



**COLORADO**  
Department of  
Higher Education



**CASFA**  
COLORADO APPLICATION FOR  
STATE FINANCIAL AID

# Resource Guide



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## Introduction

This guide has been 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).

The purpose of the CASFA is to determine need for financial aid awarding to students who historically have been 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 be used only 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, [cdhe.colorado.gov/casfa](https://cdhe.colorado.gov/casfa), or by visiting [cdhe.colorado.gov/](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 in the FAFSA, some vary, including several Colorado-specific questions to determine eligibility for state financial aid. Please refer to the "Determining CASFA or FAFSA Eligibility" section.



### Determining CASFA or FAFSA Eligibility

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 [studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/non-us-citizens](http://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 (Colorado Application for State Financial Aid)

I am not a U.S. citizen

- I qualify as a Colorado ASSET student because:
  - I have attended a Colorado high school for at least one year immediately before graduation or completed a high school equivalency examination in Colorado
  - I have had a continuous and physical presence in Colorado for 12 months before the start of the semester
- I should complete a CASFA if I have financial need, regardless of my Colorado ASSET eligibility

[cdhe.colorado.gov/CASFA](http://cdhe.colorado.gov/CASFA)

Question email: [CASFA@dhe.state.co.us](mailto:CASFA@dhe.state.co.us)

#### FAFSA Eligibility (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)

I am a U.S. citizen or I am an eligible noncitizen because (1 of 6 needed):

- I am a U.S. permanent resident, and I have a Permanent Resident Card (I-151 or I-551)
- I have an I-94 that indicates-
  - Refugee
  - Asylum Granted
  - Conditional Resident Alien
  - Cuban-Haitian Entrant
  - Conditional Entrant (valid only if issued before April 1, 1980)
  - Parolee (provide evidence from USCIS)
- Modified parole requirements for Ukrainians and Afghans paroled into the U.S. under certain time frames
- I have a T-visa for victims of human trafficking
- I qualify under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

<https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/non-us-citizens>





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

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 examination in Colorado. One year is defined as two academic terms immediately preceding graduation.
- 2 Have had 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

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 cause 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 Overreliance on date of birth to properly identify individuals, considering this student population may not possess a Social Security/ITIN number.

### Creating an Account

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 postsecondary 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, they should contact:

Sophie Vogel, CASFA Coordinator at, 303-974-2668 or via email at [CASFA@dhe.state.co.us](mailto:CASFA@dhe.state.co.us).



### Before You Begin: Information Needed to Complete the CASFA

- Date of birth for student and parent(s).
- Personal email address for student and parent(s).
- Driver's license number, if applicable.
- SSN/ITIN number, if applicable.
  - If a student does not possess an SSN/ITIN number, please leave the field blank.
  - If a parent does not possess an SSN/ITIN number, please enter all zeros.
- Date of marriage for student and/or parent(s), if applicable.
- W-2 forms and 2022 tax returns (for the 2024-2025 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

Ensure the 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 with the parent signature request. Students should save the PDF file for revisions and future reference.

- If the student enters the data incorrectly, it 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 it to the inbox to ensure the parent links work properly.
  - For technical issues, please contact **CASFA@dhe.state.co.us** or 303-974-2668.
- ALL signatures must be completed electronically. Wet signatures are no longer accepted.



### Student Revisions

Students have autonomy to revise their CASFA applications. Please note that when making revisions, students are required to **re-enter adjusted gross income (AGI) information** 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 ISIRs 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

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

### College Opportunity Fund (COF)

Some students who qualify for Advancing Students for a Stronger Tomorrow (ASSET) may not qualify for the 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.





### Printing a CASFA Submission Summary for Scholarship Use

Scholarship opportunities may request submission of the FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS) to determine financial need. Students should use the downloaded PDF file that reflects their Student Aid Index (SAI). Please instruct dependent students to download the **second** PDF file, which is generated **after** the parent signature is completed. The calculated SAI is located on the last page, above the signature segment.

### FAFSA Simplification Act

The CASFA will follow changes made by the Department of Education.

The 2024-2025 FAFSA will open December 2023, and the CASFA will launch simultaneously.

### Anticipated Changes to CASFA

- 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 be able to send ISIR files to 20 schools, versus 10 in the past.
- Students may have up to three signing parties, depending upon circumstances:
  - The student, student's spouse (if applicable) or both parents (if applicable)

### Provisional Independent Students

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

### Questions, Comments, or to Add to Useful Links:

Please contact Sophie Vogel, CASFA Coordinator, at 303-974-2668 or via email at [CASFA@dhe.state.co.us](mailto:CASFA@dhe.state.co.us).