

## TASFA Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the TASFA?

The Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA) is used to collect information to help determine eligibility for state financial aid programs that are administered by institutions of higher education in the state of Texas. Students that are classified as a Texas Resident who cannot apply for federal financial aid using the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) are encouraged to complete the TASFA. To review the FAFSA filing requirements, visit [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) or visit the financial aid office at the institution you plan to attend.

### Can I fill out the FAFSA if I am not a citizen or permanent resident?

Most colleges will ask that you complete the TASFA and not the FAFSA. However, if your college asks you to complete a FAFSA, you will complete as a NON-ELIGIBLE, NON-CITIZEN.

If you have a social security number, you should enter it. However, if you do not have one, then enter all 0's. Do NOT enter your Tax ID # [TIN] unless this is given as an option.

### How is the TASFA different that the FAFSA?

The TASFA is a paper financial aid application. It asks similar questions to the FAFSA. The biggest difference is that you will submit a TASFA to each college you apply for along with your parents' IRS Tax Transcript and a Verification Worksheet.

### What is Financial Aid?

Financial Aid is a combination of grants (free money based on economic need), low-interest loans, and work-study. For immigrant students, it comes from the state and colleges.

### What is a Priority Deadline?

The priority deadline is the date you must file your FAFSA/TASFA to receive priority consideration in the financial aid awarding process. In other words, you put yourself at the front of the line for financial aid. If you miss a FAFSA/TASFA priority deadline, you can still apply and mostly certainly should apply for financial aid.

For many colleges, the priority deadline is January 15<sup>th</sup> but for some schools it's as early as November 1<sup>st</sup>. Check your college's financial aid website to find their financial aid priority deadline. Because the Texas Grant is limited, it is essential for you to meet your college's priority deadline to maximize your chance to receive this generous grant.

## Step 1: Gathering Documents

The following information is needed to complete your TASFA:

**DOB for you and your parents.**

**Your family's 2019 tax returns (1040) and W-2**

**Tax Transcript of Parents' 2019 tax returns.**

**Males 18 to 25 [Verification of Selective Service]**

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **My parents are immigrants and they do not file income taxes.**

If your parents live in the U.S. and work, they are required to file an income tax each year even if they do not have a social security number. Immigrant workers can apply for a Tax Identification Number (TIN) when they complete their income tax returns.

Colleges understand this and they expect your parents to file an income tax. However, if your parents do not file an income tax, your college's financial aid office might ask for a letter from your parent's employer stating their income for last year.

#### **What if my parents will not complete their taxes this year?**

If there are extenuating circumstances, such as your parents are retired or are receiving disability through Social Security, then you are not expected to supply tax information on the TASFA. You will put zero for their income and more than likely be asked to submit a low-income verification document that the college will provide.

However, if your parents are required to submit a tax return then you will need them to submit their taxes; otherwise, you risk not having your TASFA processed.

#### **My parents will file their taxes after the priority deadline.**

You can still complete the TASFA. Most colleges receive ample federal financial aid. However, state and college financial aid (especially grants) is extremely limited, and it is essential that you meet your college's financial aid priority deadline.

#### **I do not live with my parents. Do I need to supply their tax information?**

Yes, unless you meet one of the categories that allows you to be classified as INDEPENDENT of your parent: at least 24 years old, married, a graduate or professional student, a veteran, a member of the armed forces, an orphan, a ward of the court, or someone with legal dependents other than a spouse, an emancipated minor or someone who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

## Step 2: Completing your TASFA

### Student Information

1. For College Student ID#, do not enter your high school ID. Every college you apply to will send you an email or letter within two weeks of applying with your College Student ID#.
  - You will have a different ID# for each college you apply to.
  - If you do not receive your college student ID#, you can call the office of admission and request it.
2. If you do NOT live with your parents, talk with your high school counselor to see if you qualify as an unaccompanied youth who was homeless. This does not necessarily mean that 'you live under a bridge'. The Federal Government has a broad definition of who is an unaccompanied youth. Generally, if you are living with someone who is not your parents you can be classified as an unaccompanied youth.
  - This is important because you are required to supply your parents' tax information unless you can answer YES to one of these questions or qualify for what is called a Dependency Override.
  - If you feel you qualify as an 'unaccompanied youth', you MUST ask your counselor to direct you to your high school's homeless liaison officer. This person will ask you a couple of questions about your living situation, and have you complete a simple application.
  - Once you are classified as an 'unaccompanied youth', you will need to make sure the college financial aid office knows this. They will confirm your status with your high school.

### Household Information

Simply write your name on the first row and the names of your parents and any family members who are being supported by your parents. This could include relatives who live back in your home country, who you support.

### Additional Information

1. A dislocated worker is someone who has lost his/her job the past 12 months. While you can indicate that your parents "will file" their income taxes, your TASFA will not be processed until you have submitted your parents' tax returns and tax transcript. (or) income verification.
2. To receive full grant funding you will need to be at least a 3/4 time student, which generally means you are taking at least 3 classes per semester.

### Income and Assets

1. If you turn in your parents' tax returns/transcript, you will most likely put 0's on **all** questions under this section.
2. However, if you are NOT living with your parents, and you are being supported by a relative or someone else (spouse), you will need to fill out 'Money you received (or bills someone else paid

for you'.

- Often times your college's financial aid office will ask you to itemize (breakdown) your monthly expenses and explain who is supporting you.

## **Total Family Income**

If your parents are unable to support you [disability, lost their job, make very little in their home country . . .] you should fill this section out. Have your high school counselor help you.

## **Statement of Selective Services Registration Status**

Females will check the first box. Males should check box 2 or the last box and supply a copy of their application. Generally, a financial aid office will work with you while you await getting your selective service card.

## **Signatures**

You only need your counselor's signature if you have no contact with your parents (they live in another country or state).

### Frequently Asked Questions:

#### **What should I submit along with my TASFA application?**

Generally, a TASFA, Parents and yours (if you file) tax returns, tax transcripts, selective service card (males), and Dependent/Independent Verification Worksheet. You will pick up a dependent/independent verification worksheet at the financial aid office or download from their website. This simple form asks your parents to sign that the information supplied is correct.

You **MUST** speak with your financial aid office to find out **EXACTLY** what they wish you to turn in with your TASFA. One college might want one thing and another something else.

## Step 3: Follow Up and Verification

Frequently Asked Questions:

### What do I do after I have submitted my TASFA?

Remember, you will need to submit a TASFA to each college you apply to.

Make sure to:

1. Make a copy of each TASFA Application you submit with all supporting documents. If a financial aid office misplaces 'loses' your TASFA application you won't have to 'scramble' to repackage your application.
2. Keep a notebook of when you turn items in and whom you talk with. If you run into problems later, you will have a DOCUMENTED trail that you have been trying to do everything correctly.
3. It is crucial that you ask each financial aid office "WHO IS THE FINANCIAL AID OFFICER IN CHARGE OF SB 1528 TASFA STUDENTS". Most colleges have ONE person who is responsible for this, and it is essential that you get to know this person.
4. You will most likely need to call or visit with him or her several times. You want the financial aid officer over TASFA to know your name.

### What is Verification?

1. Verification is a process in which colleges are asked to 'verify' or check that the information you supplied is correct. All SB 1528/TASFA students are 'flagged' for verification.
2. All this means is that you have to supply to the financial aid office your parents' tax returns/tax transcript (or proof of income) along with the verification worksheet
  - You pick this up at your financial aid office (or)
  - You can download it from your college's financial aid website. Always complete the verification worksheet for the year you will start college not the current year!
3. Verification sheets ask for your parents' income or source of financial assistance, such as social security benefits. You and your parents will need to sign the worksheet and you MUST turn them back in to receive financial aid!

### How do I order a tax transcript?

<https://www.irs.gov/individuals/get-transcript>

## Step 4: Accepting your Award Letter

### What is an Award Letter?

After your TASFA has been processed, you will receive an award letter from each college you have been accepted to detailing how much financial aid you will receive.

### When and how will I receive my Award Letter?

1. A college might send you an award letter by mail, but most likely, the college will expect you to log into your financial aid account and review your award letter online.
2. You should expect your award letter 4 to 8 weeks after your TASFA has been processed. After your TASFA has been submitted and processed, you should immediately become familiar with your college's financial aid website.
3. If you do not receive an email from your college's financial aid office in 4 weeks, you should contact them and find out why you have not received an award letter. It might be you made a mistake or they just might be behind.
4. Unfortunately, many state colleges do not award TASFA students until late summer. It is a good idea to ask the financial aid office if they have an 'emergency tuition loan program'.
  - This is a short term loan from the colleges (generally until your financial aid is processed).
  - You will have to pay a small fee.

### How do I accept my Award Letter?

First, if you do not accept your award letter the college will assume you do not want financial aid. In other words, you will not get any money!

So, make sure to log into your college financial aid account and go to a section (generally called) award letter or accept award offers. You will have the opportunity to accept or not accept your financial aid.

### How do I pay for classes?

1. Once you accept your financial aid, you will be able to pay for your classes with your financial aid..
2. You will also receive a college debt card, which will allow you to pay for books.
3. When you register for classes (sign up), you will be asked how do you wish to pay. You can apply your financial aid at this point.