



# Gear Up MA Financial Aid Training

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## About MEFA

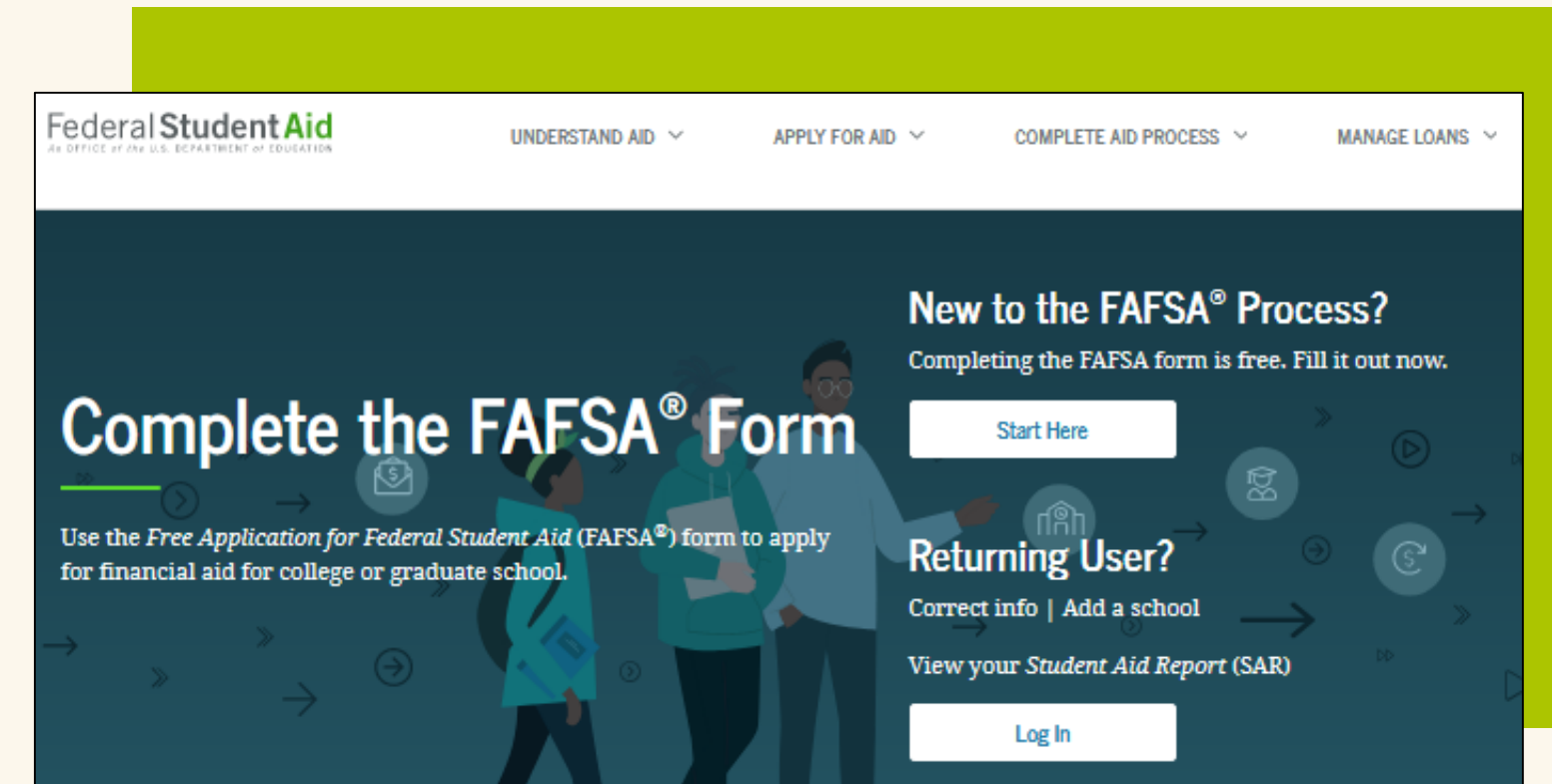
Not-for-profit state authority  
created in 1982 helping  
families plan, save, and  
pay for college

College Financing:

# FAFSA Application Process

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- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- Required by all colleges
- Becomes available October 1st: [fafsa.gov](https://fafsa.gov)
- Log in with an FSA ID: [fsaid.ed.gov](https://fsaid.ed.gov)
  - Both student and parent need one!
  - Keep both student and parent FSA Id's in a safe place that is easy to access when you need it.
- IRS Data Retrieval Tool: Pull in federal tax data
- *Understanding the FAFSA* webinar
- MUST BE COMPLETED EVERY YEAR



## What Students are Eligible for Federal Financial Aid?

- U.S. citizens
- Eligible non-citizens, including:
  - U.S. Nationals
  - Permanent Residents
  - Carriers of Arrival-Departure Records (I-94)
  - Holders (student or parent) of a T-visa
  - “Battered immigrant-qualified aliens”
  - Citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, or the Republic of Palau.
- Citizenship status will be verified by:
  - the Social Security Administration (citizens)
  - the Department of Homeland Security (eligible non-citizens)

## Dependency Determination

Questions on:

- Marital status
- Pursuit of a graduate degree
- Birthdate
- Dependents who receive your support
- Active duty military or veteran
- If since turned 13: orphan, foster care, ward of the court
- Emancipated minor
- In legal guardianship
- Homeless

**Independent students do not have to report parent data**

A man with grey hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, is sitting at a desk and looking at a laptop screen. He has his hand resting on his chin, appearing thoughtful. The background is a blurred indoor setting with a white wall and a framed picture.

## Who is Considered a Parent?

- Biological or adoptive parent(s), and certain step-parents
- Include both parents if parents are married or are not married but live together
- Married parents include same-sex couples
- If separated but living together, select “Married”
- In the case of divorce or separation, provide information only about the parent the student lived with more in the last 12 months, and step-parent if that parent is remarried

## Parents' Dependents

FAFSA will ask for:

- Parents' other dependent children:
  - Will rely on parents for more than half of their financial support from 7/1/23 through 6/30/24
  - Are considered dependent for FAFSA purposes
- Parents' other dependents:
  - Live with student's parents
  - Receive more than half of their financial support from student's parents
  - Will rely on student's parents for more than half of their financial support from 7/1/23 through 6/30/24





## Who's Included in the Number in College?

- Always include the student, even if he/she will attend college less than half time in 2023-24
- Include other household members only if they will attend at least half time in 2023-24 in a program that leads to a college degree or certificate
- Do not include the parents
- Some financial aid offices will require proof that other family members are attending college

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- Parent and student income (2021 income for the 2023-24 FAFSA)
  - Both taxed and untaxed
- Parent and student assets
  - Include: savings, checking, investments, other property
  - Include: all 529 accounts as a parent asset
  - Do not include: primary home, value of retirement, life insurance, value of small family business
- Debt is not reported except debt on reported assets

## IRS Data Retrieval Tool

- Upload 2021 federal tax return data directly to the FAFSA
- Will not be able to view on screen your transferred information
- Will be asked if you had a rollover (and amount) if untaxed IRS distributions or untaxed pensions/annuities are present
- Those married filing jointly will need to input income earned from working
- Certain individuals cannot use the tool:
  - Married individuals who file married filing separately or head of household
  - Parents with the marital status of “Unmarried and both legal parents living together”
  - Any student or parent who filed a Puerto Rican tax return, foreign tax return, or an IRS Form 1040-NR

## Untaxed Income

- Payments to tax-deferred pension and retirement savings plans
- IRA deductions to SEP, SIMPLE, Keogh, & other qualified plans
- Child support received
- Tax-exempt interest income
- Untaxed portions of IRS distributions
- Untaxed portions of pensions
- Housing & living allowances paid to military, clergy, and others
- Veterans non-education benefits (disability, death pension, or DIC)
- Other untaxed income such as workers compensation and disability

**Questions will include line numbers from tax return when applicable**



## Parent Assets To Be Reported

- **Current balance** of cash, savings, and checking accounts
- Net value of investments
  - Real estate
  - Rental properties
  - Money market and mutual funds
  - Stocks & bonds
  - 529 college savings for all children (reported as a parent asset)
- Net value of some businesses and investment farms

**Do not** include your primary residence, life insurance, value of retirement accounts, and value of small family businesses or farms

## 2024-25 FAFSA Changes

- Shorter form, fewer questions
- Expected Family Contribution (EFC) will become Student Aid Index (SAI)
- SAI will make more families eligible for Pell Grants
- Divorced/separated parents: Parent who provides more financial support will be listed on the FAFSA
- Number of students in college will not be considered in SAI calculation
- Some forms of untaxed income will no longer be reported like child support
- Resources like 529s from grandparents and other family members no longer need to be reported
- Colleges may not yet know the effect the change will have on student aid packages
- Sign up for MEFA emails to stay in the loop

# The CSS Profile

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## What is the CSS Profile?

- The College Board's online financial aid application
- Required by almost 200 colleges/universities & a handful of scholarship programs
  - Check each college/university's financial aid website
- All colleges also require the FAFSA®
- Used to award non-federal financial aid funds
- Opens October 1st each year
- Available for both domestic and international students





## Why Do Institutions Use the Profile?

- Collects more detailed information than the FAFSA
- Allows schools to ask customized questions
- Permits families to provide special circumstances

# Participating Institutions and Programs

## 2023-24 Participating Institutions and Programs

The following colleges, universities, and scholarship programs use CSS Profile and/or IDOC as part of their financial aid process for some or all of their financial aid applicants in the populations listed below. Please check schools' websites or contact the institution for more information.

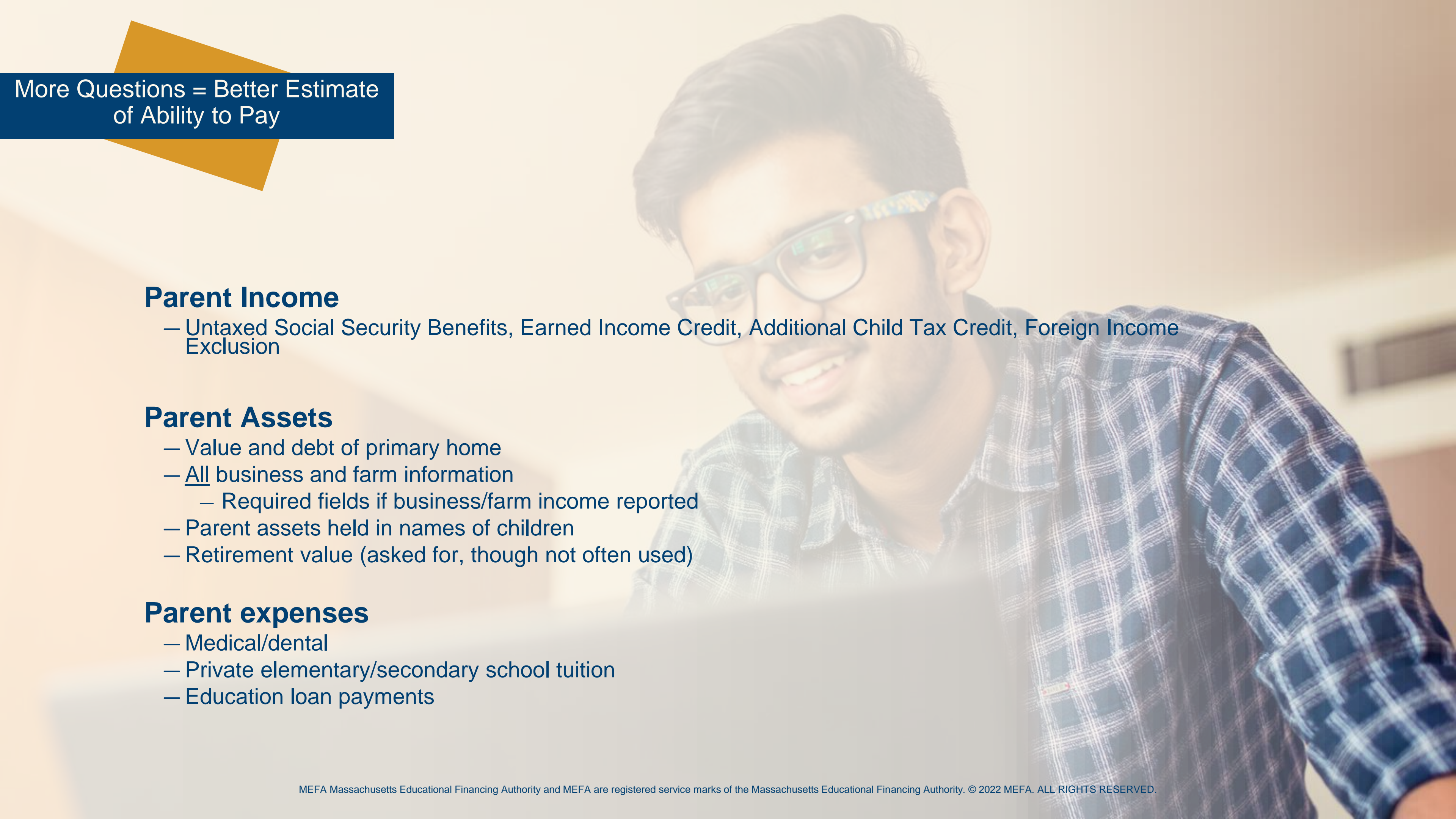
| CSS Code   | Institution Name               | Institution State | CSS Profile – Domestic Students | CSS Profile – International Students | CSS Profile – Noncustodial Parents | IDOC       |
|------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|
| Show All ▾ | Show All ▾                     | Show All ▾        | Show All ▾                      | Show All ▾                           | Show All ▾                         | Show All ▾ |
| 1001       | Adrian College, MI             | MI                | No                              | Yes                                  | No                                 | No         |
| 1003       | Alabama A&M University         | AL                | No                              | No                                   | No                                 | Yes        |
| 5007       | American University            | DC                | Yes                             | No                                   | Yes                                | No         |
| 3003       | Amherst College                | MA                | Yes                             | Yes                                  | Yes                                | Yes        |
| 0193       | Armenian Student Assoc of Amer | RI                | Yes                             | Yes                                  | No                                 | No         |
| 3075       | Babson College                 | MA                | Yes                             | Yes                                  | Yes                                | Yes        |

## Application Process

- Sign in
  - Use **student's** College Board account from SATs/AP tests
  - OR parents create a new student account using **parent's** information
  - A separate College Board account is needed for each student
- Left-hand sidebar will show different sections
- Sections are added when they become required
- Each section is checked and turns green when it's completed
- User *is* permitted to jump ahead to a different section
- Questions will be indicated if required
- Don't have to do the application all in one sitting
- When logging back in, user will be directed to first incomplete section
- Answers are automatically saved as you go
- Application is mobile-friendly

## Application General Tips

- Click *Save and Continue* to move to the next section
- To exit, click *Save and Continue* and then close the browser
- Use buttons in application, not web browser, to navigate
- Use hints and notes for question guidance
- Some questions will offer expandable hints you can click to read
- Families should answer all questions to which they have answers, such as the SSN
- Can leave an answer blank if it does not apply and is not required



More Questions = Better Estimate  
of Ability to Pay

## Parent Income

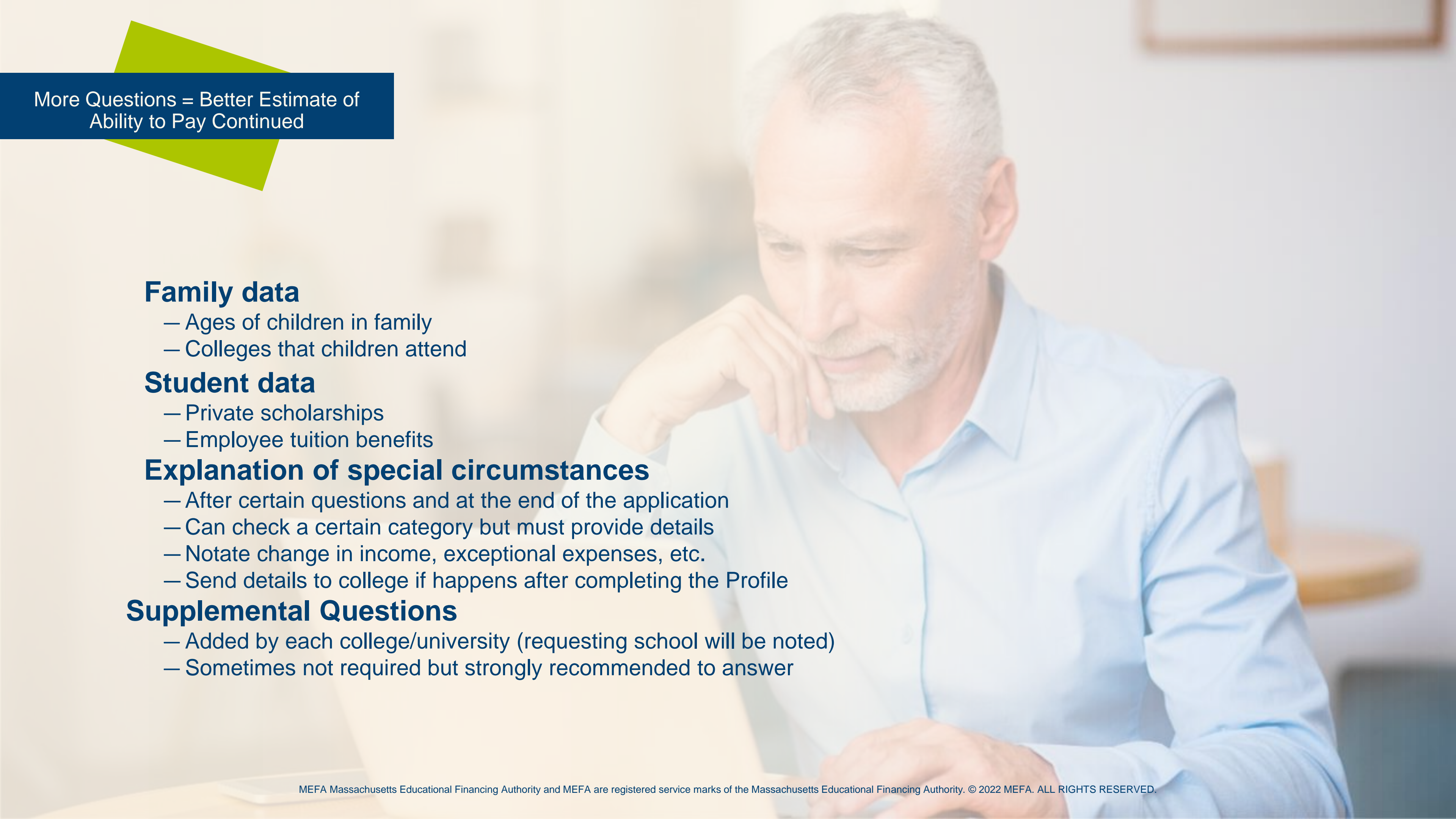
- Untaxed Social Security Benefits, Earned Income Credit, Additional Child Tax Credit, Foreign Income Exclusion

## Parent Assets

- Value and debt of primary home
- All business and farm information
  - Required fields if business/farm income reported
- Parent assets held in names of children
- Retirement value (asked for, though not often used)

## Parent expenses

- Medical/dental
- Private elementary/secondary school tuition
- Education loan payments



More Questions = Better Estimate of  
Ability to Pay Continued

### **Family data**

- Ages of children in family
- Colleges that children attend

### **Student data**

- Private scholarships
- Employee tuition benefits

### **Explanation of special circumstances**

- After certain questions and at the end of the application
- Can check a certain category but must provide details
- Note change in income, exceptional expenses, etc.
- Send details to college if happens after completing the Profile

### **Supplemental Questions**

- Added by each college/university (requesting school will be noted)
- Sometimes not required but strongly recommended to answer

## Fees

- \$25 for the application and initial school report
- \$16 for each additional school report
- Payment options: Credit card or debit card
- Noncustodial parent's Profile: \$25 one-time
- Expanded fee waiver policy

## Fee Waivers

- Automatically granted if family meets one of the following:
  - Household income (AGI) is \$100,000 or less
  - Student is an orphan or ward of the court and under 24
  - Student received an SAT fee waiver (must use student's College Board account)
- Available to freshman/transfer/returning/independent undergraduate students
- Available to students whose parents live in U.S.
- Not available for international students
- Use for unlimited # of schools
- Noncustodial parents: fee waiver if meet same income guidelines above



A young man with short brown hair, wearing a white t-shirt with red sleeves and a backpack, is smiling and looking towards the camera. He is standing on a college campus with other students and buildings in the background. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

## Fee Payment Codes

- Purchased by colleges/universities/organizations for use by students
- Each code pays for one college submission
- No limit on use of fee payment codes

# Challenging Financial Aid Scenarios

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## Breakout Rooms: Financial Aid Scenarios

### Scenario # 1: Elijah

Elijah was born in Worcester, MA but his parents were not. They are nervous and do not want him to complete any financial aid forms. Based on the conversation, you think they were born outside the US. Elijah is applying to schools that also require the CSS Profile.

- How should you advise this student?
- What financial aid forms can he complete? How should he complete them?

### Scenario #2: Mary

Mary grew up living with her grandmother for as long as she can remember. In fact, she calls her mom. It is time for Mary to complete her financial aid forms.

- Should grandma be listed as the parent on Mary's FAFSA? What about on Mary's CSS Profile?
- How would you advise Mary?

## Breakout Rooms: Financial Aid Scenarios

### Scenario #3: Alyssa

Alyssa's parents are divorced. Although her mom is considered the custodial parent on school forms. She lives equally between both parents. Her father pays child support and provides for all of Alyssa's needs when she is with him. He has remarried and has two other children, one of which is in college already.

- What parent should be listed on her FAFSA form?
- Do both parents have to complete the CSS Profile?
- What is Alyssa's household size?


### Scenario #4: Jayson

Jayson's mom is a single mom. He has not had any contact with his father for a couple years now but has not said why. He is applying to CSS Profile and FAFSA schools.

- Does Jayson's father have to complete the noncustodial profile?
- How would you advise Jayson?

# Resources

## FAFSA Customer Service

- **Phone:** (800) 4-Fed-Aid (433-3243)
- **Email Form:** Located at [studentaid.gov/help-center/contact](https://studentaid.gov/help-center/contact)
- **Chat:** Located at [studentaid.gov/help-center/contact](https://studentaid.gov/help-center/contact)  
(Chat option disappears if chat is not available)
- **Hours:**
  - Monday-Friday: 8 a.m.–11 p.m. ET
  - Saturday & Sunday: 11 a.m.–5 p.m. ET
- **Help icon**  at the top of each page leads to:
  - FAQs
  - Search
  - Link to contact information

# Profile Customer Support Center

Click on *Contact Us* on the top navigation bar

**Contact Us**

**Support Hours:**

- October 1 through February 28: Monday-Friday from 9am-10pm ET
- March 1 through September 30: Monday-Friday from 9am-6pm ET
- Certain holidays may affect these hours.

**Family customer support**

**CSS Profile For Students**  
U.S. and Canada: 844-202-0524  
International: 212-299-0096  
Email: [FinaidServices@collegeboard.org](mailto:FinaidServices@collegeboard.org)

**IDOC For Students**  
U.S. and Canada: 866-897-9881  
International: 212-299-0096  
Email: [FinaidServices@collegeboard.org](mailto:FinaidServices@collegeboard.org)

**For Financial Aid Administrators**  
Phone: 866-881-1167  
Email: [FinaidServices@collegeboard.org](mailto:FinaidServices@collegeboard.org)

**School counselor customer support**

**For Counselors**  
Phone: 800-626-9795  
Email: [FinaidServices@collegeboard.org](mailto:FinaidServices@collegeboard.org)

**Chat**

Live Chat

## Resources

### MEFA Institute

- Understanding the FAFSA
- A Deep Dive into the CSS Profile
- Financial Aid Resources for Department of Children and Families (DCF) Students
- Counseling Students with Unique Circumstances in the Financial Aid Process

### FAFSA Day MA

- Next virtual event: December 15<sup>th</sup> 6-8PM (register on their website)

Federal Student Aid: [Financial Aid Toolkit](#)



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 [facebook.com/mefaMA](https://facebook.com/mefaMA)

 [@mefa\\_ma](https://instagram.com/@mefa_ma)

 [@MEFAtweets](https://twitter.com/@MEFAtweets)

 [linkedin.com/company/mefa](https://linkedin.com/company/mefa)

 [youtube.com/MEFAcounselor](https://youtube.com/MEFAcounselor)

 [mefa.org/mefa-podcast](https://mefa.org/mefa-podcast)



Thank You

**QUESTIONS?**

Call (800)-449-MEFA (6332)  
or email [collegeplanning@mefa.org](mailto:collegeplanning@mefa.org)

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