

## Financial Aid Application Verification

**What is verification?** As colleges review your financial aid application, they may request documentation from you that supports the information reported on your application. Students may be selected for verification by the Department of Education (federal verification) or by the college (institutional verification). In either case, the financial aid office at the college will need to confirm that information reported on your FAFSA matches federal tax data and is accurate and complete.

**How will I know if I'm selected for verification?** The Student Aid Report (SAR) – the report you receive after the FAFSA has been processed – will indicate if your FAFSA is selected for federal verification by the Department of Education. The college will also notify you if you have been selected for verification, and will let you know what documentation they need you to provide.

**If I'm selected for verification, what documentation do I have to provide?** The financial aid office will need to verify certain information from your federal tax return, such as Adjusted Gross Income, federal tax liability and certain untaxed income items. Other items that may need to be verified are household size, number of students in college, receipt of food stamps (SNAP) and child support paid, if applicable. Although it's okay to use estimated figures in order to meet financial aid application deadlines, you cannot complete the verification process until after you've completed and filed your most recent tax return. If you aren't required to file taxes, see below.

Data from your federal tax return can be transmitted to your FAFSA and the college using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool. If you are selected for federal verification, you may revisit your FAFSA record online after your taxes are filed to utilize the tool. Tax information transferred using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool is forwarded along to the college and meets the needs of federal verification. Families selected for federal verification who are not able to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool are required to submit an official tax transcript to the financial aid office at the college. Instructions to request your official tax transcript are below.

If the college is verifying any additional information, they will notify you of the necessary documentation they require. It's a good idea to check with the college a few weeks after submitting your FAFSA to see if any additional paperwork is needed. Always forward them documentation as soon as possible.

**How do I access an official tax transcript?** If you are not able to utilize the IRS Data Retrieval Tool, an official tax transcript can be requested in one of three ways. Tax filers can expect to receive the transcript within 5-10 days after the IRS receives request.

- Online: [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). Click "Order a Tax Return or Account Transcript" under Online Services.
- Phone: (800) 908-9946
- Paper Request Form: IRS Form 4506T-EZ. Mail or fax completed form to contact information displayed on the form.

**What happens if I'm selected for verification but I don't file taxes?** If you are selected for verification and you are not required to file taxes, follow instructions from the financial aid office for what documentation they want you to send them.

**Is there anything I can do to prepare in case I'm selected for verification?** It's a good idea to start a financial aid file where you would keep documentation such as copies of financial aid award letters, financial aid application logins and passwords, as well as copies of financial documents used to complete the application. Below is a list of items to consider adding to your financial aid file.

- Year-end bank statements and account summaries
- Year-end pay stubs, W2s and 1099s
- Most recent completed tax returns and/or official Tax Return Transcript
- Copy of any correspondence with financial aid office
- Outside scholarship information
- Personal Resource Page available at [www.mefacounselor.org](http://www.mefacounselor.org)