



Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Updates to the FAFSA form

The U.S. Department of Education made changes to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form to expand access to federal Pell Grants.

This update has resulted in the following:

- Fewer students with completed FAFSA applications to date than in previous years due to
 - a three-month lag in availability of the federal online application
 - ongoing challenges for students in successfully completing and submitting the form on their first attempt
- Delays in processing of submitted application forms
- Changes to data files that have impacted the ability for school counselors to access timely and accurate information

Financial Aid Application Requirement

Graduation Requirement (19 TAC §74.1023)

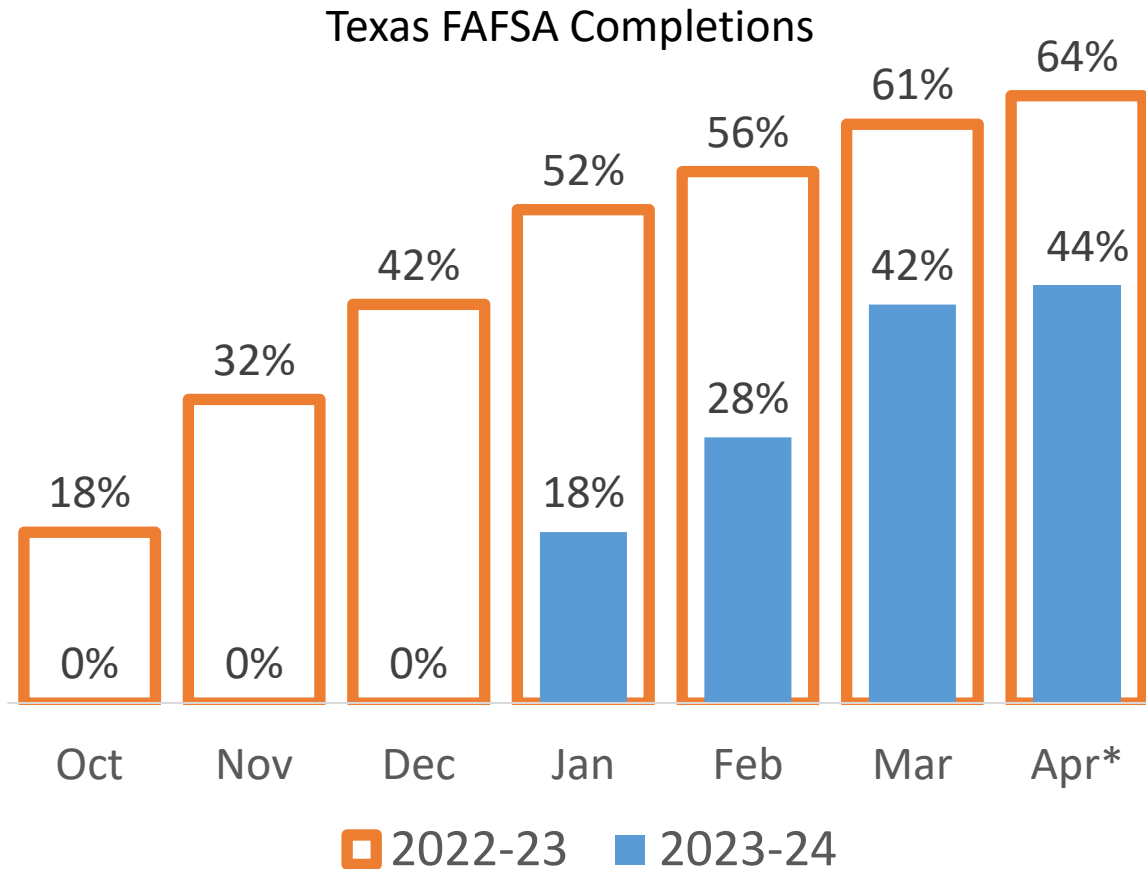
Each student enrolled in 12th grade must do one of the following in order to graduate:

- complete and submit a **free application for federal student aid (FAFSA)**
- complete and submit a **Texas application for state financial aid (TASFA)**
- submit a **signed opt-out form**

Challenges with the FAFSA application should not impact a student's ability to meet the graduation requirement. However, inability to successfully submit a FAFSA may significantly impact a student's postsecondary opportunities.



Texas is ranked #12 in senior FAFSA completions and #45 in year-over-year rate of change in completions as of April 17, 2024.



Year-Over-Year Change in FAFSA Completions

Texas -41.3%

National -38.3%

Source: NCAN.org Retrieved April 17, 2024 from [FAFSA Tracker - National College Attainment Network \(ncan.org\)](https://www.nacan.org/fafsa-tracker-national-college-attainment-network)
 Only data available is for YOY change from 3/29 to 4/5/2024.

Although Texas has a dramatic drop in year-over-year FAFSA completions compared to same time last year, the pace of FAFSA completions is similar, i.e., the rate of completions is on pace within first 3 months of application opening.

Source: TxCAN FAFSA Completions. Retrieved April 17, 2024 from <https://www.edtx.org/txcan/resources/fafsa-completion-by-state/>

*April only has 1 week of data

Next Steps

Assisting students who wish to successfully complete the FAFSA should be prioritized, even with the ongoing challenges with the federal FAFSA website.

Methods of documentation related to FAFSA completion to meet the graduation requirement have been updated and are included in the [April 11 TAA](#) . **For the 2023–2024 school year:**

- In the event a processed date or Student Aid Index (SAI) is not available, documentation of **submission** from the appropriate data sources, rather than documentation that an application was **processed**, will satisfy the graduation requirement
- School districts must develop a [local procedure](#) for the method by which a student must provide proof that the student has completed a FAFSA. That local procedure is not required to be adopted by the school board (unless local policy otherwise requires it). The procedure may permit a student to meet the requirement for the 2023-2024 school year by showing that the FAFSA was completed and an attempt was made to submit, but for reasons outside the student's control the application was not accepted by the federal FAFSA website.

Next Steps

- In the coming weeks, additional specific resources and guidance will be communicated from TEA directly to **high school counselors and campus administrators** to help support eligible students who wish to complete and submit a FAFSA, given the impact of successful FAFSA completion on college enrollment.
- A webinar targeting district administrators will be hosted April 30. Details will be provided through the TEA website and the counselor listserv.
- USDE provides additional resources and assistance through the federal student aid help center at <https://studentaid.gov/help-center/contact>