



**CASFA**  
COLORADO APPLICATION FOR  
STATE FINANCIAL AID

# Completing the CASFA:

Resource Guide for Professionals

**2023**

1600 Broadway, Suite 2200, Denver, CO 80202

*For more information contact:*

CDHE@dhe.state.co.us

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## Introduction

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This guide is developed for professionals working in education to accompany the Colorado Application for State Financial Aid (CASFA), an application of the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE). The guide addresses key areas and sections of the application to provide clarity.

### ***Introduction to the Colorado Application for State Financial Aid (CASFA)***

The Colorado Application for State Financial Aid (CASFA) is the State Financial Aid application for undocumented, and Colorado ASSET students. The CASFA bridges equity gaps and creates access to postsecondary education for Colorado ASSET students. The CASFA is an alternative to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Both the CASFA and the FAFSA open on **October 1**.  
*(Note: 2024-25 available December 2023)*

The purpose of the CASFA is to determine need for financial aid awarding to students who have been historically excluded from receiving state and federal financial aid. CASFA positively supports families and is a logical next step in efforts to erase equity gaps and put college in reach for the families who benefit most from a postsecondary education. CASFA also supports the department's efforts to make college more affordable by reducing the cost of obtaining a credential and maximizing a student's higher education investment.

The CASFA is a safe, confidential, easy way to apply for state financial aid. The information provided will only be used to determine financial aid at participating institutions. The Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) has strict security and confidentiality policies and procedures in place to protect the integrity and confidentiality of student records. The CDHE also adheres to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99), a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records.

You can learn more about the CASFA on the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) website: <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/casfa> or by visiting <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/> and selecting the "Programs and Services" tab. The CASFA is developed from the FAFSA. Although most questions in the CASFA are the same as the FAFSA, some questions vary, including several Colorado-specific questions to determine eligibility for state financial aid. Please refer to the *Determining CASFA or FAFSA eligibility* segment.

## Determining CASFA or FAFSA Eligibility

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Students should **NOT** complete the CASFA, if they are considered an eligible noncitizen with a Permanent Residence Card – these students should complete the FAFSA at [www.studentaid.gov](http://www.studentaid.gov). **International students** who are studying in the U.S. on a student visa are **NOT** eligible for state financial aid programs but may complete the CASFA to determine eligibility for institutional aid.

To learn more about non-U.S. citizens and financial aid eligibility, visit:  
<https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/non-us-citizens>.

Students should complete only **one** financial aid application per academic year: CASFA or FAFSA.

- Completing both CASFA and FAFSA applications, impacts the transmittal of information to Colorado Institutions of Higher Education.

### CASFA Eligibility:

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- I am a non-U.S. citizen resident and/or non-resident student.
- I qualify as a Colorado ASSET student.
- I have attended a Colorado high school for at least one year immediately before graduation or completed a GED in Colorado; and
- I have continuous and physical presence in Colorado for 12 months before the start of the semester.

### FAFSA Eligibility:

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- I am a U.S. citizen resident or an eligible noncitizen.
- I am a U.S. permanent resident and I have a Permanent Resident Card (I-151, I-551 or I-551c)
- I have an I-94.
- I am considered one of the following:
  - "Refugee"
  - "Asylum Granted"
  - "Cuban-Haitian Entrant" (Status Pending)
  - "Conditional Entrant"
  - Victims of human trafficking, T-visa
  - "Parolee" (provide evidence from USCIS)

Students who are eligible for Federal Title IV aid by completing the FAFSA should **not** complete the CASFA.

## Determining ASSET (Advancing Students for a Stronger Tomorrow) Eligibility:

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To qualify for Colorado ASSET in-state tuition per [House Bill 22-1155](#) passed in 2022, an undocumented student must:

- 1) Have attended a Colorado high school for at least one year immediately before graduation or completed a high school equivalency (HSE) diploma in Colorado. One year is defined as two academic terms immediately preceding graduation or completing the Colorado GED.
- 2) Have continuous physical presence in Colorado for 12 months preceding the start of the semester.
- 3) Apply for and complete an affidavit with the [College Opportunity Fund](#) (COF) indicating that you have applied for legal presence or will apply as soon as you are eligible to do so.

Students who do not have lawful immigration status and who do not meet the ASSET qualifications are still encouraged to apply for institutional aid using the CASFA.

## Naming Conventions

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Students should use their **full legal name** to create their CASFA account and complete Admissions applications. Without naming conventions in place, the student may use only one last name and/or transpose the use of their dual last names.

This can develop the following issues:

1. Multiple account creations for the same individual.
2. Challenges identifying the correct individual and matching their Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) to admissions applications at the college or university.
3. Over-reliance on date of birth to properly identify individuals, considering this student population may not possess a Social Security/ITIN/DACA number.

## Creating an Account

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Students should use their **personal** email, not their high school or college email, to ensure they have continued access to their CASFA application throughout their post-secondary education.

Students **cannot** make changes to their user profile once the account has been created.

- In the event an applicant needs to correct their user account information, please contact DeAnna Castañeda, CASFA Program Manager, at 303.996.6069 or via email at [CASFA@dhe.state.co.us](mailto:CASFA@dhe.state.co.us).

## Before you begin: Information Needed to complete the CASFA

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- Date of birth for student and parent(s).
- Personal email address for student and parent(s).
- Driver's license number, if applicable.
- SSN/ITIN/DACA number, if applicable.
  - If a student does not possess an SSN/ITIN/DACA number, please leave field blank.
  - If parent does not possess an SSN/ITIN/DACA number, **please enter all zeros**.
- Date of Marriage for student and/or parent(s), if applicable.
- W-2 forms and 2021 tax returns (for the 2023-24 CASFA application).
- Bank statements and records of investment.
- Records of untaxed income (such as child support received and untaxed pensions).

## Student and Parent Signature Requests

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Ensure applicant enters parent information **accurately**. Skip logic technology generates information based on applicant responses. Prior to signing the application, it is necessary for the student to download, review and confirm the information, before proceeding forward with the parent signature request. Students should save the PDF file for revisions and future reference.

- If the student enters the data incorrectly, this will cause issues during the parent account creation segment.
- Students **must** log out of their CASFA profile in the upper right-hand corner if both the student and parent are sharing the same device.
- If the student does not log out, this can create an error, preventing the parent from accessing the application to sign.
- The parent signature email notification is delivered immediately following the request. If the email notification has not been received, please check the spam folder.
  - The parent signature link expires 72 hours after the request has been made.
- If the email notification has been delivered as spam, please move the email notification to the inbox to ensure the parent links work properly.
  - For technical issues, please contact 303.996.6069 or email [CASFA@dhe.state.co.us](mailto:CASFA@dhe.state.co.us).
- ALL signatures must be completed electronically. Wet signatures are no longer accepted.

Please note: The Expected Family Contribution (EFC) **will not** generate for dependent students until both signatures have been collected from the student and parent. To print the Student Aid Report (SAR) containing the EFC, students are required to re-enter their account and download the second PDF generated after the parent has signed. The Calculated Expected Family Contribution is located on the last page, above the signature segment.

## Student Revisions

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Students have autonomy to revise their CASFA applications. Please note, when making revisions, students are required to **re-enter Adjusted Gross Income information (AGI)** for parents. Additionally, it is important to minimize revisions for the following reasons:

1. Multiple revisions produce multiple transaction numbers and multiple ISIR files are generated.
2. As a result, multiple ISIR's for the same student may cause issues for the ISIR file export process at the institution.
3. Each revision requires a new signature from both parent and student, where applicable.

## Student Experience User Links

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The new Student Experience Dashboard contains **User Links** which provide scholarship opportunities and community resources for Undocumented students and families. Please encourage students to review the User Links section.

## College Opportunity Fund (COF)

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Some students who qualify for Advancing Students for a Stronger Tomorrow (ASSET) may not qualify for College Opportunity Fund (COF). Under current statute, a student is required to have a State Assigned Student Identifier number (SASID) to be eligible for this state stipend funding.

## Colorado Work Study

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All U.S. employers must properly complete [Form I-9](#) for everyone hired for employment in the United States. For consideration in the Colorado Work Study program, students must meet I-9 requirements per Federal Employment Regulations.

As a result, the Work Study question will only populate when a valid SSN/ITIN/DACA number is entered by the student. (*Note: An ITIN does not authorize work in the U.S.*)

In addition, to be eligible to participate in the Colorado Work-Study Program, a student must:

- Be an undergraduate student in an approved certificate or degree program.
- Be a Colorado resident; Be enrolled at least half-time in an eligible program, except during vacation periods between consecutive terms of enrollment.
- Show documented need.

## Printing SAR Data for Scholarship Use

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Many scholarship opportunities request the submission of the Student Aid Report (SAR) report to determine financial need. Students should use the downloaded PDF file which reflects their Expected Family Contribution (EFC). Please instruct dependent students to download the **second** PDF file which is generated **after** the parent signature is completed. The Calculated Expected Family Contribution is located on the last page, above the signature segment.

## FAFSA Simplification Act

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CASFA will follow changes made by the Department of Education. Federal Student Aid has not yet committed to opening the FAFSA to applicants on October 1, 2023. As the FAFSA must be available by January 1, 2024, implementation will fall somewhere between October 1, 2023, and January 1, 2024. The Better FAFSA Better Future Roadmap anticipates the 2024-25 FAFSA to launch December 2023. The Department plans to open the 2025-26 form to applicants on October 1, 2024.

## Anticipated Changes:

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- The Student Aid Index (SAI) will replace the use of the Expected Family Contribution (EFC)
  - Will allow a minimum SAI of -\$1,500,
- Applicants will have the ability to send ISIR Files to 20 schools versus 10 in the past.
- Students may have up to four signing parties, depending upon circumstances.
  - The Student, Student's Spouse, and Both Parents
- Questions will be added regarding the applicant's sex, race and ethnicity.

## Provisional Independent Students

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Dependent students who do not have access to parental data may self-identify and complete the FAFSA as Provisional Independent Students. Institution follow-up and final determinations will be required.

***Questions, Comments, or to add Community Resources:***

*Please contact DeAnna Castañeda at 303-996-6069*

*or via email at [CASFA@dhe.state.co.us](mailto:CASFA@dhe.state.co.us).*



