

# INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS AND ELIGIBILITY FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID



This flyer provides incarcerated individuals with important information about their eligibility for federal student aid. The information is provided below in question-and-answer format. An individual is considered to be incarcerated if he or she is serving a criminal sentence in a penitentiary, prison, jail, reformatory, work farm, or similar correctional institution, whether it is operated by the government or by a contractor. An individual is not considered to be incarcerated if he or she is in a halfway house or home detention or is sentenced to serve only on weekends.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. Am I eligible for federal student aid while incarcerated?

Individuals who are currently incarcerated have limited eligibility for federal student aid. An individual incarcerated in a federal or state institution is ineligible to receive a Federal Pell Grant or federal student loans. Although an individual incarcerated in a federal or state prison is eligible to receive a Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) and Federal Work-Study (FWS), he or she is unlikely to receive either FSEOG or FWS due to the FSEOG award priority, which is that the grant must be given to those students who also will receive a Federal Pell Grant, and due to the logistical difficulties of performing an FWS job while incarcerated.

Those incarcerated in institutions other than federal or state institutions are eligible for a Federal Pell Grant, FSEOG, and FWS but not for federal student loans. Also, it is unlikely that incarcerated individuals in institutions other than federal or state institutions will receive FSEOG or FWS due to school funding limitations and to the logistical difficulties of performing an FWS job while incarcerated.

It is important to note that, upon your release, most eligibility limitations (other than those noted in question 6 below) will be removed. In addition, you may apply for aid in anticipation of being released so that your aid is processed in time for you to start school.

### 2. Am I eligible for loan consolidation while I am incarcerated?

No. Incarcerated individuals may not receive federal consolidation loans.

### 3. Can my student loans be deferred while I am incarcerated?

You may be able to have your federal student loans deferred while you are incarcerated, but you must apply for a deferment and meet its eligibility requirements. To apply for deferment, contact the servicer of your loan(s). To find out what kind(s) of loan(s) you have, and/or to find contact information for your loan servicer, call the Federal Student Aid Information Center (FSAIC)\* or visit [www.nslds.ed.gov](http://www.nslds.ed.gov).

### 4. I am no longer incarcerated. Am I eligible for federal student aid?

In general, the restrictions that applied while you were incarcerated have been removed. However, if your incarceration was for a drug-related offense or if you are subject to an involuntary civil commitment for a sexual offense, your eligibility may be limited. (See question 6.)

### 5. Am I eligible for federal student aid if I am currently on probation, on parole, or residing in a halfway house?

As noted in question 4, the restrictions that applied while you were incarcerated were removed when you were released, unless any of the circumstances in question 6 apply to you.

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

### 6. What types of convictions will continue to affect my eligibility for federal student aid after my release?

A student convicted for the possession or sale of illegal drugs may have eligibility suspended if the offense occurred while the student was receiving federal student aid (grants, loans, or work-study). When you complete the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA<sup>SM</sup>), as discussed in question 7 below, you will be asked whether you had a drug conviction for an offense that occurred while you were receiving federal student aid. If the answer is yes, you will be provided a special worksheet to help you determine whether your conviction affects your eligibility for federal student aid. You may preview the worksheet in the FAFSA Information section at [www.studentaid.ed.gov/pubs](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/pubs).

If you have been convicted of a forcible or nonforcible sexual offense, and you are subject to an involuntary civil commitment upon completion of a period of incarceration for that offense, you are ineligible to receive a Federal Pell Grant.

### 7. How do I apply for federal student aid?

To apply for federal student aid, and for most state and institutional aid, you must complete the FAFSA, either online at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov) or on paper. You do not have to pay to apply for federal student aid. Contact your institution's education coordinator or the financial aid administrator at the school you plan to attend for more information. It is important to note that even if you are not eligible for federal student aid, you may still be eligible for aid from your state or school.

### 8. What address do I provide when applying for federal student aid?

When applying for federal student aid while incarcerated, use your current correctional institution's mailing address. However, once released, you must update your permanent mailing address, which you can do at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov).

### 9. How can I get assistance applying for federal student aid?

If you have any additional questions about federal student aid, application procedures, or other federal student aid topics, contact your institution's education coordinator, the school you plan to attend, or the FSAIC.\*

### 10. How can I receive publications about federal student aid?

To receive a FAFSA or any Federal Student Aid publications, all of which are free of charge, contact your institution's education coordinator, call the FSAIC,\* order online at [www.edpubs.gov](http://www.edpubs.gov), or visit [www.studentaid.ed.gov/pubs](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/pubs) to read publications online.

## STATE INFORMATION

\*The Federal Student Aid Information Center (FSAIC) is available at **1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243)**. If you cannot access a toll-free number, call **319-337-5665**. TTY users can call **1-800-730-8913**, a number for the hearing impaired. You also may e-mail [studentaid@ed.gov](mailto:studentaid@ed.gov).

Have questions? Contact or visit the following:

- 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243)
- 1-800-730-8913 (TTY for the hearing impaired)
- [studentaid@ed.gov](mailto:studentaid@ed.gov)
- [www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov)
- a college financial aid office

**Note:** The information in this document was compiled in the fall of 2010. For updates or additional information, visit [www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov) or phone **1-800-4-FED-AID**.



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