

FAFSA Applicants – In Foster Care, Orphan, or Dependent or Ward of the Court

Important Information

Because the FAFSA only collects limited data on applicants in the foster care system, we release this information with a detailed explanation. If you include this information in writing or in a presentation, please ensure that you provide a clear understanding of what the data mean. Data on applicants who are, or have been in the foster care system collected on the FAFSA should not be construed to be representative of the entire population of such applicants.

Limited Population of Applicants Included in this Report

The FAFSA does not collect foster care information for the purpose of determining the population of students attending postsecondary institutions. There are two questions on the FAFSA that collect foster care information for different purposes.

Foster Question 1. To determine dependency status for Federal Student Aid

A question about foster care on the FAFSA is part of a series of questions asked to determine the dependency status for Federal Student Aid, and is presented only to a subset of the applicant population. The question is:

At any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care or were you a dependent or ward of the court?

Applicants who answer “Yes” are considered independent for the purposes of Federal Student Aid and do not need to report parents’ financial and other information on the FAFSA.

This question is offered only to students not already been determined independent by an earlier question on the FAFSA on the Web. There are eleven questions on the FAFSA that are used to determine dependency status. The Foster Care/Orphan/Dependent-Ward of the Court question is the eighth question. Once an applicant provides a positive response on FAFSA on the Web for any of the dependency determinant questions, most of the additional subsequent questions are not presented (skipped). (Note that similar logic does not exist on applications or corrections submitted via paper or from a school.)

Based on the priority of questions on FAFSA on the Web, counts of applicants in this report do not include most applicants who, at the time, were 24 years or older, married, or who answered “Yes” to the any of the questions: in a graduate program, in active duty, or veteran, as well as those who provided more than half of the support for their children or other dependents.

Foster Question 2. To provide additional information to those who have been in foster care

In application cycle 2015-16, the question "Are you a foster youth or were you at any time in the foster care system?" was added to FAFSA on the Web. It is asked in order to provide additional information on assistance through Federal programs for applicants who are, or have been in the foster care system. The question is offered to all students who apply online, but is not a required field. Responses do not influence dependency status.

Trending Analysis Limitations

Year to year changes in applications reported here do not necessarily represent trends in populations. Federal Student Aid requirements, including skip logic on the FAFSA, could impact counts of foster care applicants between cycles. Additionally, changes in other applicant characteristics between cycles could impact the numbers of applicants presented with foster care questions, and, because of skip logic, mask or falsely indicate underlying changes in these populations.

Table 1. Web applicants by application cycle who were in foster care, orphaned, or dependents or wards of the court

State	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Total	141,391	130,339	122,300	114,500
AK	337	316	295	282
AL	2,037	1,978	1,895	1,955
AR	1,160	1,147	1,120	1,060
AZ	2,850	2,719	2,650	2,627
CA	25,895	24,253	22,727	21,117
CO	1,783	1,528	1,481	1,414
CT	1,753	1,552	1,461	1,329
DC	586	523	429	366
DE	339	286	301	261
FL	6,955	6,422	6,231	5,968
GA	4,239	3,843	3,572	3,286
HI	654	604	512	446
IA	1,483	1,371	1,259	1,204
ID	533	460	461	393
IL	5,288	4,779	4,241	3,824
IN	2,881	2,693	2,492	2,363
KS	1,558	1,489	1,468	1,366
KY	3,057	2,888	2,688	2,423
LA	1,588	1,608	1,491	1,524
MA	3,357	3,077	2,885	2,771
MD	3,103	3,015	2,705	2,342
ME	417	394	377	364
MI	5,463	4,748	4,202	3,854
MN	1,995	1,711	1,559	1,420
MO	2,889	2,565	2,433	2,388
MS	1,280	1,220	1,201	1,200
MT	330	269	275	292
NC	3,553	3,189	3,093	2,831
ND	310	272	249	276
NE	1,397	1,158	1,142	1,013
NH	413	299	321	293
NJ	3,087	2,801	2,667	2,410
NM	631	596	537	534
NV	1,089	1,128	1,046	902
NY	6,725	6,212	5,710	5,224

State	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
OH	4,749	4,266	3,872	3,689
OK	1,373	1,311	1,367	1,454
OR	2,772	2,408	2,140	2,014
PA	5,467	4,851	4,405	4,003
RI	559	511	494	443
SC	1,762	1,593	1,550	1,422
SD	256	234	223	220
TN	3,812	3,654	3,581	3,356
TX	7,810	7,304	7,056	7,033
UT	1,004	878	892	807
VA	3,145	2,906	2,663	2,450
VT	264	251	238	218
WA	2,906	2,758	2,566	2,313
WI	1,804	1,590	1,481	1,307
WV	1,012	980	981	990
WY	293	283	269	266
Other	1,388	1,448	1,346	1,193

Table 2. Additional information for applicants who have been in foster care by state and application cycle

State	2015-2016	2016-2017
Total	429,294	400,306
AK	1,248	1,240
AL	5,516	5,325
AR	4,206	3,905
AZ	8,827	8,408
CA	70,840	66,945
CO	7,256	6,679
CT	4,276	4,081
DC	1,199	992
DE	1,029	1,045
FL	23,403	22,236
GA	14,357	13,349
HI	1,801	1,655
IA	4,711	4,363
ID	2,142	1,959
IL	15,577	13,778
IN	9,360	8,654

State	2015-2016	2016-2017
KS	5,039	4,685
KY	7,645	7,293
LA	4,488	4,381
MA	9,470	8,993
MD	8,049	7,466
ME	1,784	1,615
MI	15,989	14,237
MN	6,993	6,535
MO	9,240	8,594
MS	3,374	3,075
MT	1,314	1,264
NC	12,867	11,968
ND	946	912
NE	3,691	3,504
NH	1,200	1,059
NJ	7,629	7,018
NM	2,434	2,301
NV	4,029	3,641
NY	19,774	18,381
OH	16,260	14,528
OK	5,722	5,581
OR	8,859	8,141
PA	14,593	13,549
RI	1,503	1,417
SC	6,045	5,446
SD	961	969
TN	10,298	9,605
TX	25,192	24,529
UT	3,187	2,932
VA	9,019	8,376
VT	755	748
WA	11,839	10,674
WI	7,064	6,403
WV	2,585	2,503
WY	814	844
Other	2,895	2,525

Table 3. Total applicants by dependency status and application cycle

Dependency Status	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Dependent	9,131,781	9,022,795	8,893,669	8,694,465
Independent	12,061,972	11,539,134	10,864,095	10,046,590
Sum	21,193,753	20,561,929	19,757,764	18,741,055