

**Higher Education**

**SETTING THE CONTEXT**

The College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA) of 2007 includes provisions to make undergraduate and graduate education more affordable for aspiring social-impact professionals. It also establishes that unaccompanied homeless youth qualify as independent students for purposes of federal financial aid. In addition to the CCRAA, various other national-level supports are available for college-bound homeless students, including fee waivers for Advanced Placement exams, college entrance exams, and college application fees.

**FEDERAL RESOURCES**

Read a [July 29, 2015 Dear Colleague letter from the U.S. Department of Education](http://www.ifap.ed.gov/dpcletters/attachments/GEN1516Attach.pdf) clarifying determinations for unaccompanied homeless youth for financial aid. The letter provides guidance for financial aid administrators on the definition of homelessness, how to make determinations, and documentation. It revises USED policy so that all applicants under age 24, including those who are 22 or 23 years old, and who are unaccompanied and homeless, or self-supporting and at risk of being homeless, qualify for a homeless youth determination and will be considered independent students.

Read the [full text of the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA)](http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/110/hr2669/text)  
Download the [*Application and Verification Guide*](http://www.ifap.ed.gov/fsahandbook/attachments/1314AVG.pdf) (CCRAA implementation guidance for Financial Aid Administrators)

**NAEHCY RESOURCES**

[NAEHCY Higher Education Helpline](http://naehcy.org/educational-resources/helpline)

(855) 446-2673 (toll-free) or [highered@naehcy.org](mailto:highered@naehcy.org)  
The NAEHCY Higher Education Helpline provides assistance with issues related to students experiencing homelessness accessing higher education.

[NAEHCY Higher Education Podcasts](http://naehcy.org/educational-resources/podcasts)  
NAEHCY Higher Education Podcasts provide succinct and readily accessible information about topics related to college access and success for young people experiencing homelessness.

[*Avoiding Common FAFSA Errors*](http://naehcy.org/sites/default/files/dl/fafsa-errors.pdf)  
This NAEHCY tip sheet lists the most common errors many students, including homeless students and students coming out of foster care, make when completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). These errors stop the processing of the FAFSA and delay the disbursement of funds students need to pay college expenses. The tip sheet also provides suggestions for avoiding these mistakes.

[*College Access and Success for Students Experiencing Homelessness: A Toolkit for Educators and Service Providers*](http://naehcy.org/sites/default/files/dl/toolkit.pdf)This toolkit serves as a comprehensive resource on the issue of higher education access and success for homeless students, including information on understanding homeless students, assisting homeless students in choosing a school, helping homeless students pay for application-related expenses, assisting homeless students in finding financial aid and scholarships for school, and helping homeless students succeed in college.

[*College Access and Success for Students Experiencing Homelessness: The Web Series*](http://naehcy.org/higher-ed/access-success-web-series)  
This NAEHCY Web Series presents highlights from NAEHCY's [*College Access and Success for Students Experiencing Homelessness: A Toolkit for Educators and Service Providers*](http://naehcy.org/sites/default/files/dl/toolkit.pdf) in a web-based, clickable format with links to related resources when additional information is desired. Chapters include:  
1 | Introduction and Context  
2 | Assisting Youth Experiencing Homelessness in Choosing a College  
3 | Fee Waivers for College Application-related Expenses  
4 | Federal Financial Aid  
5 | Beyond Federal Aid  
6 | Supporting Student Success in College

[*Dependency Status Appeal Frequently Asked Questions*](http://naehcy.org/sites/default/files/images/dl/dep-stat-app.pdf)  
This NAEHCY tip sheet answers the following questions about FAFSA dependency status appeals: What is a dependency status appeal?; Who can request a dependency status appeal?; How do I complete FAFSA if I am unaccompanied and homeless, but no longer a youth?; Do I need to complete the FAFSA before submitting my dependency status appeal?; What documentation do I need to submit with my dependency status appeal?; and, What documentation do I need to submit with my dependency status appeal?

[*FAFSA Tips for Unaccompanied Youth Without Stable Housing*](http://naehcy.org/sites/default/files/dl/fafsa-tips-uhy.doc)This tip sheet provides a step-by-step guide to unaccompanied youth for filling out questions that refer to their status as an unaccompanied youth without stable housing. Guidance is given for filling out the online or paper version of the FAFSA. A list of additional resources is also included.

*[Financial Aid for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth: A Survey Report](http://naehcy.org/sites/default/files/dl/fafsa-survey-report.pdf" \t "_blank)*  
This report summarizes the results of a 2012 survey conducted by the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) in partnership with the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA). The survey, which received over 900 responses, gathered information about the ease with which unaccompanied homeless youth are able to access federal financial aid. The survey results highlight the level of awareness of provisions of federal law related to college access for unaccompanied homeless youth and areas where barriers continue to exist to students’ ability to access the financial resources needed to pursue their postsecondary educational goals. Based on an analysis of survey results, NAEHCY provides policy and practice recommendations to support higher education access and success for unaccompanied homeless youth.

[*Helping Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Access College Financial Aid*](http://naehcy.org/sites/default/files/images/dl/uy_higher_ed.doc)  
This brief provides information on helping unaccompanied youth access financial aid for college. It includes information on the provisions of the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 that make it easier for unaccompanied youth to apply for federal financial aid using the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

[*Higher Education Act Reauthorization: Homeless and Foster Youth*](http://naehcy.org/sites/default/files/images/dl/hea_summ.doc)  
This two-page brief summarizes the amendments designed to increase homeless and foster students access to postsecondary education contained in the Higher Education Opportunity Act, reauthorized in August 2008.

[*Income Tax and the FAFSA for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth*](http://naehcy.org/sites/default/files/images/dl/tax_fafsa.doc)  
This two-page brief answers various questions about the relationship between the filing of tax returns and a youth's completion of the FAFSA. Questions answered include: How does a youth's decision to file a tax return affect the FAFSA?; Are youth required to file tax returns?; and, What should an unaccompanied homeless youth do if his/her parents claim him/her as a dependent on their tax return?

[*Making Student Status Determinations for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth: Eligibility Tool for Financial Aid Administrators*](http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/faa_det_tool.pdf)  
This form, developed collaboratively by NAEHCY and the [National Center for Homeless Education](http://center.serve.org/nche/) (NCHE), is to be completed by a college financial aid administrator (FAA) who is evaluating a student’s eligibility for independent student status. It provides guidance to assist FAAs in making a determination in cases where a student, seeking independent student status as an unaccompanied homeless youth, comes to the attention of a FAA and a prior status determination by a local liaison or shelter is unavailable.

[*Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Documentation of Independent Student Status for the FAFSA*](http://naehcy.org/sites/default/files/dl/uy_fafsa_template.doc)This template provides local homeless education liaisons, HUD-funded shelter representatives, and RHYA-funded shelter representatives with a sample form for verifying a student's status as an unaccompanied homeless youth for the purpose of applying for federal financial aid for higher education using the FAFSA.

[*Who Can Make a Determination of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Status?*](http://naehcy.org/sites/default/files/images/dl/fafsa-who-deter.pdf)This NAEHCY tip sheet lists the four groups of professionals authorized to make a determination that a student meets the definition of an unaccompanied homeless youth or is a self-supporting youth at risk of becoming homeless for filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

[*Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Tip Sheet for Higher Education McKinney-Vento Single Points of Contact (SPOCs)*](http://naehcy.org/sites/default/files/dl/spoc-tips.docx)  
This NAEHCY tip sheet provides specific strategies and recommendations for how higher education SPOCs can support unaccompanied homeless youth in obtaining a college education and moving towards a stable future.

[*Making Student Status Determinations for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth: Eligibility Tool for Financial Aid Administrators*](http://naehcy.org/sites/default/files/pdf/faa_det_tool14.pdf)  
This form is to be completed by the financial aid administrator (FAA) who is evaluating a student’s eligibility for independent student status. All legal statements related to unaccompanied homeless youth and financial aid are from the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA) and the Application and Verification Guide (AVG).

[*Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Documentation of Independent Student Status for the FAFSA*](http://naehcy.org/sites/default/files/dl/uhy_fafsa_template_14.doc)

**OTHER RESOURCES**

**National Center for Homeless Education**The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) serves as the information and technical assistance center for the [U.S. Department of Education's Education for Homeless Children and Youth program](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/homeless/).  
Visit [NCHE's Higher Education resource webpage](http://center.serve.org/nche/ibt/higher_ed.php)

**NAEHCY Higher Education Podcasts**

Brief audio lessons related to higher education access and success for homeless youth

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