from the search results and click “+Select.” You can select to send your FAFSA information to a maximum of 20 schools.

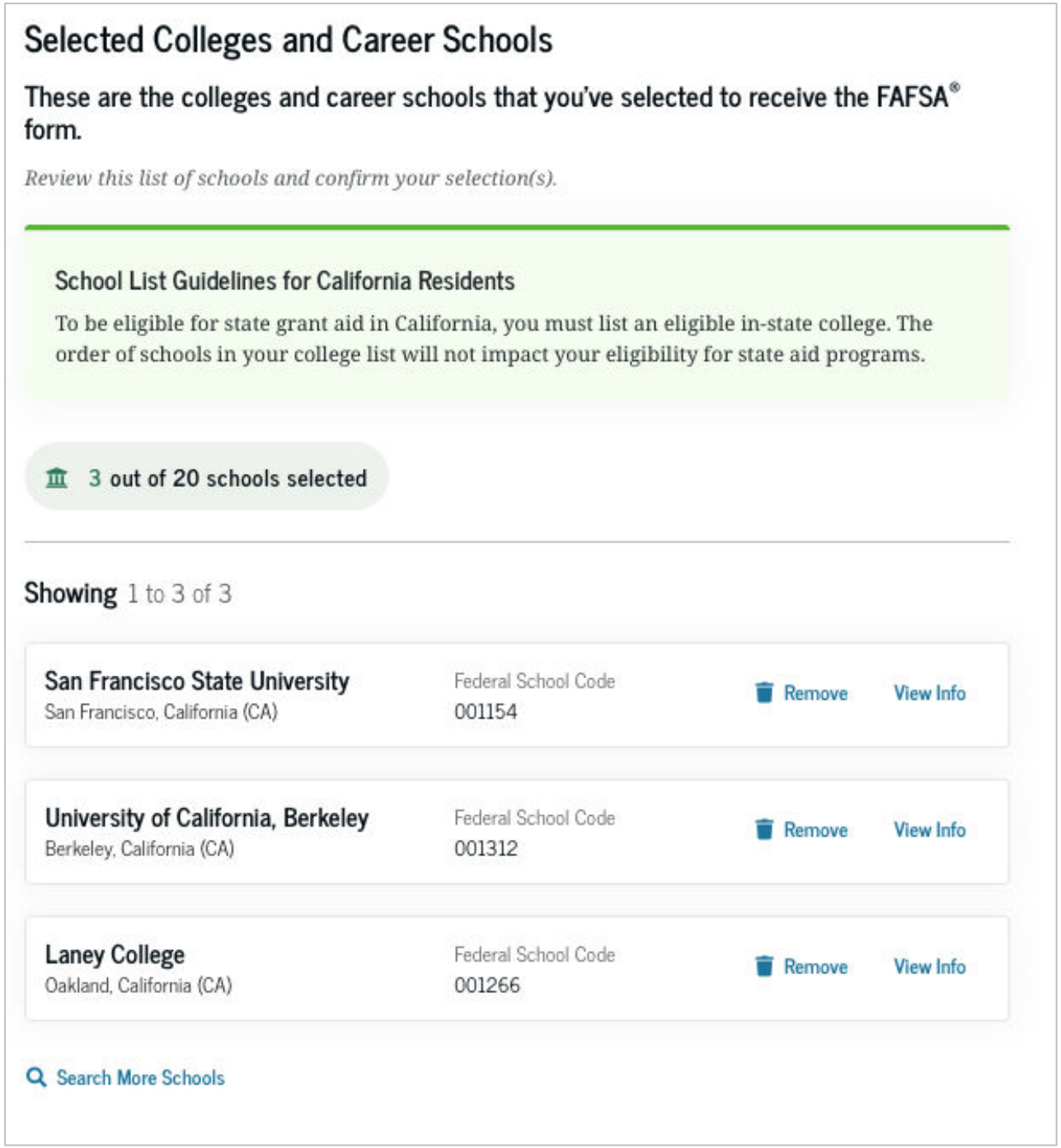
A minimum of one school is required to proceed.



Some 4-year institutions have separate codes for their graduate schools. If the code starts with a letter rather than a number, it is a graduate program and shouldn’t be used by a student applying as an undergraduate.

Selected Colleges

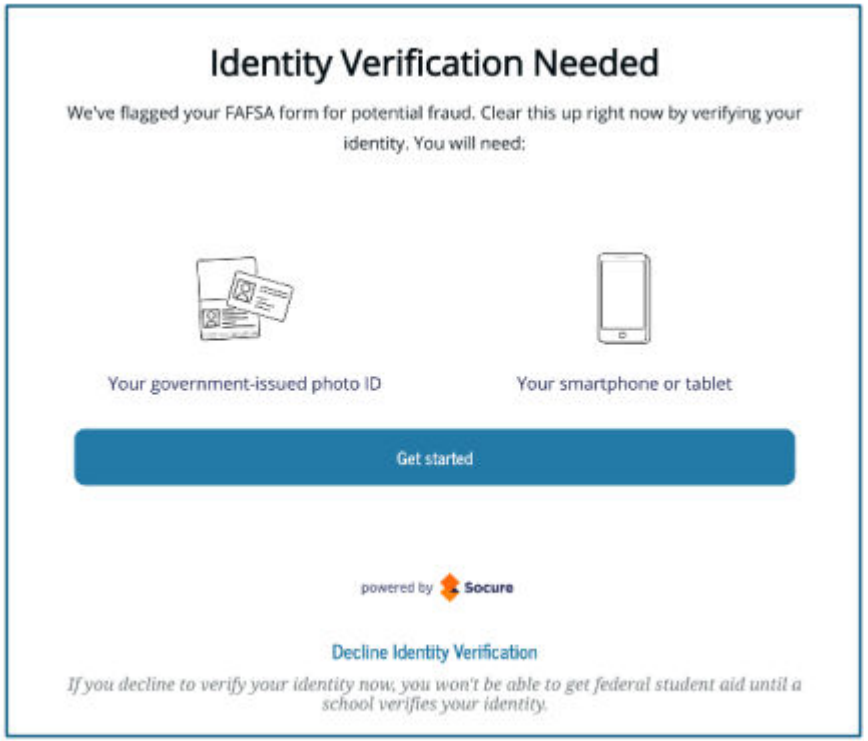
You can then view which colleges and/or career schools you have selected. If you have not selected 20 schools, you have the option to search and select more schools.

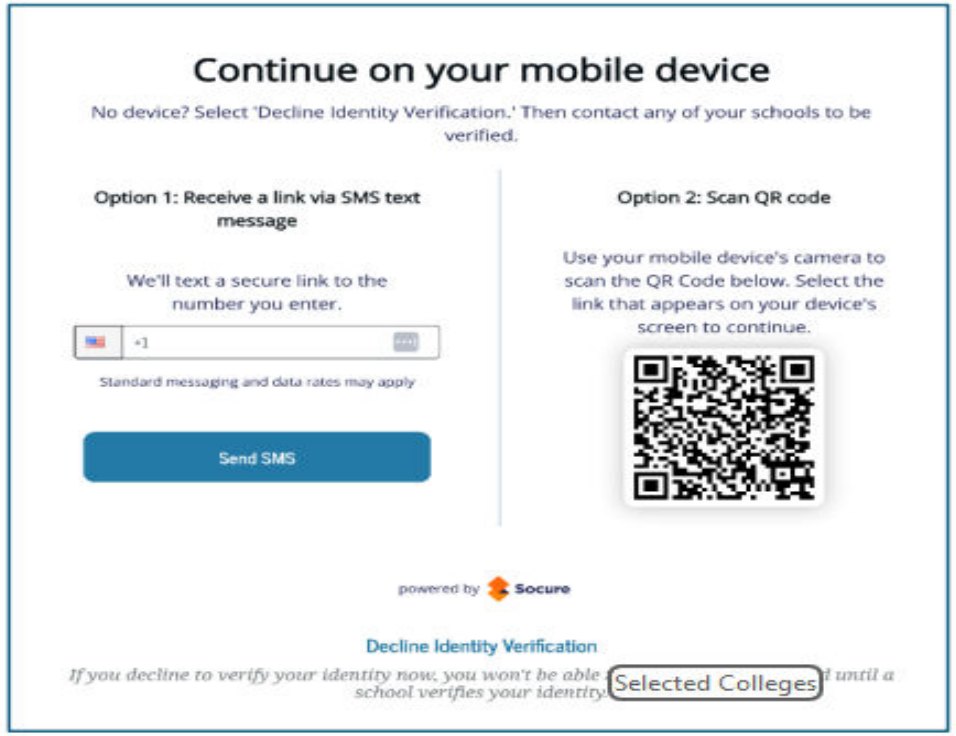


8.
Review & Signature

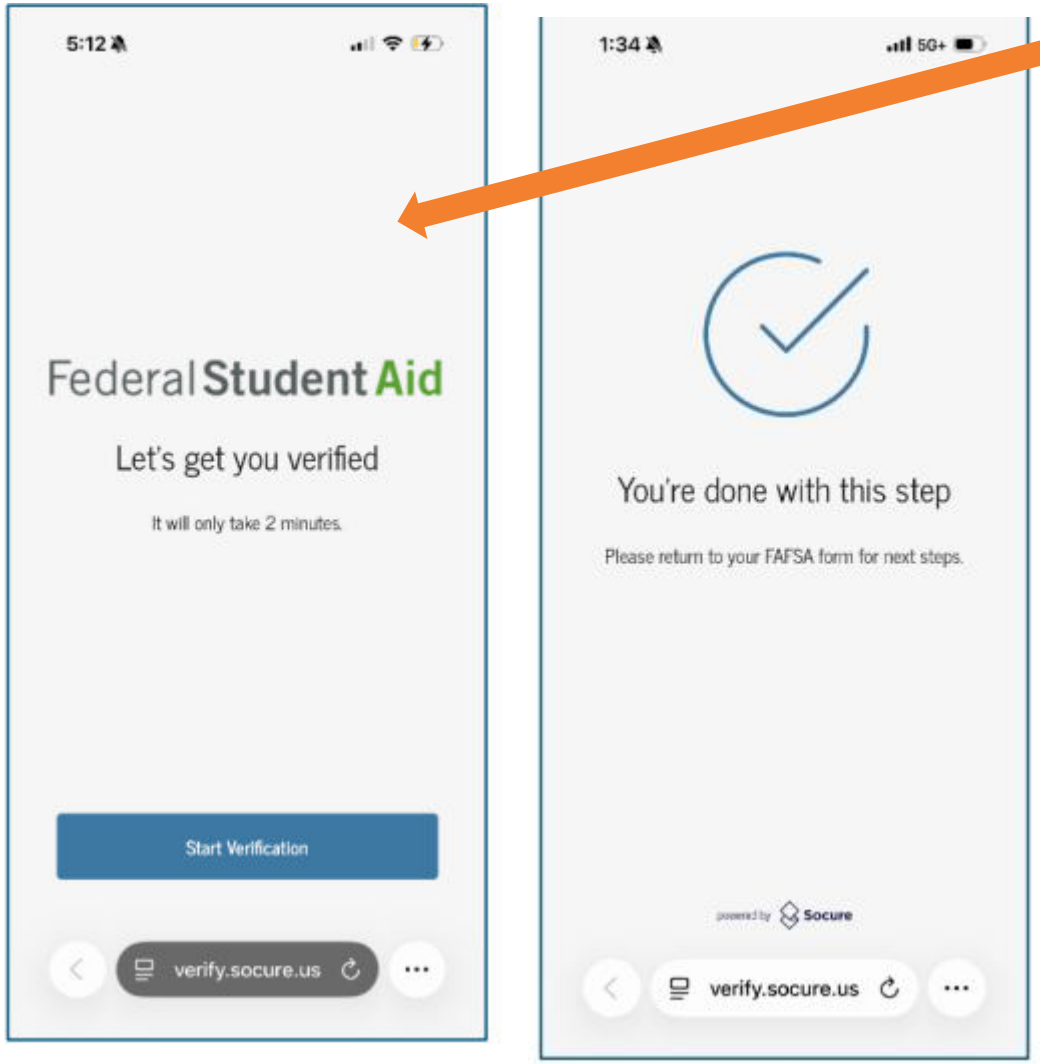
NEW ID Verification: Part 1

Some, but not all, students may be selected to take a picture of their government-issued photo ID before they submit the FAFSA. If you are on a desktop, you will be directed to provide your ID through a mobile phone or tablet with phone.





NEW ID Verification: Part 2

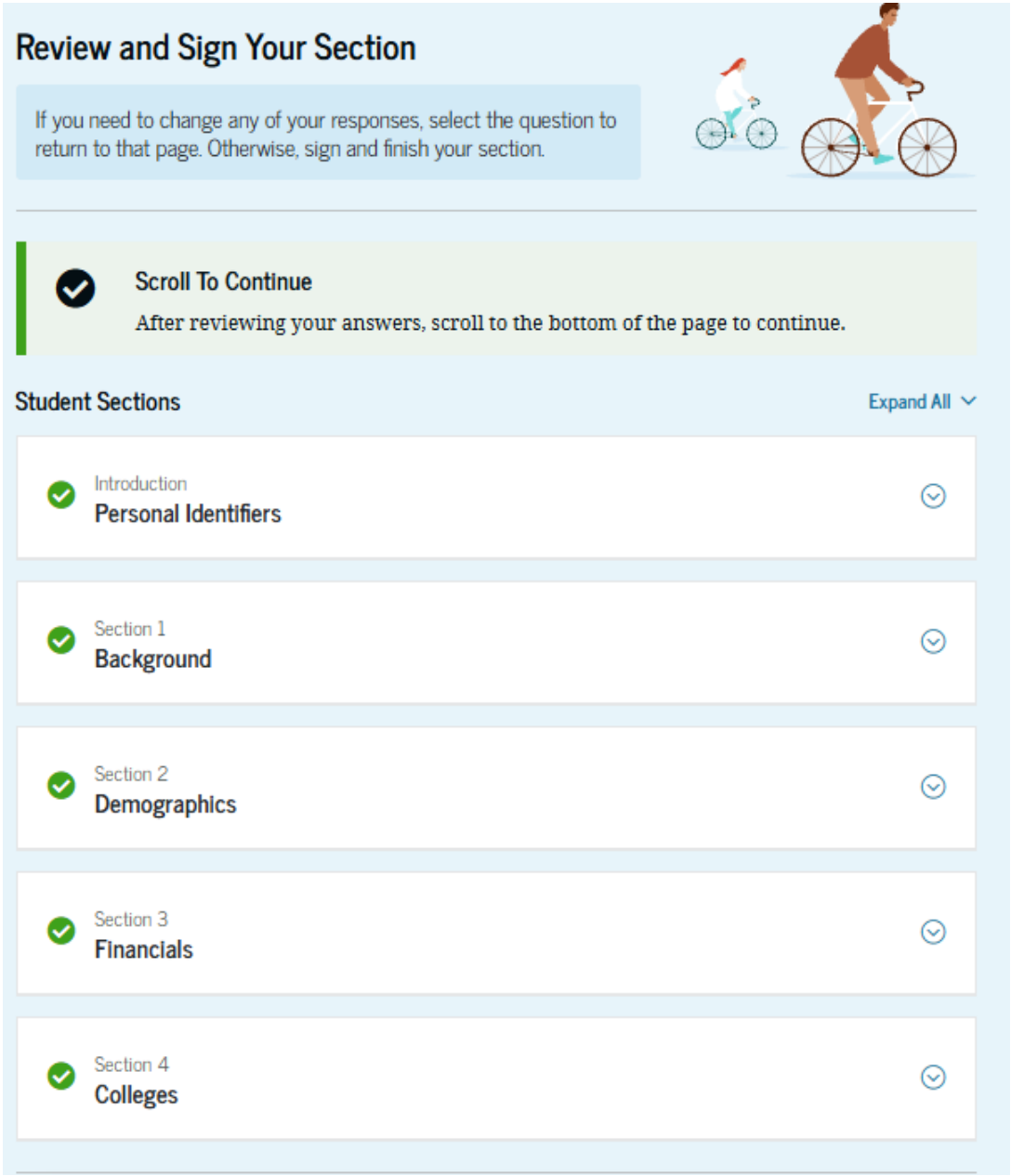


- This is the link you receive on your phone. Verification happens quickly, and you will only have a short window to retrieve your ID. This process can't be paused or finished later.
- **If you can't complete this process, you can submit your FAFSA, but must provide an ID to the financial aid office to receive financial aid.***
- **Don't have an ID? Visit www.dmv.ca.gov**

*Some financial aid offices may allow a video call. If you cannot appear in person, you may verify your ID with a notary. You will need to mail in a copy of your ID to the financial aid office along with a certification from the notary you appeared before and confirmed your ID with.

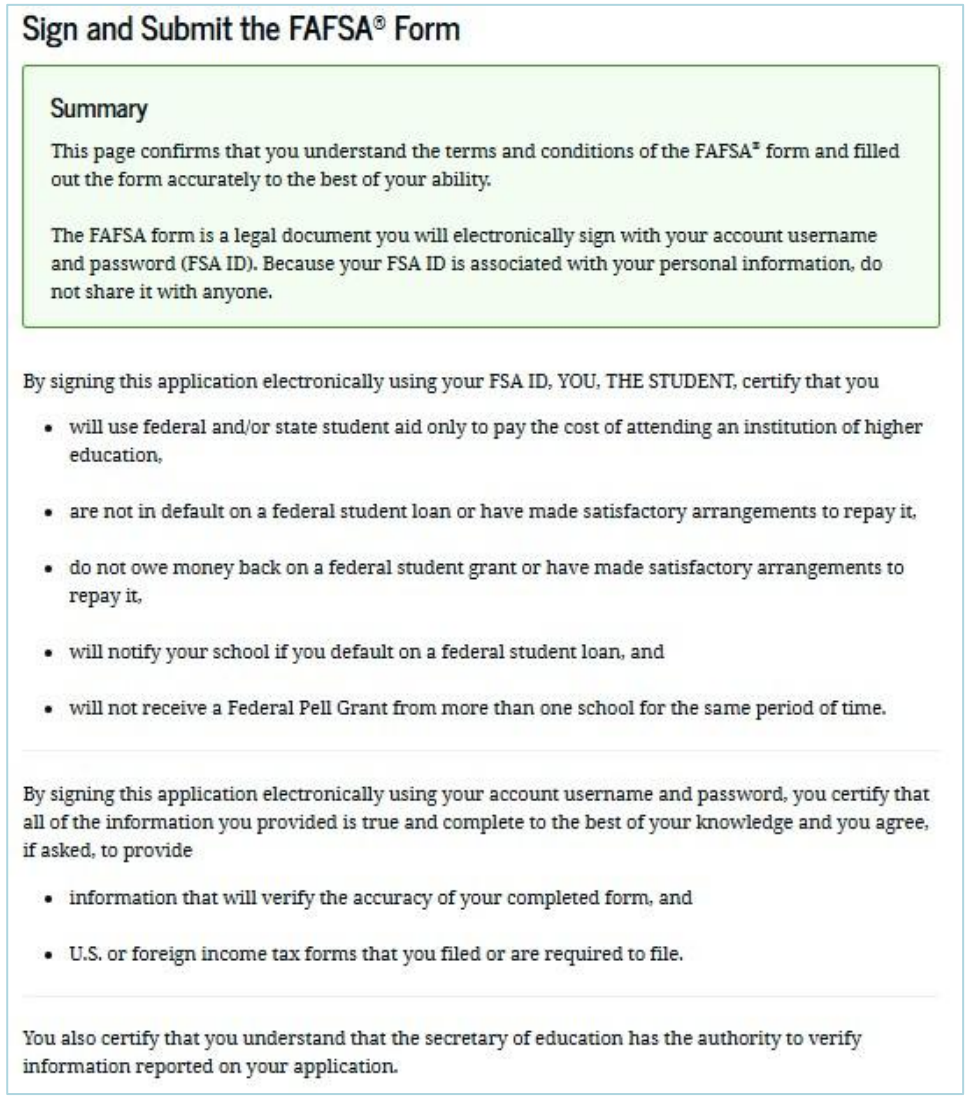
Review Page

The review page displays the responses that you provided. You can view all the responses by selecting "Expand All" or expand each section individually. To edit a response, you can select the question's link, and you will be taken to the corresponding page.



Signature

You acknowledge the terms and conditions of the FAFSA form and sign.



Sign and Submit the FAFSA® Form

Summary

This page confirms that you understand the terms and conditions of the FAFSA® form and filled out the form accurately to the best of your ability.

The FAFSA form is a legal document you will electronically sign with your account username and password (FSA ID). Because your FSA ID is associated with your personal information, do not share it with anyone.

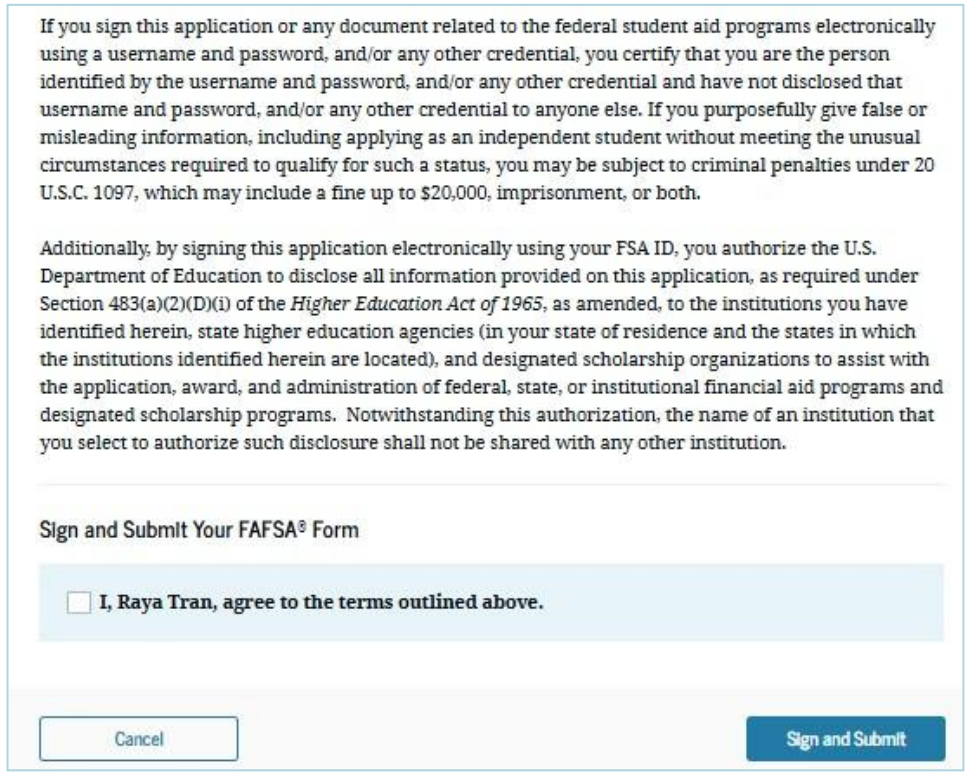
By signing this application electronically using your FSA ID, YOU, THE STUDENT, certify that you

- will use federal and/or state student aid only to pay the cost of attending an institution of higher education,
- are not in default on a federal student loan or have made satisfactory arrangements to repay it,
- do not owe money back on a federal student grant or have made satisfactory arrangements to repay it,
- will notify your school if you default on a federal student loan, and
- will not receive a Federal Pell Grant from more than one school for the same period of time.

By signing this application electronically using your account username and password, you certify that all of the information you provided is true and complete to the best of your knowledge and you agree, if asked, to provide

- information that will verify the accuracy of your completed form, and
- U.S. or foreign income tax forms that you filed or are required to file.

You also certify that you understand that the secretary of education has the authority to verify information reported on your application.



If you sign this application or any document related to the federal student aid programs electronically using a username and password, and/or any other credential, you certify that you are the person identified by the username and password, and/or any other credential and have not disclosed that username and password, and/or any other credential to anyone else. If you purposefully give false or misleading information, including applying as an independent student without meeting the unusual circumstances required to qualify for such a status, you may be subject to criminal penalties under 20 U.S.C. 1097, which may include a fine up to $20,000, imprisonment, or both.

Additionally, by signing this application electronically using your FSA ID, you authorize the U.S. Department of Education to disclose all information provided on this application, as required under Section 483(a)(2)(D)(i) of the *Higher Education Act of 1965*, as amended, to the institutions you have identified herein, state higher education agencies (in your state of residence and the states in which the institutions identified herein are located), and designated scholarship organizations to assist with the application, award, and administration of federal, state, or institutional financial aid programs and designated scholarship programs. Notwithstanding this authorization, the name of an institution that you select to authorize such disclosure shall not be shared with any other institution.

Sign and Submit Your FAFSA® Form

☐ **I, Raya Tran, agree to the terms outlined above.**

Cancel

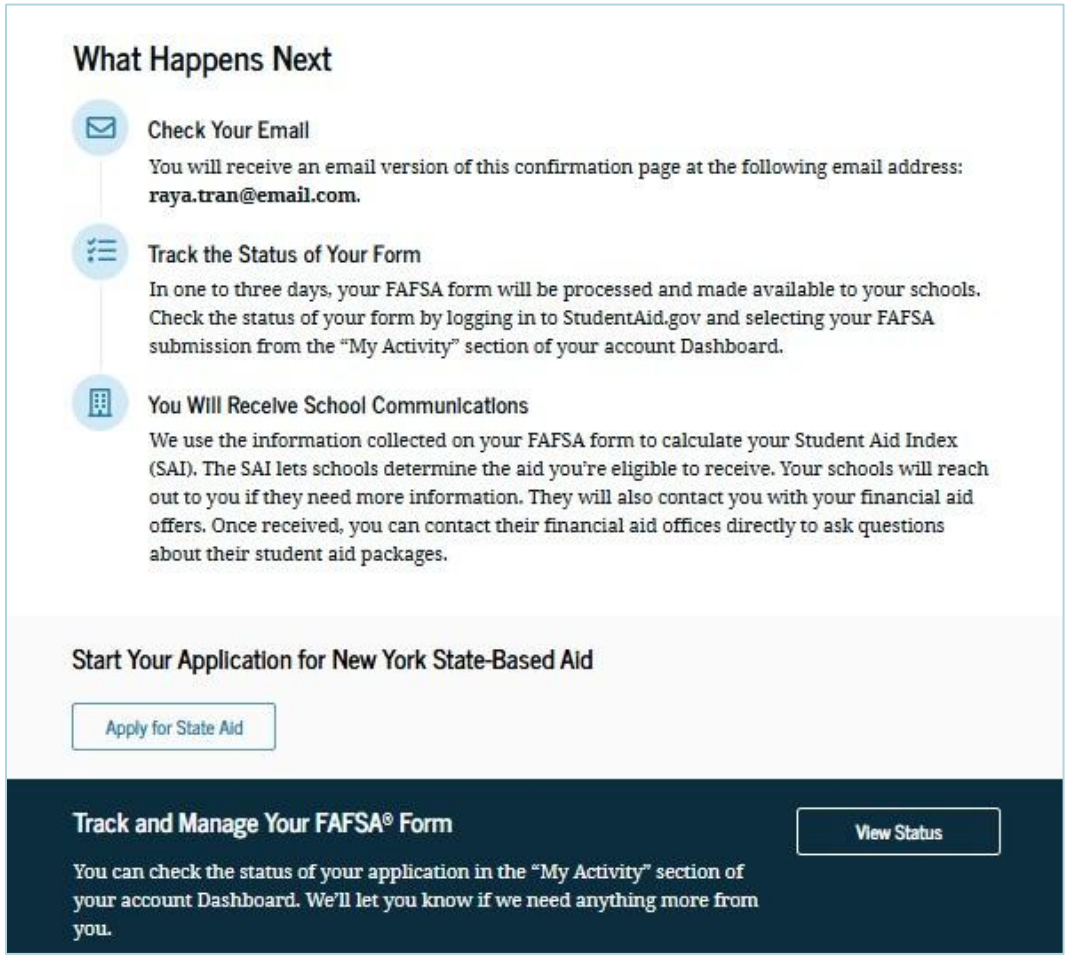
Sign and Submit

Confirmation Page & FAFSA Submission Summary

- Once submitted, you will receive a **confirmation page** with your estimated **"Student Aid Index (SAI)"**
- The SAI is used to determine eligibility for federal student aid. It is not how much aid you are eligible to receive.
- *Typically,* students receive a **FAFSA Submission Summary** indicating that their FAFSA was processed in 1–3 days.



Confirmation Page (Continued)



What Happens Next

Check Your Email

You will receive an email version of this confirmation page at the following email address: **raya.tran@email.com.**

Track the Status of Your Form

In one to three days, your FAFSA form will be processed and made available to your schools. Check the status of your form by logging in to StudentAid.gov and selecting your FAFSA submission from the "My Activity" section of your account Dashboard.

You Will Receive School Communications

We use the information collected on your FAFSA form to calculate your Student Aid Index (SAI). The SAI lets schools determine the aid you're eligible to receive. Your schools will reach out to you if they need more information. They will also contact you with your financial aid offers. Once received, you can contact their financial aid offices directly to ask questions about their student aid packages.

Start Your Application for New York State-Based Aid

Apply for State Aid

Track and Manage Your FAFSA® Form

View Status

You can check the status of your application in the "My Activity" section of your account Dashboard. We'll let you know if we need anything more from you.

9.

FAFSA Submission Summary

FAFSA Submission Summary Landing Page

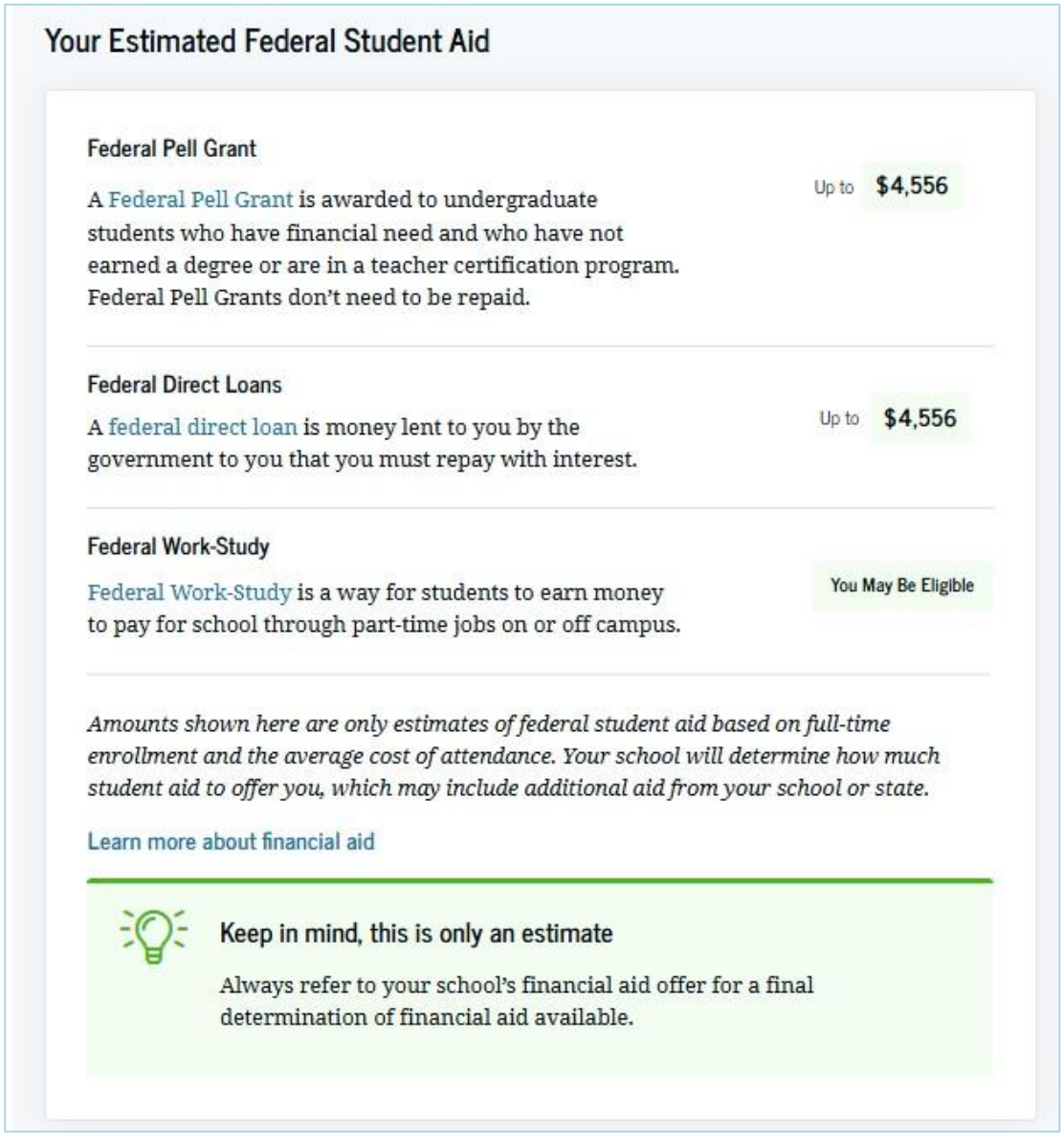
The FAFSA Submission Summary is broken into four tabs: Eligibility Overview, FAFSA Form Answers, School Information, and Next Steps.

At the top, you will see information about when your form was received and processed. You also have the option to print your FAFSA Submission Summary to keep for your records.



Eligibility Overview

On the Eligibility Overview tab, you see information about what federal student aid you may be eligible for, such as a Federal Pell Grant and Federal Direct Loans. You are also able to view your Student Aid Index. Any amounts of financial aid that display on this tab are estimates and are not guaranteed. **Final determination of your financial aid eligibility will be provided by your school's financial aid office.**



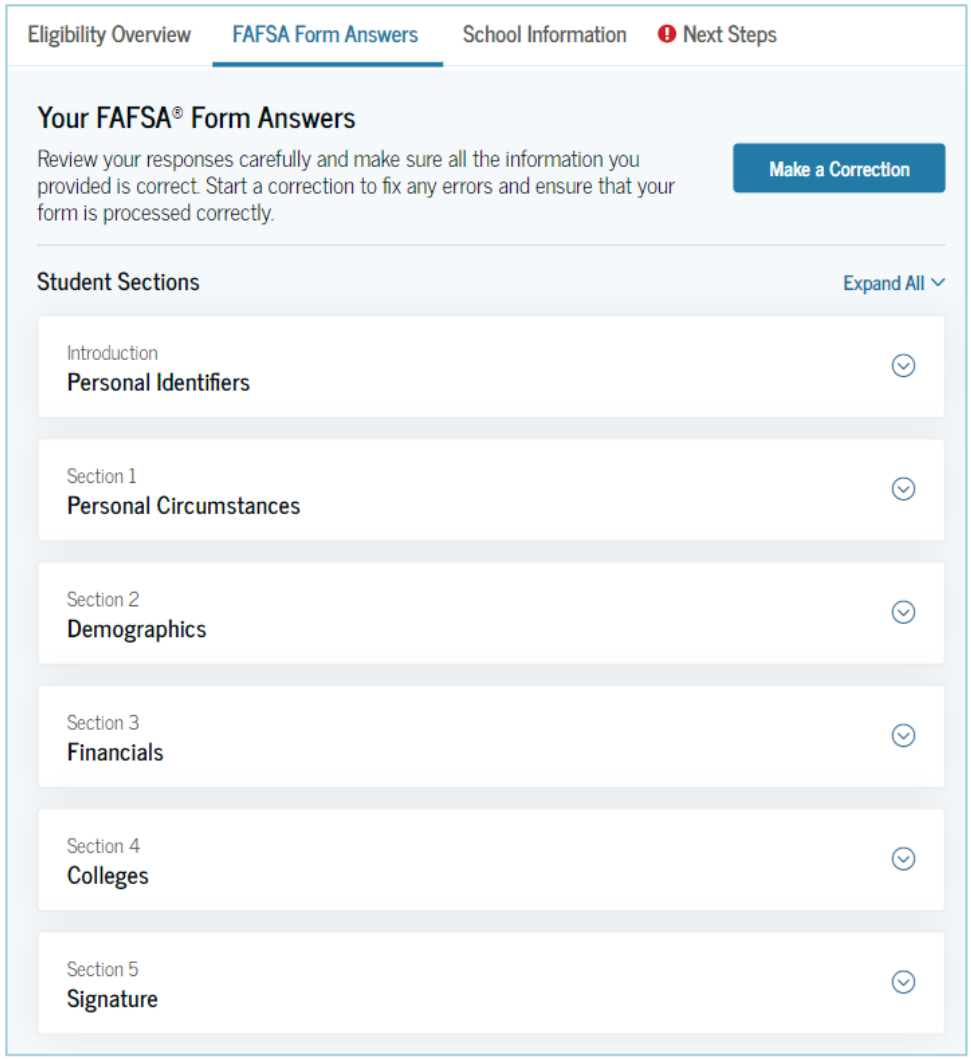
Eligibility Overview (Continued)

Student Aid Index (SAI) can go as low as –1500. The lower the number, the more aid you are eligible for.



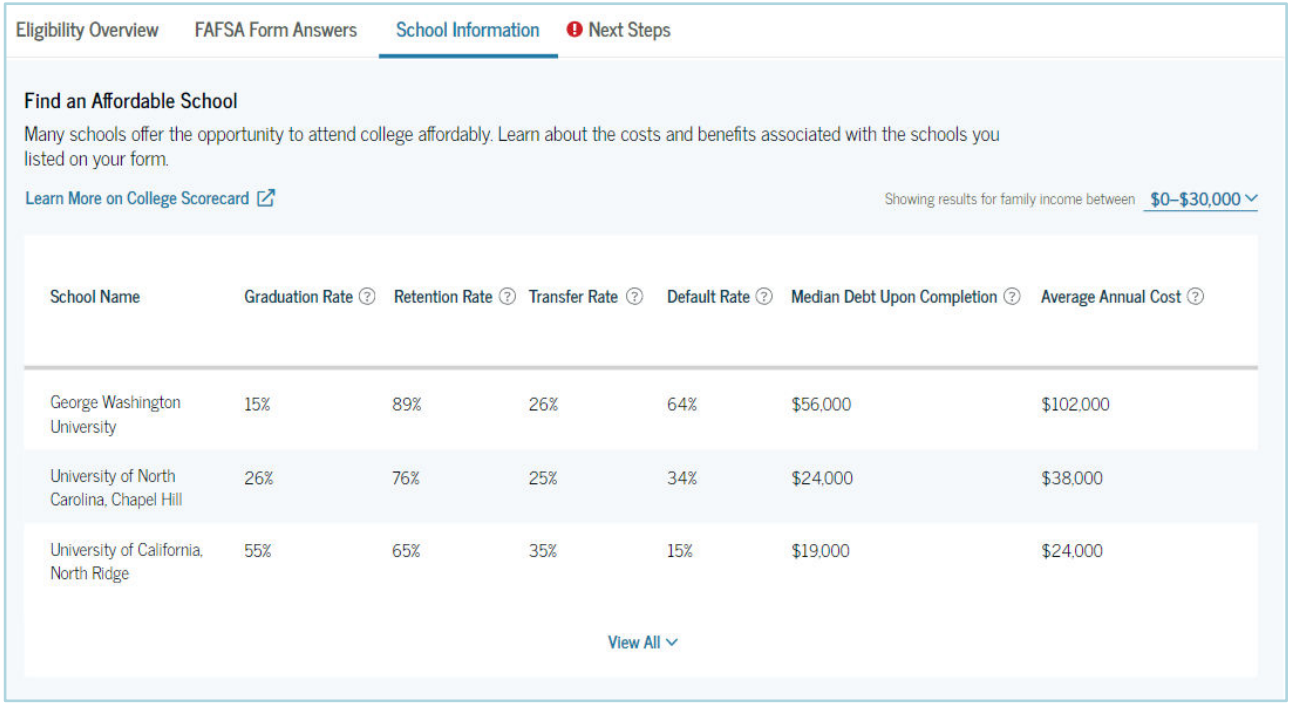
FAFSA Form Answers

On the Answers tab, you will see the answers that you and, if applicable, your contributor(s) (parents and/or spouse) provided on your FAFSA. If any of the provided answers are incorrect, you can choose to start a correction.



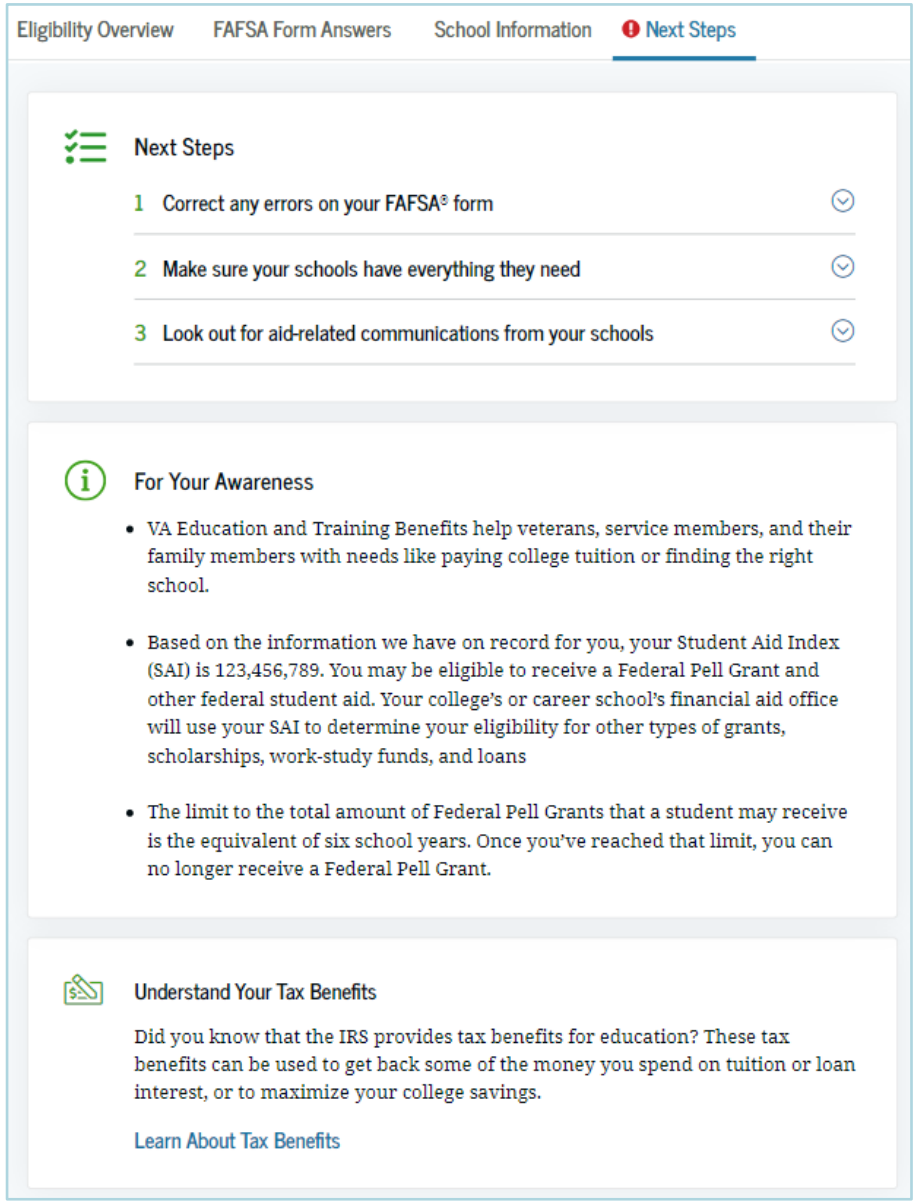
School Information

On the School Information tab, you see information about the college(s) and/or career school(s) that you selected to send your FAFSA to. You can compare the graduation rate, retention rate, transfer rate, default rate, median debt upon completion, and average annual cost of your selected schools.



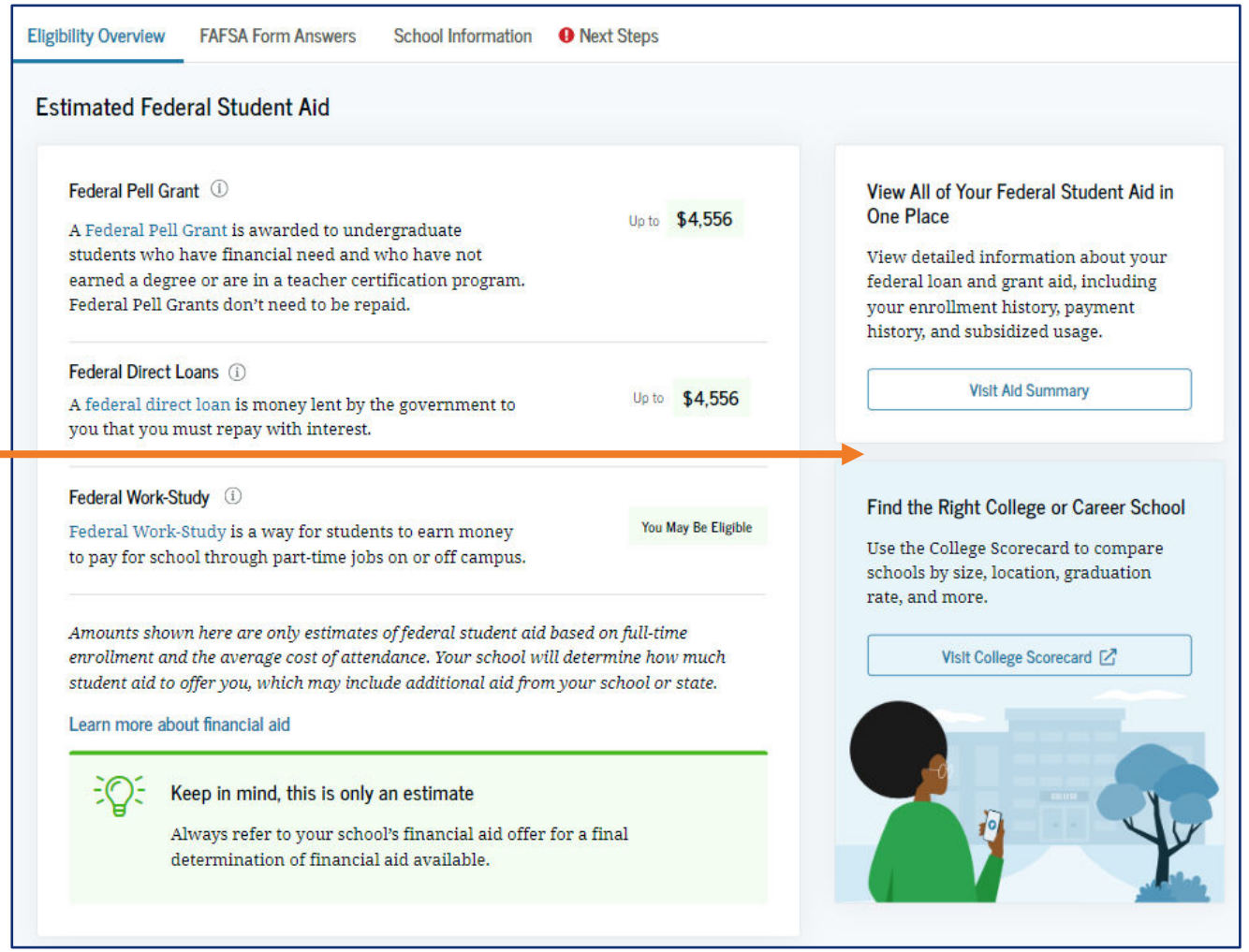
Next Steps

On the Next Steps tab, you will see comments that pertain to your FAFSA. Some comments may require you to start a correction or send additional documentation to your school. Other comments may be informational and do not require any further action from you.



More Resources

Along the right side of your FAFSA Submission Summary, you can choose from additional resources, including an Aid Summary and College Scorecard.



10.
After the FAFSA

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 (6 units).





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.



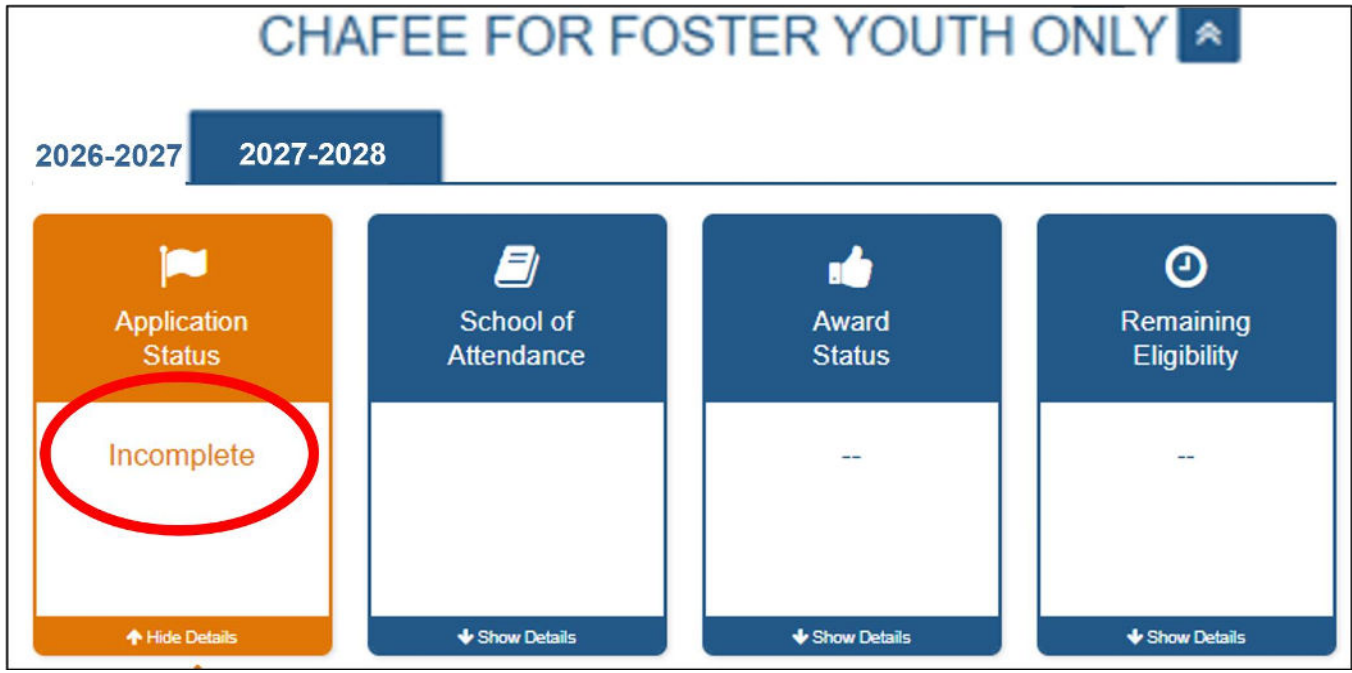
Create a Webgrants 4 Students Account at:

mygrantinfo.csac.ca.gov

- Wait until your FAFSA is processed. It can take 1-2 weeks for the FAFSA 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.

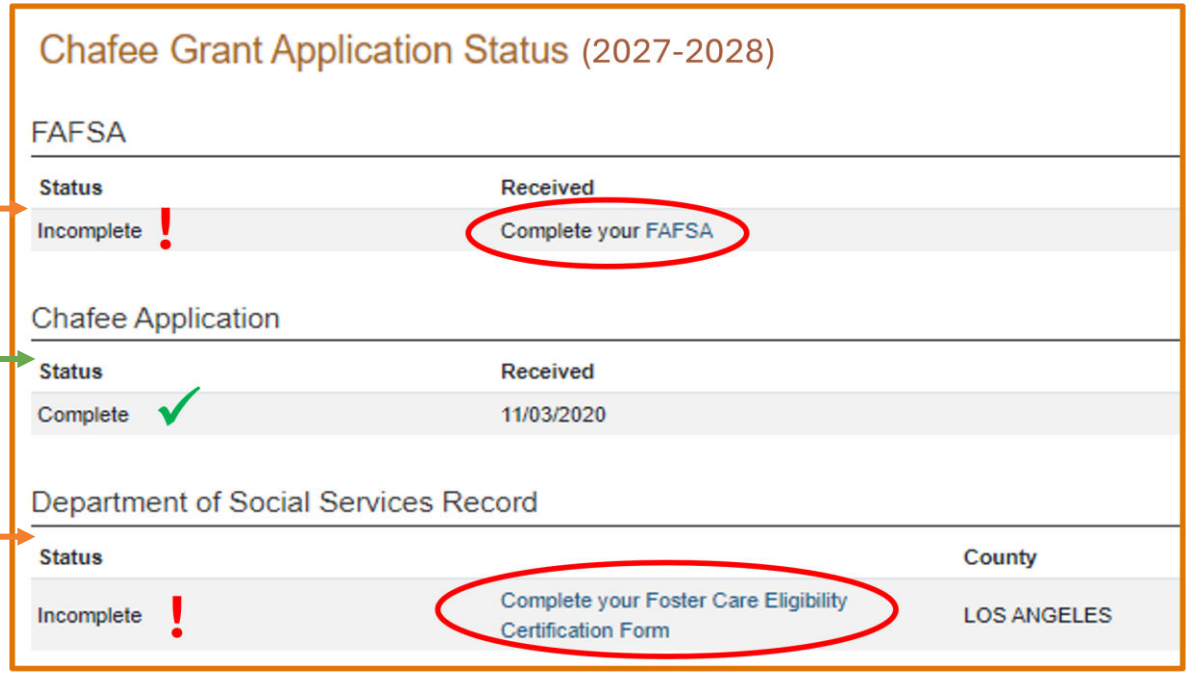


If your status shows incomplete on your Chafee Grant application, select "show details" to see what is missing (see next page).

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*



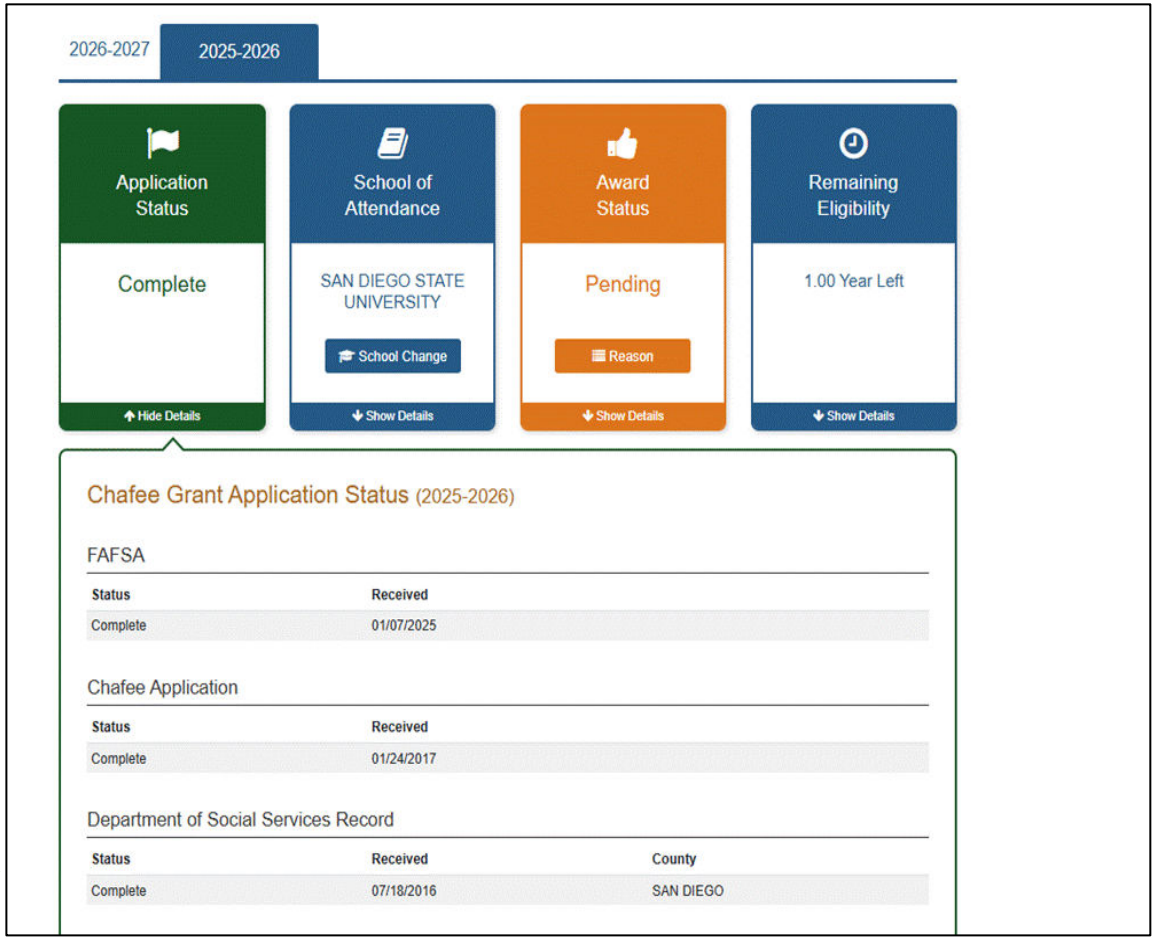
**There is an automated match with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to verify foster youth status, however this match only happens monthly and may not appear immediately. If the match is not successful, you must manually submit the Certification Form.*

WebGrants 4 Students: Check Your Chafee Application Status

COMPLETED Chafee Application:

The application will show as green when all three steps are complete:

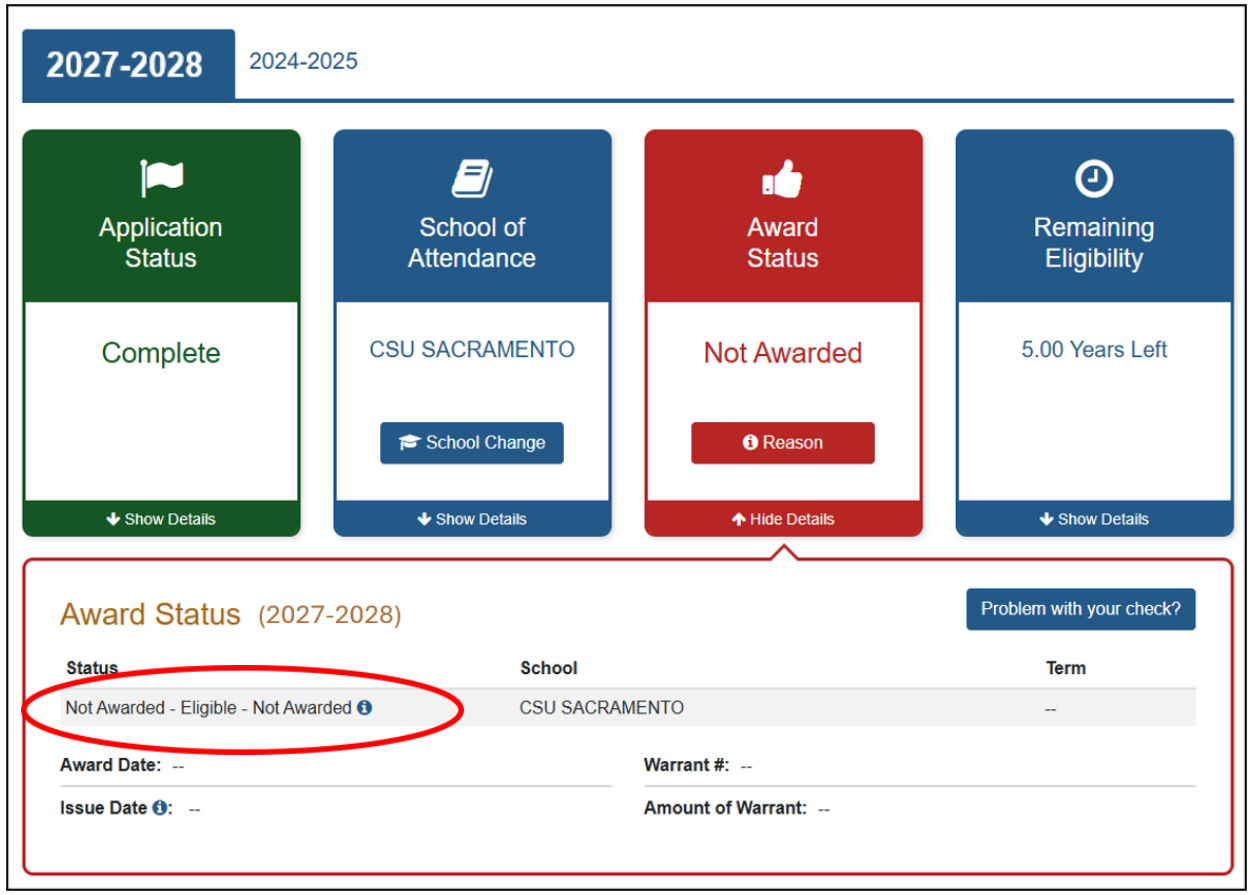
- FAFSA or CADAA submitted
- Chafee application submitted
- Verification of foster youth status completed



WebGrants 4 Students: Check Your Award Status

Award Status: Not Awarded – Eligible

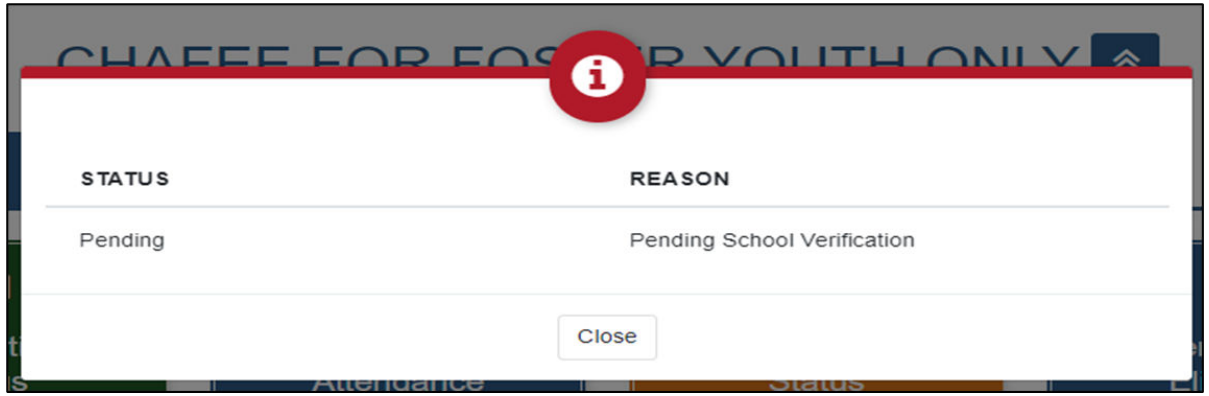
"Not Awarded – Eligible" means the student is wait listed until funding becomes available.



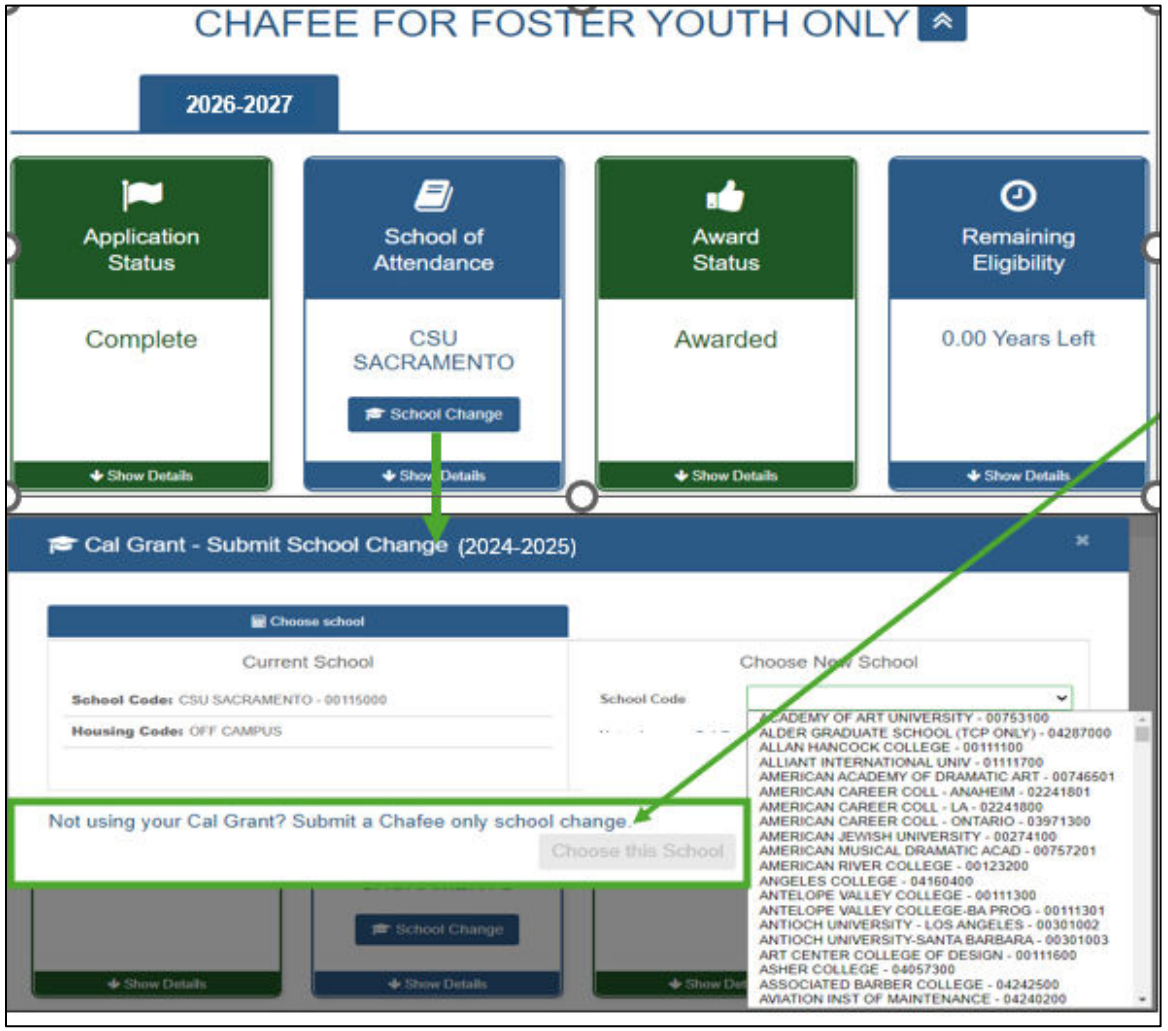
WebGrants 4 Students: Check Your Award Status

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, 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 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 available to you to use at an eligible college, university, technical or vocational institution.

- Once funds are requested, they are sent to your institution. 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 Award



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

1. California county where you attended school in the previous year on census day.
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!

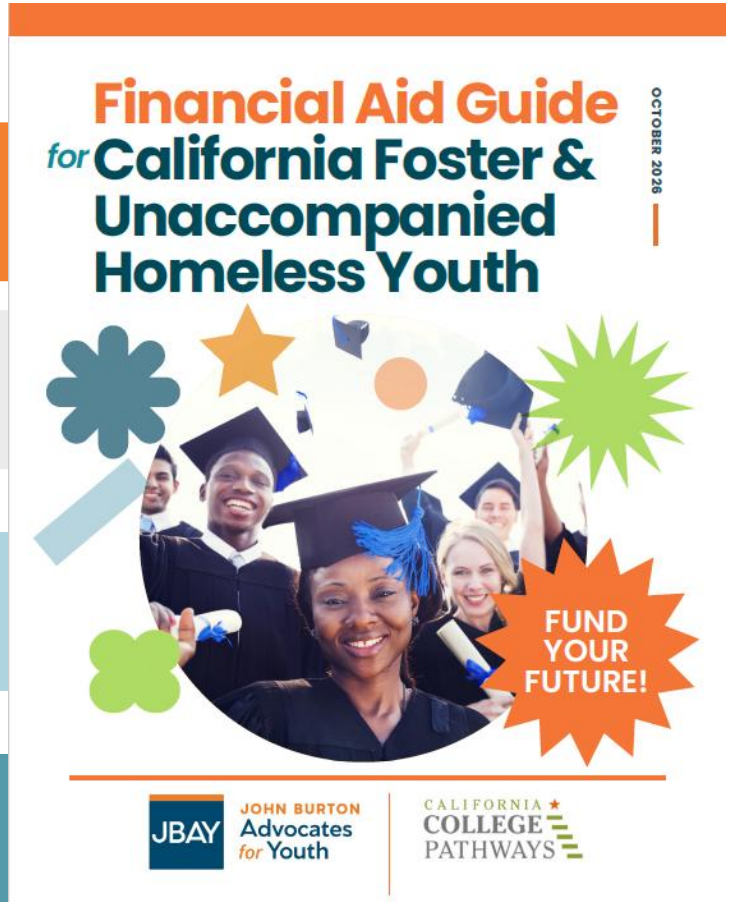
Remember:

- 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 homeless youth status or additional income verification.
- Update all your accounts if your address, email or phone number changes (e.g. WebGrants, college portal, FAFSA/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.
- Reapply for aid by submitting the FAFSA every year!

11. Resources

JBAY Financial Aid Resources

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



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/fafsa/

✓ 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-fafsa
- Financial Aid for Justice-Involved Youth
  https://www.ylc.org/financial-aid-guide-for-youth-with-juvenile-justice-involvement
- Immigrants Rising
  immigrantsrising.org

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