

Helping Students with Common FAFSA Mistakes

Students who file the FAFSA sometimes submit an incomplete or incorrect application, leaving them ineligible to receive aid. According to new data received by FCAN from the U.S. Department of Education (ED), the following are the most common mistakes students made on FAFSAs between October 1, 2016 and November 26, 2017.

Mistake 1: Missing Signatures

- To submit a completed FAFSA, dependent students must include their own signature and one of their parent's signatures.
- To sign the FAFSA electronically, students and parents will use their FSA ID on the web application.
- A social security number is required to register for an FSA ID.
- If a student's parent cannot create an FSA ID because they do not have a social security number, they can print, sign, and mail in the parent signature page.

Mistake 2: Parents' Income and Asset Information is Incomplete

- Dependent students whose parents make less than \$50,000 a year meet the Simplified Needs Test. These students will need to answer fewer questions about their parents' income and net worth.
- If a student's parents make more than \$50,000, they will need to fill out more asset information. This may include information about savings and investment accounts, rental properties, etc.

Mistake 3: Parental Social Security Number, Last Name, or Date of Birth Missing

- Most dependent students need to include income and identification information for both parents.
- If the application is missing a social security number, last name, or date of birth for one or both parents, it will be marked incomplete.
- If one or both parents does not have a social security number, they can instead enter 000000000.

Mistake 4: Missing Marital Status and Number of Family Members

- Dependent students should set their marital status to "unmarried." Note that married students are automatically considered independent, regardless of their age.
- The household size for dependent students includes the parents and any individuals who receive more than half of their support from the parents. A 19-year-old who lives at college but still receives more than half of their support from their parents is considered a household member. The same goes for an older parent who lives with and is supported by their children.

Need Help Resolving These Mistakes?

If a student has a problem their FAFSA, contacting the FAFSA helpline is the best way to determine the next steps to resolve the issue.

Students and parents can call 1-800-4FED-AID (1-800-433-3243) from 8 AM to 11 PM Monday-Friday and from 11 AM to 5 PM Saturday and Sunday. They can also communicate with financial aid experts using the online chat feature at: <https://studentaidhelp.ed.gov/app/home/site/fafsa>