



Maryland Higher Education Commission
FAFSA Completion Initiative
User Guide

Introduction

Thank you for your participation in the State of Maryland's implementation of the FAFSA Completion Initiative (FCI). Those of us at the Maryland Higher Education Commission's, Office of Student Financial Assistance, are all very excited by your involvement in the FCI process. We anticipate that the Maryland College Aid Processing System (MDCAPS) will prove to be an effective tool for measuring the degree of FAFSA completion among your students.

MDCAPS will provide school officials with an opportunity to follow each student's progress as they work their way through the FAFSA process. The user guide will provide step-by-step instructions on how to navigate thru MDCAPS, as well as making the most out of the data it provides.

Once it has been determined that a student's FAFSA is incomplete, FCI users are encouraged to intervene directly with the student. Using MD CAPS, it becomes possible to identify potential errors, as well as offer the most likely solutions to students of FAFSA related issues. MDCAPS also determines whether a student has been selected for federal verification. This is a process that requires the student to submit additional documentation to their prospective institutions, who then determine their eligibility for financial aid.

Using MDCAPS, users will be able to retrieve FCI data in real time by uploading a file containing certain self-reported student demographic information. Once uploaded, the user will then see an option to "download" and view the FAFSA Completion data results requested. If there are any students that do not show on your FCI data results, first consider whether the demographic information that you are reporting matches the information provided on the student's FAFSA. If the information provided by the FCI user, does not agree with the FAFSA information provided by the student, then MDCAPS will provide an update of the mismatched status.

Also, it is important to note that MDCAPS only contains FAFSA information for students who indicate at least one Maryland institution on their FAFSA.

MHEC encourages any Maryland student to indicate at least one Maryland institution on their FAFSA, not only for FCI purposes, but also for consideration of state grant/scholarship opportunities in Maryland.

We thank you again for your participation in the FAFSA Completion Initiative and are excited of your efforts to increase the rate of FAFSA completion in the State of Maryland.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the FAFSA Completion Initiative or use of MDCAPS you may contact an OSFA representative via email at fafsa.mhec@maryland.gov.

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FAFSA Completion Initiative

Data Retrieval Instructions

Below are the steps required to retrieve FAFSA Completion Initiative information from the Maryland College Aid Processing System (MDCAPS):

1. Create and Save a CSV file and include the following columns:

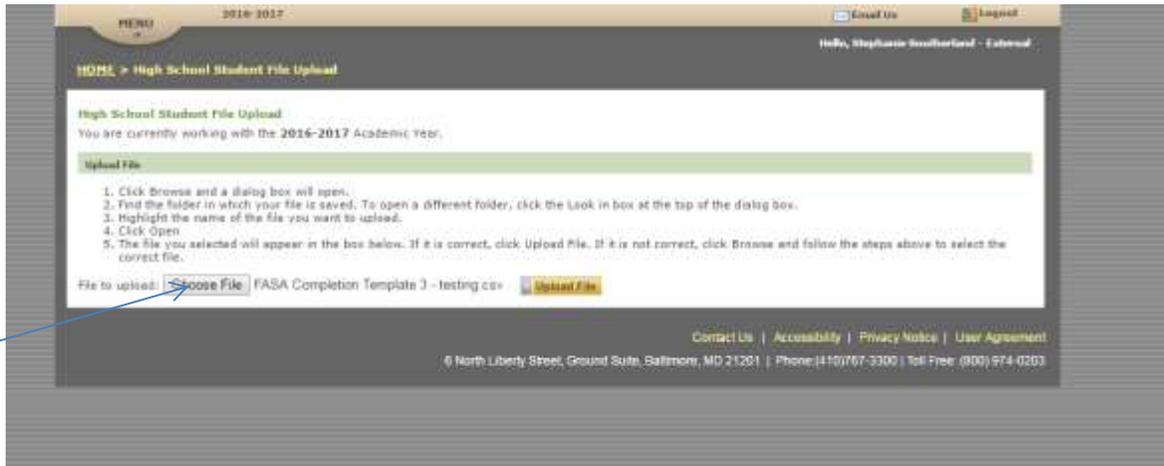
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	FIRST_NAME	LAST_NAME	DOB	ZIP_CODE	HIGH_SCHOOL_NAME		
2	John	Doe	1/1/1991	20784			
3	Jane	Doe	7/22/1993	20904			
4							
5							
6							
7							

**High School Name is an optional field and will not affect the matching process.*

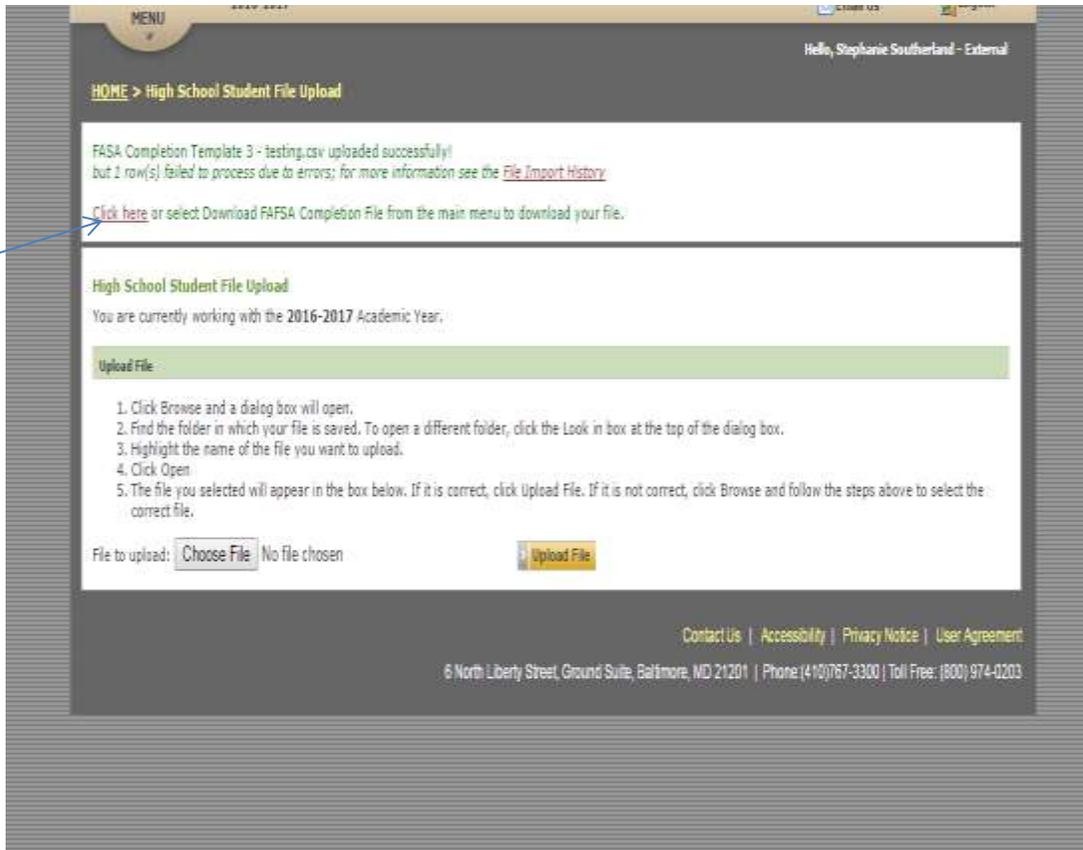
2. Log into MD CAPS and click the Upload High School Student File option



3. Select **Choose file** and locate the CSV file saved from step 1.



4. Once the file has been selected, click the option for **Upload file**
5. A message appears verifying that the file has been uploaded. To proceed in retrieving your results, select the “Download FAFSA Completion File” link by returning to the homepage or selecting the “Click here” option as noted on the below screenshot:



6. Once you have selected the option to Download the FAFSA Completion File, the below screen will appear. Click **Download File**.



The “Downloaded file” will show the following fields:

Submitted Date – Date that the ISIR Application was received

Process Date – Date that the ISIR Transaction was processed

Select for Verif – Indication as to whether the student was selected for verification (See additional details in Appendix)

FAFSA Status – Indication as to whether the student has a complete or incomplete FAFSA on file (See additional details in Appendix)

Inc Reason – Reason that FAFSA is incomplete (See additional details in Appendix)

7. To view whether your file successfully uploaded without error, return to the Home screen and select the **File Import History** option available on the main menu.



Appendix A

Definitions

Verification

The Department of Education selects a percentage of FAFSA filers for a process called verification. Verification requires students to submit additional documentation to their prospective school's financial aid office for further review of their financial aid eligibility. This process is designed to improve the accuracy of the information submitted on the FAFSA. Documentation such as income tax transcripts, W-2 statements, child support information, etc. may be requested by the student's financial aid office as a result. Students selected for verification are advised to contact their institution's financial aid office directly to determine what documentation is required.

FAFSA Status

A "matching" process occurs within MDCAPS once the user has uploaded the high school student file into MDCAPS. The system will match the student information provided on the uploaded file to the FAFSA data that exists in MDCAPS for the academic year. Please note students must include at least one Maryland Institution on their FAFSA in order for the FAFSA information to be available in MDCAPS.

Full Match:

The following data elements must match the FAFSA data within MDCAPS to be considered a full match:

- Student Last Name
- Student First Name
- Student Date of Birth (The date of birth must be formatted as mm/dd/yyyy or mm-dd-yyyy)
- Student Zip Code (The zip code must not be greater than five digits)

***All** four data elements listed above must match the information that the student provided on the FAFSA.

Partial Match: If 3 of the 4 data elements (noted above) match the FAFSA data in MD CAPS but not all 4.

Multiple Match: If 2 or more data elements match the FAFSA data in MDCAPS but not all 4.

No Match: If none of the data elements match the FAFSA data in MDCAPS

Please Note: The “FAFSA Submitted Date”, “FAFSA Processed Date”, “FAFSA Incomplete Reason”, and “Verification” fields will be blank on the downloaded file should the student’s status reflect as **no match**, **partial match**, or **multiple match**.

FAFSA Incomplete Reason (also known as “Inc_Reason”)

When a student submits a FAFSA, the FAFSA is sent to a number of federal agencies including but not limited to the Department of Homeland Security, Social Security Administration, and Selective Service System. If the FAFSA information provided does not “match” with the student’s information housed at these agencies, the FAFSA will produce a “reject reason” that notifies the student that additional information is still required.

Below are the specific reasons that will appear on your downloaded report if the student’s FAFSA status is showing as **incomplete**. These fields will populate as applicable to the student’s status:

Missing signature - A student and/or parent’s signature is missing on the FAFSA.

Citizenship – The question(s) on the FAFSA pertaining to the student’s citizenship was left blank or “No.” If the student indicated “No” and did not provide their Alien Registration Number confirming their permanent resident status (if applicable) then the FAFSA will be considered incomplete.

SSN Not Valid – Student’s Social Security Number is not correct

Other – all other reasons

*If the student’s status is “other”, they may follow up with the institution that they listed on the FAFSA for additional assistance. Alternatively, students may contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center by phone 1-800-433-3243 or email to determine the reason for the rejection. Please visit <https://studentaidhelp.ed.gov/> for more information.