The MEFA Institute

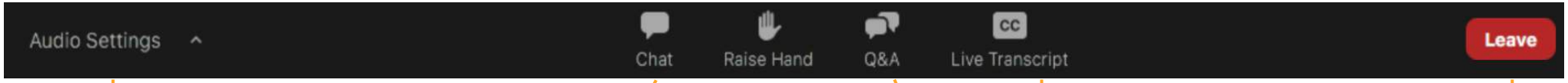
Supporting Students and Families with Unique Immigration Statuses in the Postsecondary Planning Process

October 2026

MEFA

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

How to Participate



The *Audio Settings* allow you to control the volume levels

The *Chat* feature is disabled. To communicate with the host, please use the *Q&A* section

Use the *Live Transcript* feature if you want to see closed captions

Have a question during the webinar? Type it in the *Q&A* section

Click *Leave* to exit the webinar

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

About MEFA

State authority created by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1982, helping families plan, save, and pay for college



MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Your Presenter



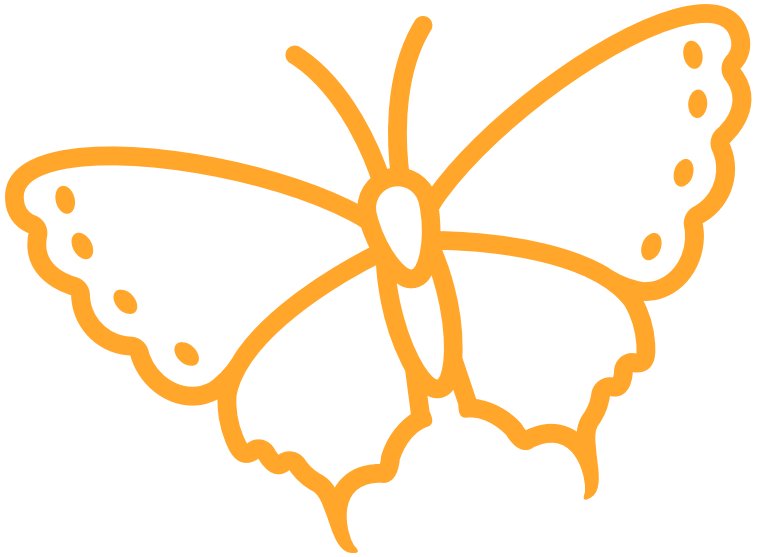
Andrea Keenan
Associate Director, K-12 Services

- 5 years as TRIO counselor
- 8 years as HS counselor in East Boston
- Immigrant from Mexico and 1st-generation college student

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Grounding Ourselves

- Your story is important
- Acknowledge your awareness/knowledge level
- Lean into growth
- This topic is hard



MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

3 Best Practices



1) Know your community

- Work to ensure every counselor, general teacher, ELL/ESL teacher, coach, adviser, and administrator has a baseline knowledge of the local landscape. What populations need extra support?
  - Immigrant students, undocumented, at risk of being homeless, self-supporting student
- Your hyper-local context will impact how you do work at your school and organization

2) Student self-disclosure is important to maximize resources and time!

- Even if they're not undocumented, some may have a non-citizen status or come from a mixed-status family or have other pressing issues, which may impact their financial aid process
- Students should not give up on their postsecondary dreams and plans
  - But they and their support team might need to get more creative!
  - Self-disclosure within the safety of your counseling department really matters

3) Model talking about immigration especially around the college app process and be open

- Myth bust whenever possible!
- Don't stay silent… but also, no answer is better than the wrong answer
- Don't be afraid to say, *"I don't know, but you know what, I'm on this journey with you and we'll figure it out. I will make sure we get an accurate answer for this!"*
- Get ready to GET CREATIVE
- Roll call for the counseling team 1-2X per year

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Self-Reflection Questions

Bring these back to your teams/schools!

- What countries are mostly represented in our school/organization?
  - Are there statuses that are more prevalent from certain countries? (e.g. TPS)
- Do we have a large population of undocumented students or other underserved groups?
- Where have students in the past gone after high school? Any feedback on their experiences?
  - undocu+ students, at risk of being unhoused, self-supporting

Best practice: Centralize your undocumented student support (someone that can coordinate and triage self-disclosures)

Note: Trends change fast! Always put it in the state/federal context

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Statuses

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

The Immigration System in the U.S.

- It takes on average 10 to 16 years for a “skilled worker” to even get on the pathway to citizenship or become a citizen via “employment-based visas"
    - Tourist visas, etc., are in the category of "non-immigrant" visas
- Much longer, if ever, for everyone else
- This is why the push for comprehensive reform matters

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Defining Undocumented

It is a status, not an identity.

Undocumented: a person living in a country without the immigration status or authorization required under that country's current immigration laws

In the U.S., this can include people who:

- **Entered without immigration authorization** and do not have lawful immigration status
- **Entered lawfully but later lost or fell out of status**—for example, after a temporary visa expired
- **Had an immigration application, petition, or status that ended or was denied**, leaving them without current lawful status
- **Were brought to the U.S. as children** and have never had a permanent immigration status, including some young people who may have DACA or another temporary protection

1. A person's immigration status can also change over time.
2. "Undocumented" does not mean that a person is a criminal, and an immigration violation does not automatically mean that a person has committed a crime.
3. "Undocumented" is a broad, commonly used term, but immigration situations are highly varied. Someone may have a pending application, temporary protection, a work permit, or another form of protection while still being described as undocumented in some contexts. Educators generally should not try to determine a student's immigration status themselves.

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Language Matters

Preferred/People-Centered Language

- **Undocumented:** commonly used to describe someone who lacks current immigration status or authorization
- **Undocu+:** an inclusive term that can encompass undocumented people and those navigating related immigration experiences
- **Immigrant/migrant:** use when accurate and relevant; immigration status is not synonymous with identity

Terms to Avoid in School Settings

- ❌ **"Illegal" or "illegal immigrant":** labels a person as illegal and can reinforce stigma
- ❌ **"Unauthorized" or "unauthorized immigrant":** a **government/legal term** that may be appropriate when discussing official policy or documents, but is generally not people-centered language for educators to use when referring to students or families
- ❌ **"Alien":** outdated and dehumanizing in everyday educational contexts

For Educators: A Simple Rule

- **Name the person before the paperwork:** use the terminology individuals and communities use for themselves and avoid assumptions about anyone's immigration status
- **Bottom line:** Government terminology and school/community language don't have to be the same; in schools, prioritize dignity, respect, belonging, and people-centered language

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

A Spectrum of Statuses

- U.S. National
- Naturalized citizen
- Asylum granted
- Asylum pending
- Refugee (with permanent resident card)
- TPS
- Permanent resident (I-551, I-151, or I-551c, etc.)
- Conditional permanent resident
- "Parolee"*

**Note the role of the Paper I-94 vs the computer-generated Form CBP I-94A*

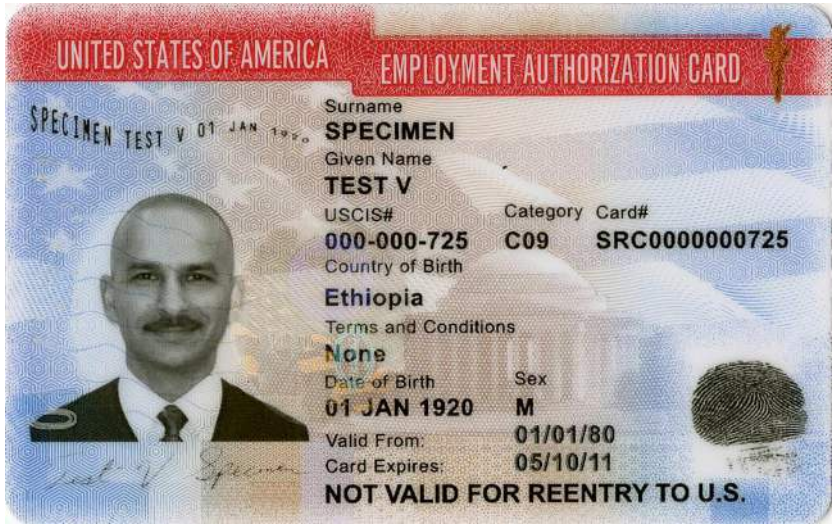
- Processes for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans (CHNV) offers humanitarian parole and has recently been revoked*
- Cuban/Haitian Entrants (this designation allows eligibility to many federal benefit programs) *
- U visa
- J and F visas
- T visa
- Other temporary visas
- DACA
- Family-sponsored visas
- VAWA self-petitioner* (If approved, may lead to a permanent resident card)
- Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (If approved, may lead to a permanent resident card)
- Undocumented (a lack of status)

Note: Those within the eligible statuses (yellow) fall under the category of "eligible non-citizens" for FAFSA eligibility purposes

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Differences Between Cards





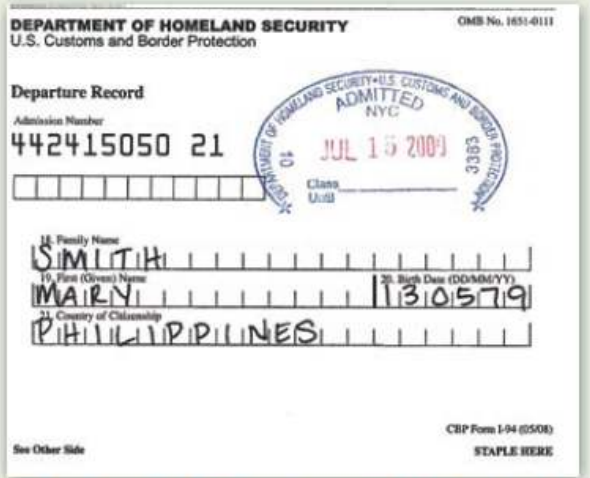
Both these cards give the holder a USCIS#, but only one makes its holder eligible for federal financial aid (the Permanent Resident Card) (USCIS# is otherwise (formerly) called the A# or ARN).

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Become Familiar with the I-94

The I-94 Arrival/Departure record comes in electronic form now (some people might still be in possession of a paper version)

Form I-94: Issued by CBP prior to Automation at Air and Sea Ports of Entry


DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
OMB No. 1651-0111

Departure Record

Admission Number
442415050 21

ADMITTED NYC JUL 15 2009

Class Until

1. Family Name
SMITH

19. First (Given) Name
MARY

20. Birth Date (DD/MM/YY)
130579

21. Country of Citizenship
PHILIPPINES

CBP Form I-94 (05/08)

See Other Side

STAPLE HERE

This version of the I-94 was issued by CBP to air and sea travelers prior to automation.


U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Securing America's Borders

Get I-94 Number | I-94 FAQ

Admission (I-94) Number Retrieval

Admission (I-94) Record Number: 69000888062

Admit Until Date (MM/DD/YYYY): 10/10/2012

Details provided on Admission(I-94) form:

Family Name:	LI
First (Given) Name:	LYDIA
Birth Date (MM/DD/YYYY):	01/01/1990
Passport Number:	P123123213
Passport Country of Issuance:	Mexico
Date of Entry (MM/DD/YYYY):	04/11/2012
Class of Admission:	B1

Individuals can visit **www.cbp.gov/I94** to retrieve a copy of their electronic Form I-94.

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Current Immigration Landscape: What Educators Should Know (2026)

Employment authorization is increasingly status-dependent

- Students may lose or gain work authorization depending on changes in their immigration status
- Employment eligibility should never be assumed based on previous documentation

More rapid policy shifts

- DHS guidance, executive actions, and federal court decisions are changing more frequently than in previous years
- Advising should rely on current information rather than past practice

DACA remains limited

- Current DACA recipients may continue renewing their status.
- No new initial DACA applications are being approved, meaning today's high school students generally cannot newly obtain DACA

Increased changes to humanitarian protections

- DHS has moved to terminate or limit several humanitarian programs (including TPS for multiple countries), creating uncertainty for many students and families
- Legal challenges continue, but eligibility and work authorization can change quickly

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

A Spotlight on Temporary Protected Status (TPS)

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

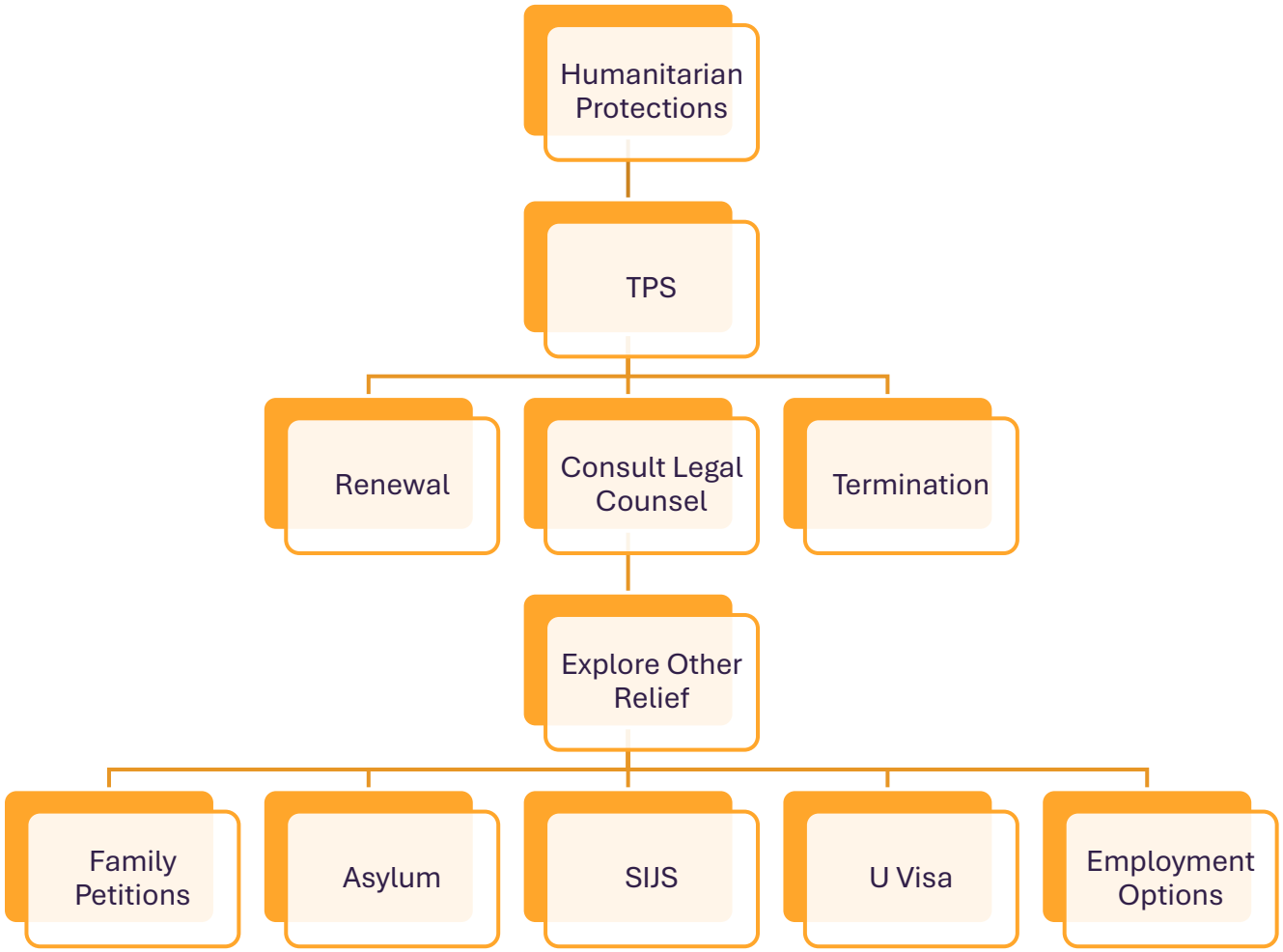
Immigrants in Massachusetts

- Immigrants in the state: ~2,000,000
- 1 in 5 workers is an immigrant
  - 5,600+ TPS holders are essential workers
  - 26.2% of workers in manufacturing are foreign-born, 23.7% of workers in recreation, accommodation, and food services are foreign-born
- Amount of state and local taxes paid by undocumented immigrants: $253 million
- Individuals with DACA: ~5,000
- TPS holders: ~18,000 (rapidly shifting!)
- International students: 75,000
- Number of college-educated labor force underutilized (i.e. unemployed or employed in low-skilled jobs): 56,000

Source: MIRA

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Spotlight on Temporary Protected Status (TPS)



- TPS is a rapidly changing form of humanitarian protection
- A student's eligibility to work or remain in the U.S. may change because of DHS actions or court rulings
- Always verify the student's current status before advising on employment, financial aid, or postsecondary planning

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

TPS Status by Country

As of October 26, 2026

Country	Current TPS Status
Burma (Myanmar)	terminated; effective August 7, 2026. Litigation may affect implementation.
El Salvador	TPS protection continues pending a DHS announcement.
Ethiopia	Terminated; effective August 18, 2026.
Haiti	Terminated; effective July 27, 2026. Litigation remains relevant.
Lebanon	Active; designation valid through November 27, 2026.
Somalia	Terminated; effective August 14, 2026.
South Sudan	Terminated; effective August 7, 2026.
Sudan	Designation's stated end date was October 19, 2026; DHS reported that protections continue pending further action.
Syria	Terminated; effective July 27, 2026. Litigation remains relevant.
Ukraine	Designation's stated end date was October 19, 2026; DHS reported that protections continue pending further action
Venezuela	Both the 2021 and 2023 designations have been terminated, with different effective dates. Litigation and court orders must be assessed separately.
Yemen	Terminated; effective July 20, 2026. Litigation may affect implementation.

Note: *This list is for context only. For legal, immigration, or employment-eligibility purposes, verify the latest USCIS guidance and the relevant court orders for the individual country and beneficiary. A country-level summary does not establish an individual's current TPS or employment authorization.*

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Countries to Note

Countries whose TPS recently ended or was terminated earlier in 2026

- Afghanistan
- Cameroon
- Honduras
- Nepal
- Nicaragua

These countries have had their TPS designations terminated or allowed to expire under recent DHS actions, though some aspects have been challenged in court

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

When a Family's TPS Ends



- Encourage them to consult a qualified immigration attorney or DOJ-accredited representative immediately
- Timing matters because some forms of relief have filing deadlines or are easier to pursue before TPS and work authorization expire



- Don't assume they have to leave the U.S. immediately Court orders, appeals, or other immigration applications may affect their ability to remain in the country

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

For Educators

- Your role: to **identify concerns and connect families with reliable resources, not determine eligibility for immigration benefits**
- If a student mentions that a parent's TPS is ending, an appropriate response is:
  - *Because immigration policies are changing quickly, I recommend speaking with a qualified immigration legal services provider ASAP to review your family's options*
  - *There may be other forms of relief available*
  - *Here are some local community resources*
  - *Let me know how it goes. We'll continue to plan for your life after high school because regardless of immigration status, you can _____!*
- This approach helps ensure families receive advice tailored to their specific circumstances rather than relying on general information

Self-Disclosing Safely

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Framing

Immigration status has become much more dynamic

Five years ago: we could often give fairly stable guidance around what to expect re: statuses

Today: students may experience changes in work authorization, humanitarian protections, or eligibility for benefits **within a single school year**

Our role isn't to take the place of immigration attorneys—**it's to recognize when a student's status may affect postsecondary planning** and connect them with good postsecondary planning advice and accurate legal and community resources

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Why Is Self-Disclosure Important?



To maximize resources and time for your students, regardless of what postsecondary path they're pursuing



People who immigrate to the U.S. may have varied immigration statuses (or lack thereof) and/or be in a "mixed-status" family… this may impact their financial aid process



The *earlier* you know, the timelier the resources and help will be (for example, they won't miss any financial aid deadlines)

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Can It Be Done Safely?

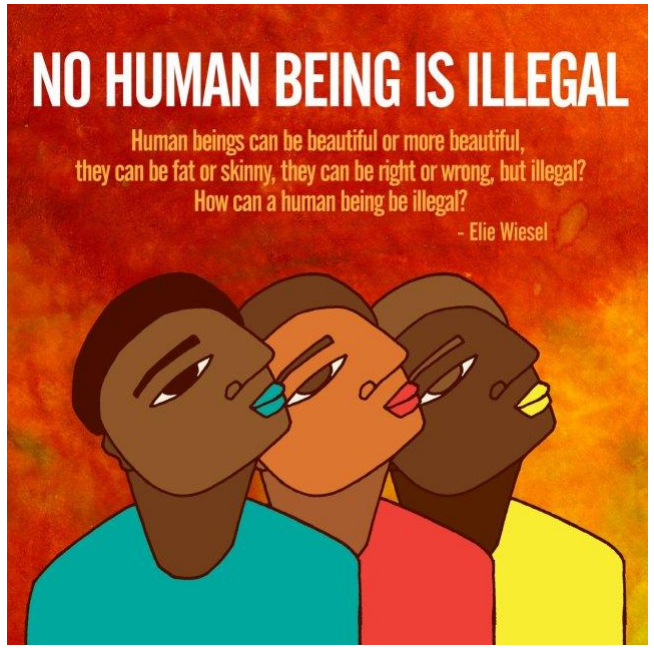
- Educators can **never ask** a student or family what their immigration status is (Plyler vs Doe, 1982)
- But once students self-disclose, counselors should feel like they can bring it up respectfully and when appropriate as needed for the college process
- If you suspect there might be an immigration concern, use open-ended questions like, "**Is there anything else you want to share with me that might allow me to help you in your process?**"
- **Avoid writing emails** with sensitive information at all times, but especially *before* a student or family hasvgiven permission to spread the information to others regarding their status
- Share information with only staff that need to know (e.g. a fellow school counselor if you need a thought partner) and do it in person!
- **Do not keep a written list** anywhere of student statuses when it includes first/last names + status in the same place. Major no!

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Any Ways to Make Self-Disclosure Easier?

- Students need to feel safe and supported in an authentic
- It's OK if you don't know everything, but make sure they know you're on their side
- Set the scene: visual cues of your allyship matter too!
- *How can we do this **virtually too**?*

*Think: website, e-mail communications, stickers**. Don't be afraid to be bold. Be unafraid.***



Favianna Rodriguez 2013



Poster by ImmSchools.org

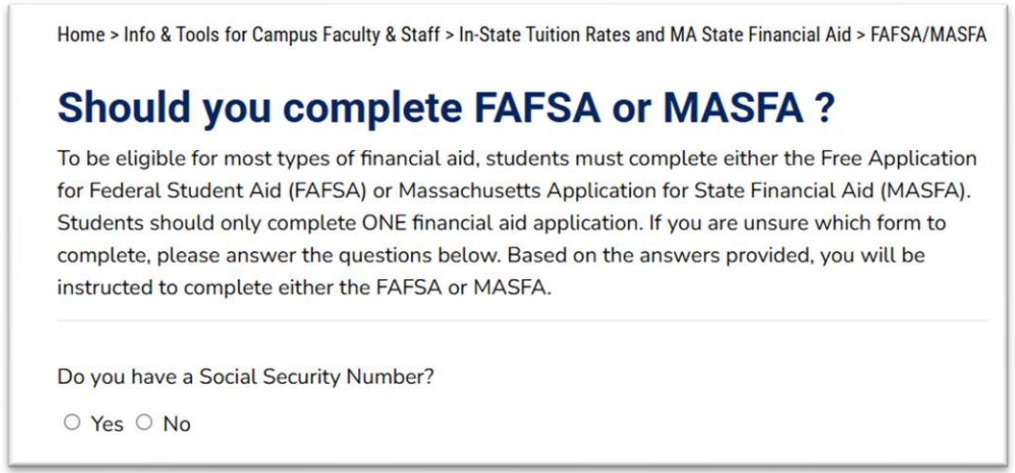
MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Model Openness and Inclusivity

- Talking about immigration especially around the college app process should be something educators are open about (e.g., FAFSA and MASFA nights)
- Our instinct is to protect our students and therefore be “very discreet” to the point sometimes of avoiding the topic directly, but this does not serve students applying to college
- **The earlier we talk about it**, especially counselors, the more resources we’ll have when helping students apply to college (e.g,, have all students fill out the MASFA questionnaire)
- Peruse resources like these on statistics by state + access to financial aid and **show them to your students too!**
    - Higher Education Immigration Portal
    - The Education Trust comprehensive tool
- Include resources about Tuition Equity, MASFA, and MassEducate in all your student and family-facing resources

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Whole-Group Activity: the OSFA MASFA Questionnaire


Home > Info & Tools for Campus Faculty & Staff > In-State Tuition Rates and MA State Financial Aid > FAFSA/MASFA

Should you complete FAFSA or MASFA ?

To be eligible for most types of financial aid, students must complete either the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid (MASFA). Students should only complete ONE financial aid application. If you are unsure which form to complete, please answer the questions below. Based on the answers provided, you will be instructed to complete either the FAFSA or MASFA.

Do you have a Social Security Number?

○ Yes ○ No

Guide every student through the questionnaire together to help them determine whether they should complete the **MASFA or FAFSA**.

This approach:

- Encourages students to reflect on their own circumstances and identify what they may need to learn or confirm
- Gives students an opportunity to fact-find with their families and follow up with you privately with questions
- Creates a shared, inclusive experience rather than singling out undocumented or immigrant students
- Models openness and communicates that all students are welcome to ask questions and access financial aid support

The goal: Give every student the same starting point and a clear path to determine which financial aid application is right for them

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Sound Bites

Instead of saying...	Consider saying...
"Are you undocumented?“ (NEVER ASK THIS!!)	Do you have any other situations or circumstances that you think could affect your process that might be useful for me to know about. Anything you tell me stays between us unless you give me permission to share!
“Have you worked before?”	"Are there any employment or documentation considerations you'd like us to help you navigate?"
"You should apply for DACA."	"Now that you've told be about_____ and self-disclosed, let's discuss the details of the immigration status you currently have and what opportunities are available."
"You'll need a Social Security number."	"Let's identify which postsecondary and employment pathways fit your circumstances."

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Stay Informed & Next Steps

1. **Search for the closest Immigrant and Refugee Coalition to you**
   - Local is best when pointing specific families to trusted legal aid: in MA it's MIRA!
   - Why? Legal processes can take years, the earlier students start, the better

2. **Refer to trusted legal sources online like:**
   a. Catholic Legal Immigration Network
   b. National Immigration Law Center
   c. The Immigrant Legal Resource Center: red "know your rights" cards
   d. City of Boston Bi-weekly immigration consultations with volunteer immigration lawyers
   e. LUCE: Local intel and information regarding ICE presence in MA

3. **Know about IMMIGRANT-led organizations and advocacy groups**
   a. UNITED WE DREAM: backbone of the early 2010s push for reform that brought forth DACA
      i. Know your Rights Guide
   b. Immigrants Rising: originally started by educator allies
   c. ImmSchools: a new immigrant-led org with great toolkits for educational organizations

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Financial Aid

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

FAFSA

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2025 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Statuses Eligible for Federal Financial Aid (In Yellow)

- U.S. National
- Naturalized citizen
- Asylum granted
- Asylum pending
- Refugee (with permanent resident card)
- TPS
- Permanent resident (I-551, I-151, or I-551c, etc.)
- Conditional permanent resident
- "Parolee"

*Note the role of the Paper I-94 vs the computer-generated Form CBP I-94A

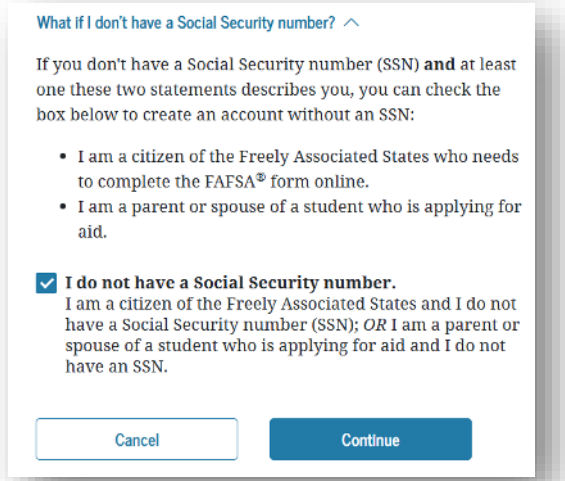
- Processes for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans (CHNV) offers humanitarian parole* and has recently been revoked*
- Cuban/Haitian Entrants (this designation allows eligibility to many Federal benefit programs)
- U visa
- J and F visas
- T visa
- Other temporary visas
- DACA
- Family-sponsored visas
- VAWA self-petitioner* (If approved, may lead to a permanent resident card)
- Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (If approved, may lead to a permanent resident card)
- Undocumented (a lack of status)

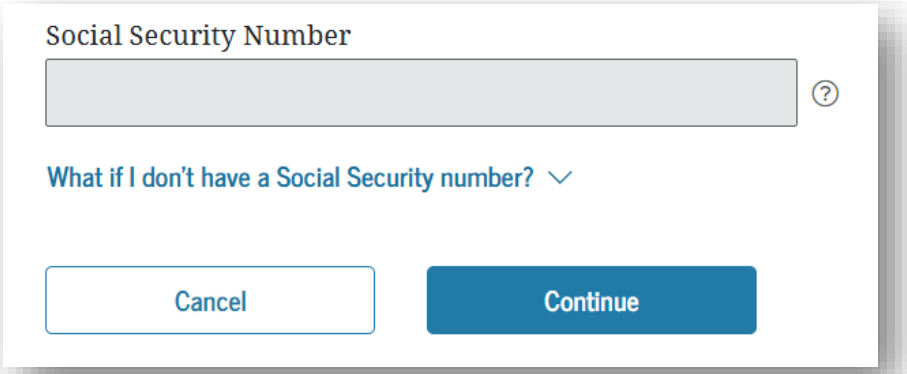
Note: Those within the eligible statuses fall under the category of "eligible non-citizens" for FAFSA eligibility purposes

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Helping Students from Mixed Status Families

- Preview with families that you are a team! Even if tech glitches arise, there are ways to solve them and they will definitely still be able to fill out a FAFSA.
- Make copies of the *Who Needs an FSA ID?* MEFA handout so students are clear or who needs an FSA ID, as well as who will be a contributor on their FAFSA via this studentaid.gov graphic. It may lessen undue stress, especially in mixed status families.
- Have handouts at the ready with instructions for how undocumented parents create their FSA ID. If students are coached to create theirs first in school, they can then help their parent(s).
- If a parent doesn't have a Social Security number, as they're creating an FSA ID (AKA studentaid.gov account), they should click on the blue drop-down, which will expand, and then check off: *What if I don't have a Social Security number?*. Form will be processed even if identity verification isn't immediate!





MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Data Protections for FAFSA Information

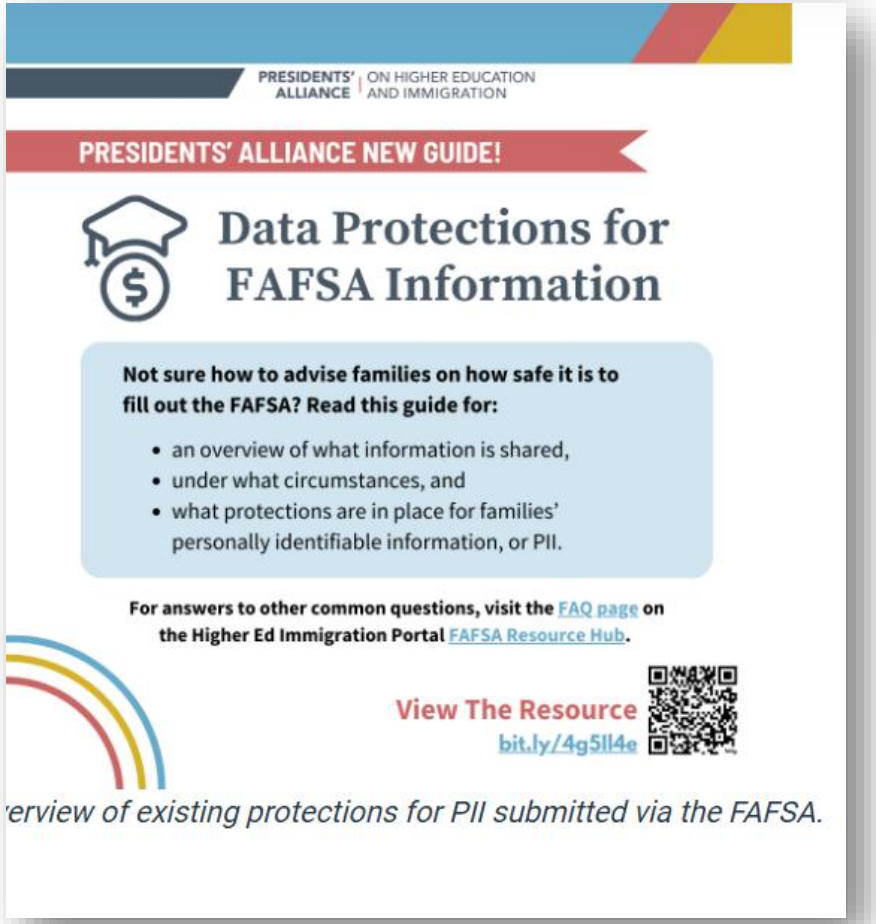


Image source: President's Alliance for Higher Education

How will I know if regulations protecting PII change?

If the Department of Education establishes any new data sharing agreements, these will be published in the System of Records Notices (SORNs). The Presidents' Alliance is monitoring all active SORNs and will publish a summary of what data sharing they authorize. This will be kept up to date in the future and will be emailed out to our FAFSA Updates listserv.

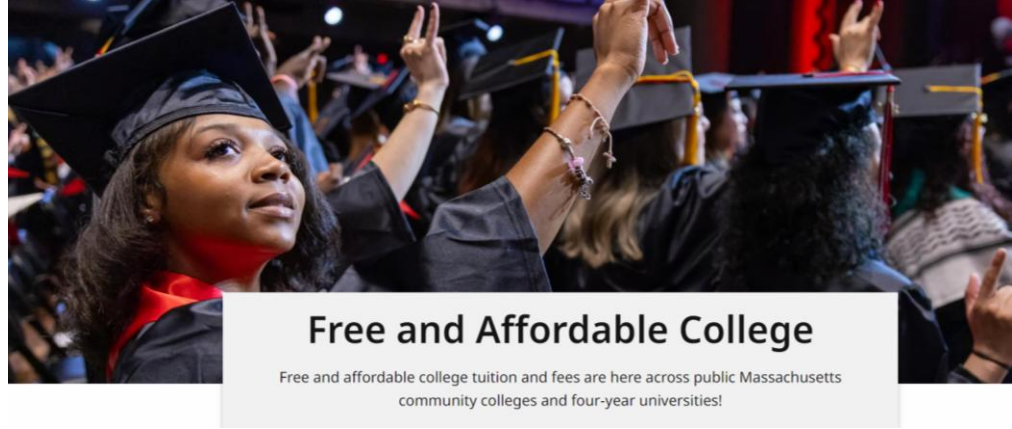
- Privacy Act System of Record Notice Issuances | U.S. Department of Education
- Resources & Guides - Presidents' Alliance

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

MA State Aid

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Paying for College in MA



To apply for MA state financial aid, complete the FAFSA or MASFA ASAP after Oct 1st

https://www.mass.gov/free-and-affordable-college

- **Free Community College:** Free community college (tuition & fees and potential book allowance) for all students
- **MASSGrant Plus & MASSGrant Plus Expansion:** Free or reduced tuition & fees for low & middle-income students and potential book allowance at community colleges and 4-year public colleges
- **Tuition Equity Law:** Some undocumented students can receive MA state aid and in-state tuition rates by submitting the MASFA (https://www.mass.edu/tuitionequity/home.asp)
- **MassTransfer:** Makes transferring from a MA community college to a 4-year MA public college more affordable
- **Tuition Break:** Reduction on out-of-state tuition costs at New England colleges for certain programs (https://nebhe.org/)

mefa.org/paying-college-massachusetts

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

FREE MA Community College

What Is It?	Requirements
• For any student with no previously earned bachelor's degree • Covers all course-related tuition and fees for eligible courses (does not cover program-specific fees for testing, materials) • Offers a stipend of up to $1,200 per academic year ($600 per semester) for books and supplies to any student (Pell-eligible students receive another $1,200)	• Complete the FAFSA • Students not eligible to complete the FAFSA and approved as a "High School Completer" can complete the MASFA and still attend for free • Enroll in at least six credits (usually two classes) per semester in an approved program of study leading to an associate degree or certificate • Maintain satisfactory academic progress in accordance with college requirements

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Massachusetts State Financial Aid Tuition Equity Law

Courtesy of the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA)

Tuition Equity Law notably carves a **pathway** to in-state tuition rates and state financial aid for certain non-US citizen students, including undocumented students, who have attended high school in Massachusetts for at least three (3) years and earned a high school diploma (or the equivalent) in the Commonwealth

Students across the Commonwealth will benefit from this expanded access to affordable higher education

Creation of Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid (MASFA) application allows students to apply for need-based state financial aid

MASFA launched in January 2024 for the 2023-24 academic year; and March 2024 for 2024-25.

Over 500 students completed the 2023-24 MASFA

1375 + applicants were received for 2024-25

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

MASFA

To apply for MA state aid, students must submit Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid (**MASFA**),
the form by which the MA Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) and MA public colleges will acquire household financial information about students.

Things to note:

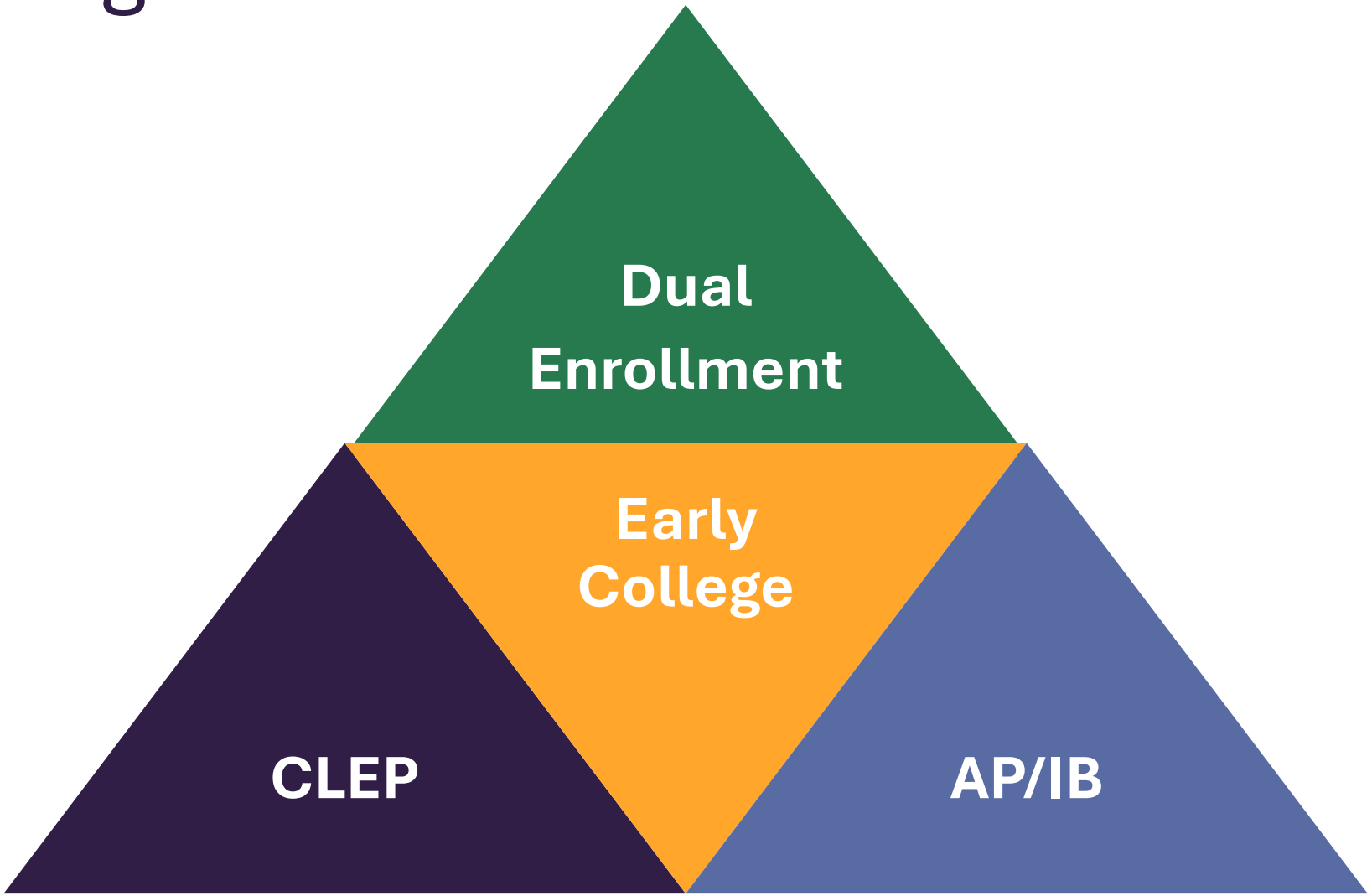
- OSFA records only 1 “Mass Grant” record per account. If a FAFSA is filed erroneously, student won’t be able to fill out MASFA until that account is purged.
- The Affidavit is now e-fillable online – 1 version only, must still print! But most colleges have their own e-version, which is preferred. Students need only fill it out ONCE.
- Good FAQ page: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) / Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
- Application Guide: 26-27 MASFA Application Guide and FAQ.pdf

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Admissions Counseling

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

While in High School



MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Ask Your Students



- What are your interests?
- What makes you happy?



- Have you thought about your future career ?
- Is there a college program or other program that will help you prepare?



- Does your ideal career path need a work permit?
- Do you have one? If not, have you considered going to a legal screening to see if there are any options for you?
- Are there ways for you to become self-employed for your chosen career?



- What about financial support?
- Have you been working and saving?
- How can you maximize that money?
- Will you have support from others? If not – there may be private scholarships you can apply for!

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Tactical Information

Institutional aid (financial aid from the colleges) may be available; policies vary from school to school, but some may give students merit awards

Vetting for “undocufriendly colleges” is now more important than ever; assemble a task force in your counseling office and build a network of other counselors to reach out to

In Massachusetts, students can still be honest about their immigration status. We can be less sure about other states. Colleges are still prohibited from releasing information unless under court order. Information is still protected by FERPA (A federal act)

Connect with someone in the admissions office/scholarship office who works with multicultural students. Advise your students to not get discouraged if someone at a college doesn’t know the answer… it’s very common!

Students might be considered “domestic” for admissions and “international” for financial aid at colleges

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Sample Roadmap for Students with ≥ 3.8 GPA



3.8-4.0 = Great job! This is a great GPA! Your essay, showing interest in colleges, and interview become VERY important. Is your application telling your story of who you are (including and NOT including your immigration status)?



4.0+ = The biggest hurdle here is making sure you and your family asks questions! Being a first-generation AND an immigrant is tough. What's important to you? BUT ALSO, take risks! It's possible to get more aid at colleges where you might have to live on campus.



Everyone = Read the "undocufriendly college" lists and ask your counselor if they know of colleges that often help undocumented students with need-based aid.

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

The CSS Profile



CSS Profile®

- cssprofile.org
- Required by some colleges and universities
- $25 for 1st school, $16 for each additional
- Fee waivers if parent income is $100k or less or family meets certain other criteria
- Becomes available October 1st
- Noncustodial parent submits a separate CSS Profile
- *What to Know about the CSS Profile webinar* on mefa.org/webinars
- **The special circumstances section is still a good place to self-disclose (if all colleges are in MA)**

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Sample Roadmap for Students with a GPA 3.0-3.7

- Think about applying to colleges at all levels
- Apply to colleges that give merit aid scholarships
- Can you live at home? If so, saving $ on room and board can make a difference
- Do you have relatives in other parts of the state or country?
  - For example, California has smaller private colleges that give good merit aid
  - Note: At this time, we do recommend students not travel far if they are undocumented
- Spend time getting feedback on your college applications and your essay
- Could be good candidates for strategic undermatching

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

For Students with a Lower GPA



You can still make your goals a reality!



College is GREAT! And also, there are so many types of colleges accepting a variety of GPAs: certificates, 2-year programs, 4-year programs



This is true regardless of GPA, but always think about this question: What are my career aspirations? What are my skills? What are my interests?



2-4-year programs in MA: ALL community colleges have the in-state tuition benefit! AND some other options like: DUET, Endicott Boston (Van Loan), Franklin Cummings Institute of Technology, Quincy College, UMASS Online



If you have a work permit, think about vocational programs and career and technical apprenticeships. Example: Year up



If you're thinking about career education, did you know that if you don't have a work permit, you can still work as an "independent contractor"?

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Scholarship Resources

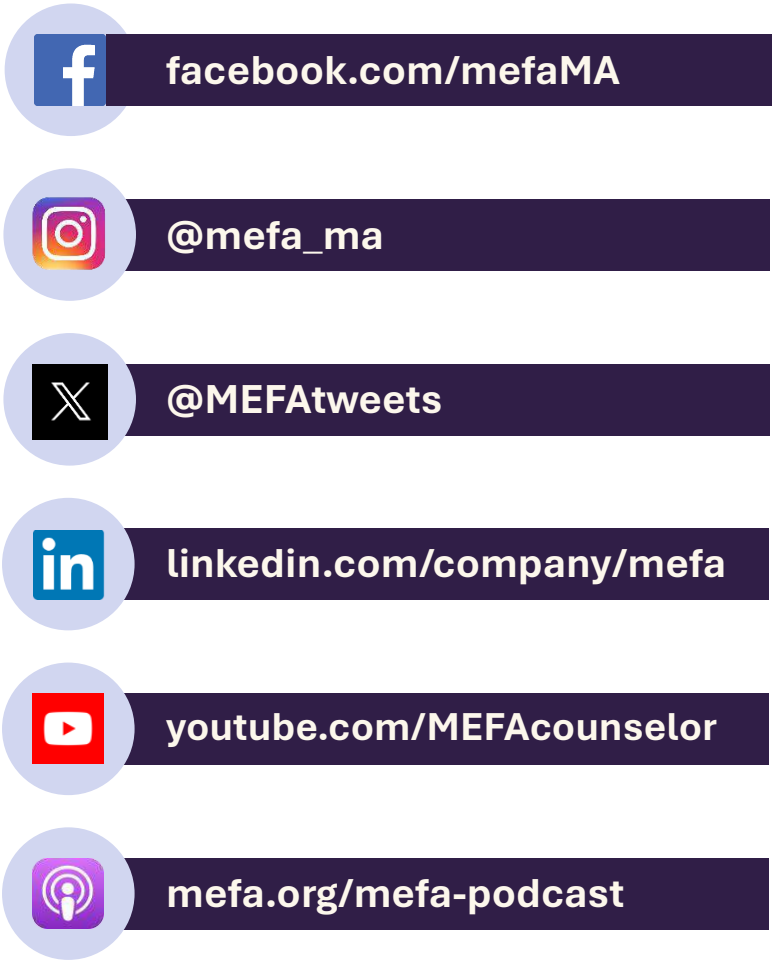
MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Scholarship Resources

Resource	How to Use
MALDEF's Scholarship Resource Guide	A great, inclusive list of scholarships that do not require citizenship status to apply maldef.org/resources/scholarship-resource-guide/
Dreamer's Roadmap App	dreamersroadmap.org/
Immigrants Rising's Scholarship Resource Guide	immigrantsrising.org/resource/list-of-scholarships-and-fellowships/ My favorite starting point!

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Connect with MEFA: Social Media



MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Thank You!

Questions?



(800) 449-MEFA (6332)

collegeplanning@mefa.org

MEFA

MEFA Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority and MEFA are registered service marks of the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. © 2026 MEFA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.