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STEP ONE: FILE THE FAFSA **OR** MARYLAND STATE FINANCIAL AID APPLICATION (MSFAA) BY MARCH 1

The FAFSA or Maryland State Financial Aid Application (MSFAA) is the first step in applying for the Guaranteed Access (GA) Grant, as well as all need-based awards offered through the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC). The FAFSA is available on October 1 each year.

The State of Maryland's deadline to file the FAFSA and MSFAA is March 1.

To complete your FAFSA now click here. Students who are ineligible to receive federal aid may complete the MSFAA by clicking here.

STEP TWO: CREATE AN MDCAPS ACCOUNT

The Maryland College Aid Processing System (MDCAPS) is the online system that is used for students to view the status of their GA Grant. In order to access this system, you must create an MDCAPS account by visiting:

https://mdcaps.mhec.state.md.us.

Once your account has been created you can view all required outstanding documents under 'Check Your Application Status'. All documents must be submitted to MHEC by **April 1**.

STEP THREE: CHECK YOUR MAIL/EMAIL FOR NOTIFICATIONS FROM MHEC

When determining a student's eligibility for the GA Grant, MHEC uses the income information as reported on the FAFSA or MSFAA. Students who meet the 2019-2020 income requirements *may* be considered for the GA Grant. Upon receiving the FAFSA or MSFAA, MHEC will notify you by mail and email of the documents to submit to confirm your eligibility for the GA Grant.

STEP FOUR: SUBMIT REQUIRED DOCUMENTS BY APRIL 1

All documents listed under 'Check Your Application Status' in MDCAPS must be submitted by **April 1**. MSFAA applicants may not see the outstanding documents required in MDCAPS however, will be notified of all documents required by MHEC.

Important tips:
- MHEC strongly advises you to submit all requested documentation as soon as you receive the first notification.
- Check your MDCAPS account regularly to view any changes, additional documentation, or documents not received by MHEC.
- Review each form to ensure that all documents are completed accurately and all forms are completed in accordance with instructions outlined on the form.
- Students can submit documents via ga.mhec@maryland.gov.
- Allow at least 14 business days for MHEC to process documents that have been submitted.

STEP FIVE: IF AWARDED, YOU MUST ACCEPT YOUR AWARD

Students awarded the GA Grant will be sent an email notification of how to accept the award through MDCAPS.

If the student fails to accept the award within the allotted time frame, the award will be canceled and **not** reinstated.

Awarding for the GA Grant takes place after April 1.