

You Have Choices

Applying for Financial Aid in the 2025-26 Academic Year
As a Mixed-Status Family in California

MAKING INFORMED DECISIONS

Who is CSAC?

The California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) is the state agency responsible for administering financial aid programs for the State of California. Our mission is to promote educational equity by making post-secondary education affordable for all Californians. CSAC is also responsible for the administration of the California Dream Act Application (CADAA), which determines eligibility for state financial aid, including Cal Grant and the Middle Class Scholarship.

What is financial aid?

Financial aid includes grants, scholarships, work-study, and/or loans provided to students to help pay for tuition, books, rent, food, and transportation while they are enrolled in a college or career certificate program. Students can apply for many forms of financial aid by submitting a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or CADAA.

What is a mixed-status family?

You are in a mixed-status family if you are a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen, and your parent(s) or spouse, also known as FAFSA contributors, do not have a Social Security number (SSN).

Who can apply for financial aid by completing CADAA?

Thousands of undocumented students in California apply for and receive state and institutional financial aid every year. In the 2025-26 financial aid cycle, any of the following students who meet the requirements for a “non-resident tuition exemption” can complete the CADAA:

- Undocumented students
- DACA recipients (valid or expired)
- Students with a U visa

- Students with Temporary Protected Status (TPS)
- **U.S. citizens or eligible noncitizens whose parent(s) or spouse are undocumented** ([read more about mixed-status families^{1\)}](#))

MY OPTIONS IN CALIFORNIA

What are the advantages of completing a CADAA?

If you choose to complete CADAA, CSAC will only share your information with the schools you list on your application. CSAC will also determine your eligibility for state aid -- including Cal Grant -- and communicate with you directly.

This immediate option of using the CADAA can allow students from mixed-status families to receive more timely information about state and institutional financial aid. **You can still submit the FAFSA** after submitting the CADAA and be considered for federal student aid. This option reflects a shared commitment to making higher education more affordable and accessible for Californians from all backgrounds.

Can I complete the FAFSA at a later date?

Yes, you can complete the FAFSA even if you have already completed the CADAA. You should talk to their college's financial aid office for specific information on federal financial aid deadlines.

If I choose to complete a FAFSA, will I put my family at risk?

In general, data collected for FAFSA is intended to be used only for purposes of determining financial aid. At this time there is no way to know if the incoming federal administration will try to obtain and use FAFSA information for purposes other than financial aid.

Mixed-status families are understandably nervous about providing personal information to the federal government. While potential risk is unknown, families can consider a few factors to help them assess their own situations, including but not limited to individuals who:

- May have a complicated immigration or criminal history.
- Are known to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), which is under DHS.

- Have a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) Social Security number even if their DACA is expired.
- Has an Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITIN) for tax purposes.
- Have already created a StudentAid.gov account to complete FAFSA in prior years.

If none of the above apply to your non-SSN contributor and immigration status information is not already in a federal government system, you might choose to continue to protect information about their immigration status. Every family will need to assess their personal situation and decide for themselves if providing personal information by completing FAFSA is right for them. Check the resources section of this document for more information.

Will my information or my family's information on the CADAA be shared with other entities or agencies?

CSAC wants to reassure you and your families that data submitted through the CADAA is protected. Information provided on the CADAA is used only to determine eligibility for state financial aid, and it is not shared with the federal government or used for immigration enforcement. CSAC will work to the fullest extent of the law to protect all students that share their information through the CADAA. For more information, [read our student privacy protection statement](#)².

WHAT APPLICATION IS RIGHT FOR ME?

What are the benefits of completing a CADAA?

CADAA is an application created and maintained by CSAC, and we will only share your information with the campuses you list on your application for the purposes of determining financial aid eligibility. CSAC does not share this data with the federal government or use it for immigration enforcement. For more information, [read our student privacy protection statement](#)². When you choose to complete CADAA, you will be considered for all available state aid from the state of California and institutional aid from the college you plan to attend. **Students who don't complete a FAFSA cannot receive any form of federal student aid**, including Pell Grant (up to \$7,395 per year), work study, or federal student loans.

What if I choose to complete the FAFSA process as a member of a mixed-status family?

When you complete FAFSA, you will be considered for all available federal, state, and institutional aid. FAFSA is managed by the U.S. Department of Education and the Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA). To fill out FAFSA, students, parents, and spouses must create a StudentAid.gov account which will ask if you have a Social Security number (SSN). Non-SSN contributors will need to create an account on StudentAid.gov if they don't already have one. Students will complete FAFSA and invite their contributor(s) to complete a section of the student's application. As stated above, if you previously applied for the FAFSA, your information is already in the federal government database.

Non-SSN contributors who complete the 2025-26 FAFSA should be prepared to provide consent to direct data exchange with the IRS. However, direct data exchange does not yet work for non-SSN contributors. These contributors will also be asked to manually enter their tax information from 2023.

What are my next steps as a Mixed-State Family Applicant?

CSAC is here to help you make informed choices & apply for aid. We know that applying for financial aid right now could feel overwhelming and there's a lot of information to consider. Talk with your family about all the options and make the best decision that is right for you. CSAC and our community partners across California are here to help you access resources to understand your situation and decide which application is right for you. Reach out to free legal services on the campus you attend or plan to attend and review the resources available to you in the next section.

RESOURCES FOR MIXED-STATUS FAMILIES

[Know Your Constitutional Rights: Immigrants' Rights](#)³ (American Civil Liberties Union)

[Joint Message from CDE And CSAC: Protection of Student Information For CADAA Applicants](#)² (California Student Aid Commission)

[CADAA for Students from Mixed-Status Families](#)¹ (California Student Aid Commission)

[Undocumented Student Campus Resources](#)⁴ (The Campaign for College Opportunity)

[Find Your Ally: Higher Education Legal Services](#)⁵ (California Community College Foundation)

[Get Legal Help](#)⁶ (Immigrants Rising)

¹ <https://www.csac.ca.gov/cadaa-msf>

² <https://www.csac.ca.gov/post/joint-message-cde-and-csac-protection-student-information-cadaa-applicants>

³ <https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/immigrants-rights>

⁴ <https://collegecampaign.org/undocumented-student-campus-resources>

⁵ <https://findyourally.com/>

⁶ <https://immigrantsrising.org/resource/getting-legal-help/>