



Introduction

This FAQ is designed to assist school counselors and administrators in understanding and implementing Illinois' Financial Aid Application graduation requirement. As outlined in state law ([105 ILCS 5/22-87](#)), all public high school seniors in Illinois must complete one of the following to graduate:

- The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- The Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid (for eligible undocumented students)
- A Nonparticipation Form (electronic or paper)

This document answers common questions about procedures, reporting tools like the ISAC GAP Access Portal, and how to handle special circumstances. It also outlines how schools should manage records for compliance and reporting, ensuring no student is denied graduation due to lack of access or extenuating circumstances.

Please review this guidance and reach out to the Illinois Student Assistance Commission School Services team for technical support or additional clarification.

[Financial Aid Application Completion Initiative](#)

Steps to be completed by districts:

- Complete FAFSA designee contact information in GAP Access.
- Report Paper FAFSA Waivers in GAP Access (check off the boxes in GAP Access to report these).
- Compete and report the Admin Waiver (Good Faith Effort) in GAP Access for students who were unable to complete the FAFSA or waiver.
- Hold at least one FAFSA workshop during the school year; date and record the date in GAP Access.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the Illinois FAFSA graduation requirement?

- Under Illinois law ([105 ILCS 5/22-87](#)), all public high school seniors must complete one of the following as a graduation requirement:
 - i. A FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)
 - ii. An Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid (for eligible undocumented students)
 - iii. A Nonparticipation Form (online or paper copy)
- A school district must award a high school diploma to a student who is unable to meet the requirements due to extenuating circumstances, as determined by the school district.

2. Is it required to use ISAC as the official record for FAFSA waivers?

- We highly encourage counselors and administrators to have students who wish to opt-out of completing a financial aid application as part of the graduation requirement to complete the electronic Financial Aid Application Nonparticipation Form unless the student is an emancipated minor. In that case, the student must request the form themselves from ISBE by emailing FAFSA@isbe.net. If they submit a paper form to a counselor/administrator, the counselor/administrator must log into ISAC GAP Access to check off the “paper waiver completed” box for reporting purposes and keep the form in their files for compliance and auditing purposes.

3. What is the FAFSA Gap Portal?

- The FAFSA Gap Portal is a secure online tool that allows Illinois school districts to:
 - i. Track students’ FAFSA/Alternative Application completion status.
 - ii. Identify which students still need to fulfill the graduation requirement; and
 - iii. Manage and upload Nonparticipation Forms.

4. How do you report your FAFSA contact person to ISBE and ISAC?

- Schools can report their FAFSA designee on the GAP Access FAFSA Completion School Summary page. To get to the School Summary Page: Sign into GAP Access > Programs > FAFSA Initiative.

5. Who qualifies for an Alternative Application?

- This application is only for students who are not eligible for federal student financial aid, including qualified undocumented students. Most students will still complete the FAFSA to apply for financial aid.

6. What is a Nonparticipation Form, and who should complete it?

- The Nonparticipation Form satisfies the graduation requirement in place of submitting the FAFSA and is used when:
 - i. A parent/guardian opts their student out of the FAFSA/Alternative Application requirement; or
 - ii. A student who is 18 or legally emancipated chooses to opt out themselves.
- Instructions on filling out the electronic Nonparticipation Form can be found on the [ISAC Nonparticipation Form information page](#).

7. When is a paper Nonparticipation Form needed?

- If a student or group of students is unable to fill out the electronic Nonparticipation Form, a paper copy can be requested by emailing ISBE at FAFSA@isbe.net. Once the form is completed and the appropriate signatures are acquired, the completed form should be emailed to FAFSA@isbe.net. Upon approval, ISBE will then send a digital copy of the Nonparticipation Forms.
- Please note: It is not permissible for the form to be shared with other schools. Approvals are on a school-by-school basis. A separate request form with appropriate signatures must be submitted for each school.

8. Is the Nonparticipation Form available in languages other than English?

- A request for paper Nonparticipation Forms in languages other than English may be requested from ISBE by emailing FAFSA@isbe.net.

9. Is the Nonparticipation Form confidential?

- All forms and FAFSA status information are handled in accordance with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and Illinois data privacy laws. The information can only be used in furtherance of administering financial aid.
- If the FAFSA form is completed through the portal, school districts will know whether students completed the FAFSA but will not have access to the information provided.

10. Who can be contacted for technical help with the FAFSA Gap Portal?

- The ISAC School Services team can be reached at ISAC.SchoolServices@illinois.gov or 1-866-247-2172.

11. What if a student completed a FAFSA but it doesn't show up in the portal?

- There may be a delay or data mismatch. Have the student check that:
 - i. The FAFSA was submitted using correct personal information (name, date of birth, SSN); and
 - ii. It was submitted after the last portal update.
- Contact the ISAC School Services team for help verifying records.
 1. ISAC.SchoolServices@illinois.gov
 2. 1-866-247-2172

12. What is an Admin Waiver and when should it be used?

- If a student cannot complete the FAFSA, Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid, or Financial Aid Application Nonparticipation Form, a school administrator may grant a waiver on the student's behalf.
- Admin Waivers are intended to be a last resort and only after the school has exhausted all means to reach the student.
- School-granted waivers for 2026 high school graduates must be recorded in the ISAC GAP Access portal no later than July 31 for compliance with the state graduation requirement mandate.
- GAP Access makes this process simple by allowing administrators to grant an Admin Waiver by checking a box for individual students. Detailed instructions can be found on page 11 of [Financial Aid Application Completion Initiative – Access and Agreement User Guide](#).

13. What happens if a student does not complete the FAFSA, Alternative Application, or Nonparticipation Form?

- If a counselor is not able to contact a student to complete the FAFSA, Alternative Application, or Nonparticipation Form, the high school principal can complete the Principal Good Faith Effort Attestation that is available in ISAC GAP Access.