
Introduction



This publication is intended for financial aid administrators and counselors who help students begin the aid process—filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®), verifying information, and making corrections and other changes to the information reported on the FAFSA.

Throughout the Handbook we use “college,” “school,” and “institution” interchangeably unless a more specific use is given. Similarly, “student,” “applicant,” and “aid recipient” are synonyms. “Parents” in this volume refers to the parents of dependent students, and “you” refers to the primary audience of the Handbook: financial aid administrators at colleges. “We” indicates the U.S. Department of Education (Department, ED), and “federal student aid” and “Title IV aid” are synonymous terms for the financial aid offered by the Department.

We appreciate any comments that you have regarding the Application and Verification Guide (AVG), as well as all the volumes of the Federal Student Aid Handbook. We revise and clarify the text in response to questions and feedback from the financial aid community, so please contact us at fsaschoolspubs@ed.gov to let us know how to improve the Handbook so that it is always clear and informative.

CHANGES FOR 2015–2016

On page 4 we removed text about the personal identification number or PIN and added information about the new username and password (the FSA ID) that students and parents will use instead of the PIN to log on to FAFSA on the Web and other FSA websites. Throughout the AVG we removed references to the PIN.

Also on page 4, we added guidance in the margin on how students who are younger than 13 apply for federal student aid.

On page 7 we no longer give anticipated deadline dates for application corrections, changes, and verification. We just direct aid administrators to refer to the deadline notice that is expected to be published in the *Federal Register* sometime in summer 2015.

We changed the guidance on page 9 about the address incarcerated students should use on the FAFSA. Instead of their college address, they should use the address of the facility they are incarcerated in. We also amended the

guidance for homeless youth and now advise them to use an address where they can reliably receive mail and that they have permission to use.

On page 18 we added a sentence on the Land Buy-Back Program to the section on excluded assets for Native American students.

In the last bullet of the margin note on in-kind income on page 21, we added an example of an adoption assistance program.

On page 25 we modified the definition of parent to include persons that a state affirms are parents, such as on the child's birth certificate.

On page 81, we revised and added to the guidance pertaining to the IRS's Verification of Nonfiling Letter that students in some cases need to obtain. We also modified the margin note on what to do when a W-2 form is not available.

We modified and added text to the margin note on page 82 about verification and professional judgment. Also on that page, we updated the guidance pertaining to filers of amended tax returns; a copy of the original return is no longer needed for verification. And we updated the guidance for victims of tax-related identity theft to show that they need to provide a signed statement, and if they cannot get a TRDBV transcript, they can provide another IRS document that has all of the information necessary for verification.

We added the second paragraph under "Other untaxed income" on page 84 to give more guidance on dealing with situations where you must examine how students or parents support themselves when there are no clearcut sources of income.

We also added text at the top of page 85 reminding FAAs that the number in the household of the student needs to comport with answers to the pertinent FAFSA dependency status questions.

In the fourth bullet under "High school completion" on page 86, we added a sentence clarifying when certain test transcripts can be used as documentation of high school equivalency.

Pertinent to the recent Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, we added a bullet at the top of page 87 and a note in the margin about high school completion alternatives for students in an eligible career pathway program.

We modified and added text to the margin note on page 88 about disbursing unsubsidized aid prior to completing verification in certain instances.

On pages 127 and 128 we added to our guidance about unaccompanied homeless youth by, among other things, adding a margin citation to DCL GEN-15-16, emphasizing that you should not focus on why students are homeless but rather on whether the evidence shows that they are, and noting that students who are too old to qualify as youth but who meet the other criteria of this category qualify as homeless youth (previously we said to consider them as dependency overrides).