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Upholding the California Dream for all Students with the release of the 2025-26 FAFSA form

Sacramento, Calif., November 22, 2024 – Yesterday, the [U.S. Department of Education \(Department\)](#) announced the official release of the 2025-26 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The application launched after a series of beta-testing periods designed to identify and resolve system issues. While the Department also tested the application with a variety of student groups, concerns around the privacy protections of contributors without Social Security numbers (SSN) remain. As a result, the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) reaffirms its commitment to providing aid to all students and learners across California in a safe and secure manner.

During the 2024-25 financial aid cycle, students from mixed-status families (families where a student is a U.S. citizen or a FAFSA eligible non-U.S. citizen, with one or more parents without an SSN) faced challenges with FAFSA verification. In response to this, CSAC and California's public higher education segments utilized the California Dream Act Application (CADAA) as a reliable and immediate solution to ensure these students can apply for, and receive, financial aid offers and awards. Now, with a shifting federal landscape that has created an uncertain environment, CSAC continues to encourage mixed-status families to utilize the CADAA during the 2025-26 financial aid cycle.

“We take seriously our mission to make higher education affordable for all Californians, which means connecting them with the most financial aid for which they can qualify. However, we must also be honest with our students and families about the risks they may incur when completing a FAFSA,” said Executive Director, Daisy Gonzales. “It is our duty to not only ensure our students can access financial aid, but to make sure they have viable and safe pathways to do so.”

Starting December 1 as the 2025-26 California financial aid application cycle officially begins, applying for financial aid via the CADAA will remain an option for students and families that have concerns and fears about adverse actions by the federal administration. While forgoing the FAFSA will lead to the loss of the federal financial aid, CSAC is hopeful that applicants will recognize their eligibility for state and institutional aid as they make an informed decision.

Today, CSAC has released a [memo](#) to educational leaders, financial aid administrators, and counselors sharing this important information about the availability of the CADAA for students from mixed status families. CSAC will continue to update students and families, financial aid practitioners, and all other stakeholders on any federal or state updates regarding the 2025-26 financial aid cycle in our new CSAC *All-in & Ready* Webinar Series. This webinar series will feature CSAC staff, Commissioners, and national, statewide, and local partners who will share tools, resources, and best practices. CSAC’s first *All-in & Ready* webinar will be held on December 2 and can be joined by [registering here](#).

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The [California Student Aid Commission](#) currently serves over 400,000 students and administers the state’s \$3 billion portfolio of student financial aid programs and services, including the Cal Grant, the Middle Class Scholarship, and the California Dream Act Application. The Commission serves as a resource for policymakers and the public on college affordability and financing issues, and advocates for policy changes to eliminate cost as a barrier to any qualified California student pursuing a higher education. Visit our website at www.csac.ca.gov or follow us on social media by clicking on our [Link Tree](#).