

**1) What is the "FAFSA" and how is it used?**

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the form that determines eligibility for state and federal financial aid to cover higher education expenses.

**2) Where does the student data in the *Finish the FAFSA* database report come from?**

The NC Department of Public Instruction provides a list of the seniors for each participating high school. Each senior's name, date of birth, home address, and school code are matched with his or her FAFSA status from the U.S. Department of Education's office of Federal Student Aid. Information reflected in the database includes: not submitted, submitted, completed, signed by student and parent, and whether chosen for verification.

**3) What do schools do with this information?**

School counselors who work with seniors can monitor their students who have or have not completed the FAFSA. They can advise seniors about correcting FAFSA errors or how to complete verification.

**4) Is there a risk to student privacy?**

No income information is included in the *Finish the FAFSA* database. No Social Security numbers are included either. Access to the database is guided by regulations to safeguard student data and only authorized users at each school can access that school's student data. Parents can opt-out so that student information does not appear in the *Finish the FAFSA* database.

**5) Can I share student data that I find in the *Finish the FAFSA* report?**

Student level data is protected by federal law and must not be shared with anyone other than the student or parent, and other authorized personnel at the school.

- The data should never be shared with other students.
- Sharing student data from one school with authorized personnel at another school is prohibited because authorization is school-specific.
- Sharing student data within the school with unauthorized personnel at the same school is prohibited.
- Authorized personnel have been designated by the school district administration.
- Access has been granted only to those school staff, and/or to other persons from federally designated entities, such as GEAR UP, who work directly with seniors on FAFSA completion and college access.

Each participating school district signs a Data Use Agreement requiring the protection of student data and limitation of use of the data for intended purposes only.

**6) Where is *Finish the FAFSA*?**

Education professionals who are Authorized Users access *Finish the FAFSA* in the Professional Tools on CFNC.org.

**7) Where do I get more information?**

The North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (NCSEAA) is a state agency that helps North Carolinians pay for education. Contact [Outreach@ncseaa.edu](mailto:Outreach@ncseaa.edu) with questions or to request a Data Use Agreement for your school.