Drug Convictions May Affect Your Financial Aid

By law, some students who have drug-related convictions under any federal or state law **may be ineligible for federal student aid.**

According to the law, if you are convicted of a drug-related offense you may fact these restrictions:

1. For ***possession*** of illegal drugs, you are ineligible from the date of conviction (not arrest) for:
    - 1 year for a first offense
    - 2 years for a second offense
    - Indefinitely for a third offense

2. For ***sale*** of illegal drugs, you are ineligible from the date of conviction (not arrest) for:
    - 2 years for a first offense
    - Indefinitely for a second offense

Do all drug convictions count?
No, do not count any conviction that was reversed, set aside, or removed from your record. Also, do not count any conviction that occurred before you turned 18, unless you were prosecuted as an adult.

Alcohol and tobacco are not illegal drugs under this law.

If I have drug convictions, should I still apply for student aid?
Yes, even if you have drug convictions, you should complete and submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). You may be eligible, depending on the date and number of convictions.
Even if you are ineligible for federal student aid, you should complete and submit your FAFSA. Many states and schools use information from the FAFSA, and you may still be eligible for scholarships or other types of aid from other programs. There is a way that you can regain eligibility for the federal programs no matter how many or what type of drug convictions you have. You must successfully complete an acceptable drug rehabilitation program that meets the standards set by Congress and the Department of Education, and you will regain eligibility on the date you complete the program.

How do I answer question 35 on the FAFSA?
Question 35 on the FAFSA asks about drug convictions. **Do not leave this question blank**. If you answer "YES" you can call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243) or go to www.fafsa.ed.gov if you need help filling out the worksheet after you receive it in the mail.

What is an acceptable drug rehabilitation program?
An acceptable drug rehabilitation program must have **TWO** unannounced drug tests **AND** it must either:

1. Be qualified to receive funds from a federal, state or local government agency or program, or from a state or federally licensed insurance company, or
2. Be administered or recognized by a federal licensed hospital, health clinic, or medical doctor.

How can I get more information?

If you still have questions about the law, call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243). Your personal information is confidential, and you will remain anonymous.
If you want to find out if a drug rehabilitation program meets the described standards, you need to contact the rehabilitation program.

I am in the process of being convicted of a drug felony. I received charge when I was not enrolled in school. Will I be able to receive financial aid for school?
If you are denied after filling out the worksheet you could try an acceptable drug rehabilitation program to become eligible again.
If you are convicted of possessing or selling drugs after you submit your FAFSA, you must notify your financial aid administrator immediately. You will lose you eligibility and be required to pay back all aid you received after you conviction.
You may also wait to attend school until your conviction is completed, then attend a drug rehabilitation program (something your conviction may force you to do; mention to the judge you would like this option when sentenced to improve your life, and prove to the government that you are not doing/selling/etc drugs anymore), and then apply for Financial Aid.

I've been convicted of a drug offense. Does this mean I won't get any aid?
This question on the FAFSA asks about convictions for possessing or selling illegal drugs (not including alcohol and tobacco) if the offense occurred during a period of enrollment for which you were receiving federal student aid (grants, loans, and/or work-study). Do not count convictions that have been removed from your record. Do not count convictions that occurred before you turned 18, unless you were tried as an adult.

If the student has been convicted for the possession of sale of illegal drugs for an offense that occurred while the student was receiving federal student aid grants, loans and/or work-study)?

When you fill out the Drug Conviction Worksheet, your responses will result in one of these answers:

1. No = Eligible. Your eligibility for federal student aid is not affected.
2. Yes = Partial Eligibility. You will become eligible for federal aid during the school year. You can become eligible earlier in the school year if you complete an acceptable drug rehabilitation program.
3. Yes/Don't Know Ineligible = You are not eligible for federal student aid for this school year unless you complete an acceptable drug rehabilitation program. You may still be eligible for state and school aid.

Even if you are not eligible for federal aid, you may be eligible for state or school financial aid. If you become eligible for federal financial aid (for example, if your eligibility date arrives or if you complete an acceptable drug rehabilitation program, notify the financial aid administrator at your school. If you are convicted of possessing or selling drugs after you submit you FAFSA, you must notify your financial aid administrator immediately. You will lose your eligibility and be required to pay back all aid you received after your conviction.