

Federal Student Aid and Homeless Youth

Questions and Answers

1. Can I receive federal student aid if I am homeless or at risk of becoming homeless?

Yes. When you complete the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®) form, you will be asked whether you are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and “unaccompanied” (meaning not with your parents). Answer the question and continue with the application.

2. Do I need to provide my parents’ income information on the FAFSA® form?

No. If you answer “yes” to the homelessness question on the FAFSA form, you can submit it without providing information about your parents because you are stating that you are not with your parents.

3. Do I need to provide a home address on the FAFSA® form?

No, but you must provide a mailing address where you can reliably receive mail. Your mailing address can be the address of a relative or friend who has given you permission to use it, or it can be your college’s address. If you want to use your college’s address, you must contact the school for permission and instructions to ensure that your mail reaches you. If you find more permanent housing, you should update your address on the FAFSA form.

4. Will I be required to submit documentation to prove that I am “unaccompanied” and homeless or at risk of becoming homeless?

Maybe. Once you answer “yes” to the general homelessness question on the FAFSA® form, you will be asked whether you have received a homeless youth determination. If you indicate that you have, the financial aid administrator at the college you plan to attend may request the determination to prove that you are “unaccompanied” and homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

You should contact one of the following individuals to ask if they can provide you with a homeless youth determination:

- Your high school or school district homeless liaison
- The director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- The director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program

In some cases, the individual listed above may only be allowed to make a homeless youth determination if you are receiving his or her program’s support or if, in the case of a school district homeless liaison, you are in his or her high school or high school district.

5. What happens if I can't obtain a homeless youth determination from any of the individuals listed in Question 4?

If you answer “yes” to the general homelessness question on the FAFSA® form but have not received a homeless youth determination from one of the individuals listed in Question 4, you can still submit the FAFSA form.

Once you submit the FAFSA form, you must request a homeless youth determination from the financial aid administrator at the college you plan to attend. While it is not required to help the financial aid administrator make a homeless youth determination, you may want to submit documentation from any of the following:

- Local school district personnel
- State homeless education coordinators
- The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)
- Third parties such as private or publicly funded homeless shelters and service providers
- Financial aid administrators from colleges other than the school to which you're presenting the documentation
- Staff from college access programs such as TRIO (e.g., Talent Search or Upward Bound) or GEAR UP
- College or high school counselors
- Mental health professionals, social workers, mentors, doctors, or clergy

If you don't have any written documentation of your homelessness status, the financial aid office must still review your request for a homeless youth determination and make a determination as to whether you qualify as a homeless youth. The financial aid office's determination may be based on other information available to them through resources like your state or local government, community organizations, or services provided by the college.

6. Where can I find additional resources for homeless youth?

The U.S. Department of Education released a toolkit and guide for youth in the child welfare system who are transitioning to adulthood. Although this toolkit focuses on youth leaving the foster care system, it also provides useful information for youth who are homeless and have never been in the child welfare system. The toolkit includes information on the different types of housing options that may be available in your community. You can access the toolkit at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/foster-care/youth-transition-toolkit.pdf>.

Below are additional resources for homeless youth:

- The **National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth** (NAEHCY) offers scholarships for students who have experienced homelessness while in college. Learn more about NAEHCY at naehcy.org.
- The **National Center for Homeless Education** (NCHE) operates a toll-free homeless education helpline that provides assistance with issues related to pre-K–12 and higher education for children and youth experiencing homelessness. Contact the NCHE homeless helpline by phone at 1-800-308-2145 or by email at homeless@serve.org. To learn more about the NCHE Helpline, visit nche.ed.gov/resources.
- Many cities offer shelters where homeless youth can stay on a first come, first serve basis. If you are a student, check with your college to learn more about shelters in your area. You can also check out the following resources:

- [Shelterlistings.org](https://shelterlistings.org) offers a list of shelters and supportive housing available near you.
- The **Teen Project Shelter Finder** at theteenproject.com/find-shelter helps teenagers aging out of the foster care system by providing opportunities for higher education and independent living.
- The **Family and Youth Services Bureau** supports transitional living and maternity group home programs to provide supportive services and housing to runaway and homeless youth.
 - The Transitional Living Program provides long-term residential services to homeless youth between the ages of 16 and 22, while also providing supportive services to help youth make a successful transition to self-sufficient living.
 - The Maternity Group Home Program supports homeless pregnant or parenting young people, as well as their dependent children. Youth must be between the ages of 16 and 22 to enter the program.

You can get more information at acf.hhs.gov/fysb/runaway-homeless-youth.

- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) offers direct resources for homeless individuals. You can find resources on youth homelessness at hudexchange.info. Below are available programs supported by HUD:
 - The **Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program**: This program provides information about emergency shelters for homeless individuals. To locate your local ESG, visit the HUD website at hudexchange.info/grantees/contacts.
 - The **Continuum of Care (CoC) Program**: The CoC program provides homeless individuals the services needed to move into transitional and permanent housing. To locate your local CoC and find out which housing programs you may qualify for in your community, visit the HUD website at hudexchange.info/grantees/contacts and select your state and search the list to find the CoC that covers your community.
 - **Public Housing**: Public housing provide decent and safe rental housing for eligible low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. To learn more about public housing, visit hud.gov/topics/rental_assistance/phprog.
 - **Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Programs**: This program may be referred to as Section 8 housing, and they are for low-income individuals and families. The participant pays a share of their income, generally 30 percent, as rent to their local public housing agency (PHA). To learn more about HCV and for information on eligibility and the application process, visit HUD's website at hud.gov/topics/housing_choice_voucher_program_section_8.

Students under the age of 24 who want to qualify for project-based rental assistance and housing choice vouchers covered under Section 8 must also have income-eligible parents unless the student is a veteran, is married, has dependent children, or is an independent student. One way to qualify as an independent student is to have been determined to be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless through the processes described in Questions 4 and 5 above. For more information, visit hud.gov.

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