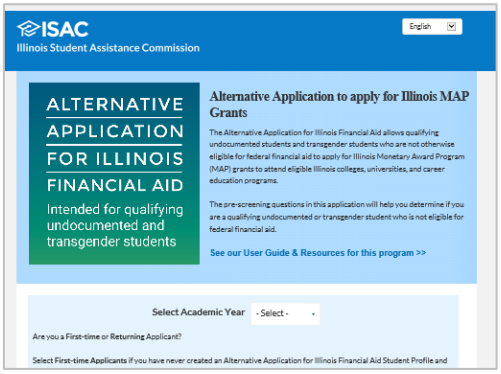
Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid
User Guide



The Retention of Illinois Students & Equity (RISE) Act, which went into effect on January 1, 2020, provides that "a student who is an Illinois resident and who is not otherwise eligible for federal financial aid, including, but not limited to, a transgender student who is disqualified for failure to register for selective service or a noncitizen student who has not obtained lawful permanent residence, shall be eligible for state financial aid and benefits …".

The Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) has developed the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid to provide a pathway for students who meet the provisions of the RISE Act to apply for the Monetary Award Program (MAP) grant. The Alternative Application collects much of the same data as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®), but it is administered by ISAC.

The Application Process

Complete Pre-Screening Questions

- Questions will be presented to help determine if you are eligible to complete this application or if you should complete the FAFSA®.
- You will be provided with guidance on which application to complete after completing the pre-screening questions.
- Data collected in the pre-screening questions will be retained by ISAC and will not be shared with the colleges.

Create Student Profile

- If the pre-screening questions determine that you should proceed with this application, then you will be prompted to create an ISAC Student Profile.
- An e-mail address and challenge question will be required.
- After creating your profile, an ISAC ID Number will be assigned to you by ISAC.

Provide Student and Parent Data

- There are seven sections in the application which collect demographic and financial information about the applicant, and about the parent(s) for dependent students.
- Separate e-mail addresses are required for the applicant and the parent so a Personal Identification Number (PIN) can be sent to them to electronically sign the application.
- For the 2021-22 award year application, both the student and parent(s) should provide 2019 tax and/or income information.

Review, Sign, and Submit

- E-mail messages will be sent to the addresses provided in the application and each will contain the PIN number the student and parent will need to sign the application.
- Student applicants will be presented with an Eligibility and Certification/Affidavit statement which should be carefully reviewed, and if in agreement, applicants can proceed and provide their electronic signature (PIN).
- Once all required data and signatures have been provided, the application can be submitted to ISAC electronically.

Tips and Notes About Completing the Application

There are **seven sections** in the application:

- Section 1 – Demographic information about the student
- Section 2 – Student's income and asset information
- Section 3 – Questions to determine if a student is dependent or independent
- Section 4 – Demographic and financial information about the applicant's parents
- Section 5 – Household information about independent students
- Section 6 – School choices
- Section 7 – Review/edit data provided, certify eligibility and accuracy of information, and electronically sign the application.

Here is a **list of documentation needed** to complete the 2021-22 application:

- 2019 federal income tax returns, W-2s, and other records of money earned
- Bank statements and records of investments (if applicable)
- Records of untaxed income (if applicable)
- List of colleges the student would like to attend
- Parents of dependent students will also need most of the same information listed above.

Here is important information **about the PIN** you'll need to sign the application:

- ISAC will provide separate four-digit Personal Identification Numbers (PINs) to the student and parent that must be used to electronically sign the application.
- The PINs will be sent to the e-mail addresses that are provided on the application.
- The student and parent must provide two separate e-mail addresses.
- The application is not considered complete and cannot be submitted until electronic signatures (PINs) have been provided.
- If you are a renewal applicant, both you and your parent may use the PIN assigned to you the previous year. However, if you have requested a new PIN at some point, you (and your parent) must use the most current PIN (based on the last activity) associated with your Student Profile. If you are unable to locate a previous your PIN or are unsure which one is most current, you and/or your parent may simply request a new PIN.

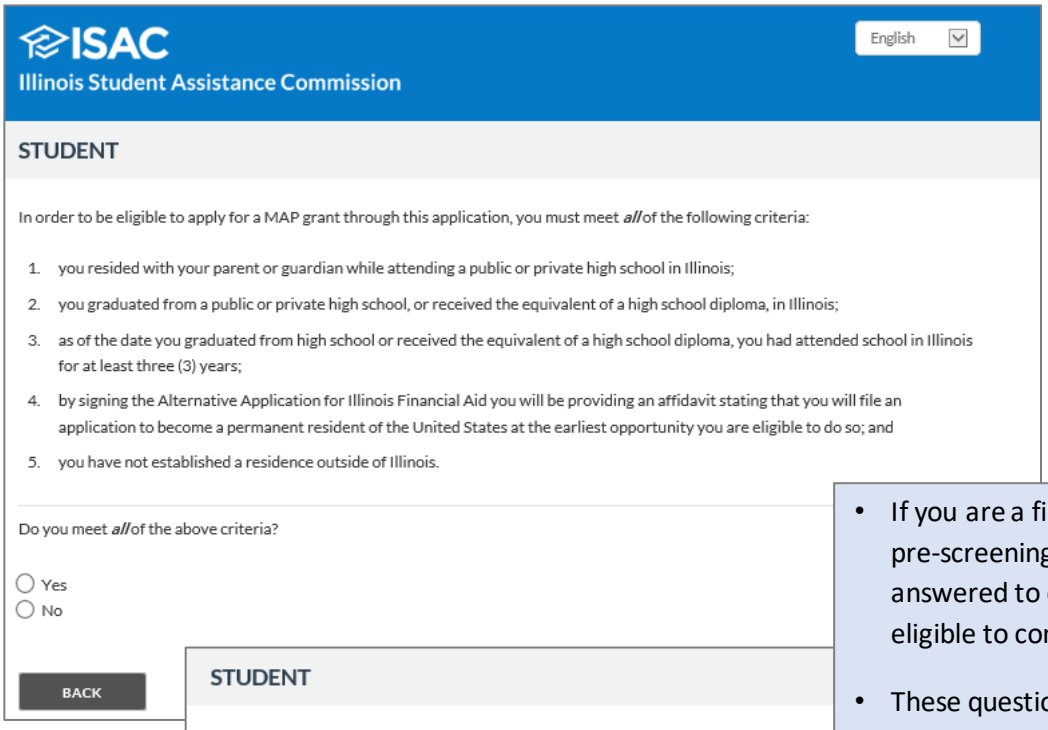
Here is some other helpful information:

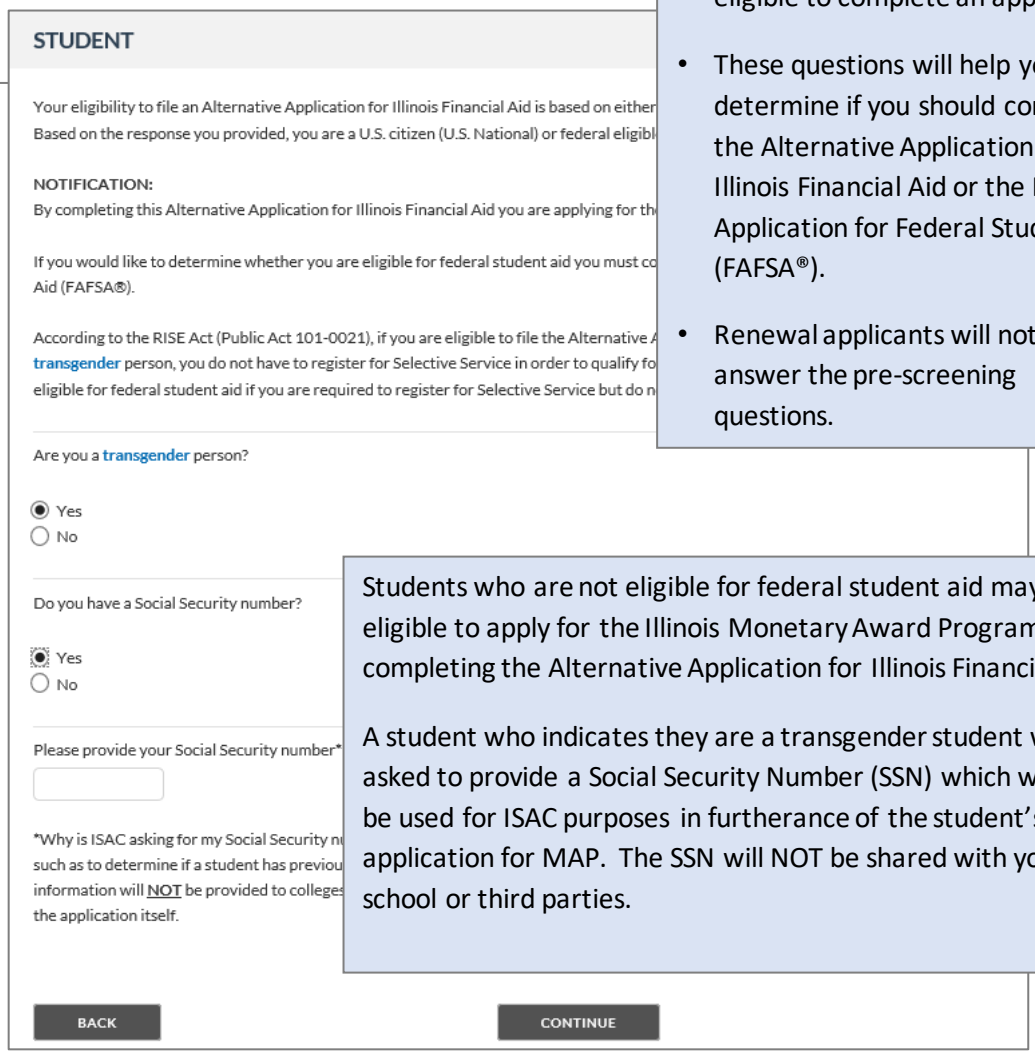
- A **Save** function is available in the application that will allow you to save your data and return at a later time to finish completing the application.
- Once you have started an application, any time you return (e.g. to finish completing it or to make a correction), you should log in as a Returning Applicant. If you are a renewal applicant, you should also log in as a Returning Applicant. If you forget your log in information, you can contact ISAC at 1-800-899-4722 for assistance. Select Option 3.
- If, as a dependent applicant, you are unable to provide parental data due to a special circumstance or unique situation (such as fleeing an abusive home) you should contact the financial aid office at the college you plan to attend for guidance and assistance.

Here is important information about ISAC's Privacy Policy:

- ISAC respects your right to privacy. ISAC is committed to ensuring that your personal, professional and financial information is secure. We have taken numerous steps to help safeguard the integrity of our communications and computing infrastructure, including but not limited to authentication, monitoring, auditing, and encryption. Security measures have been integrated into the design, implementation and day-to-day practices of the entire ISAC operating environment as part of our continuing commitment to risk management. Please read ISAC's complete policy at isac.org to understand how your personal information will be used.

PRE-SCREENING QUESTIONS



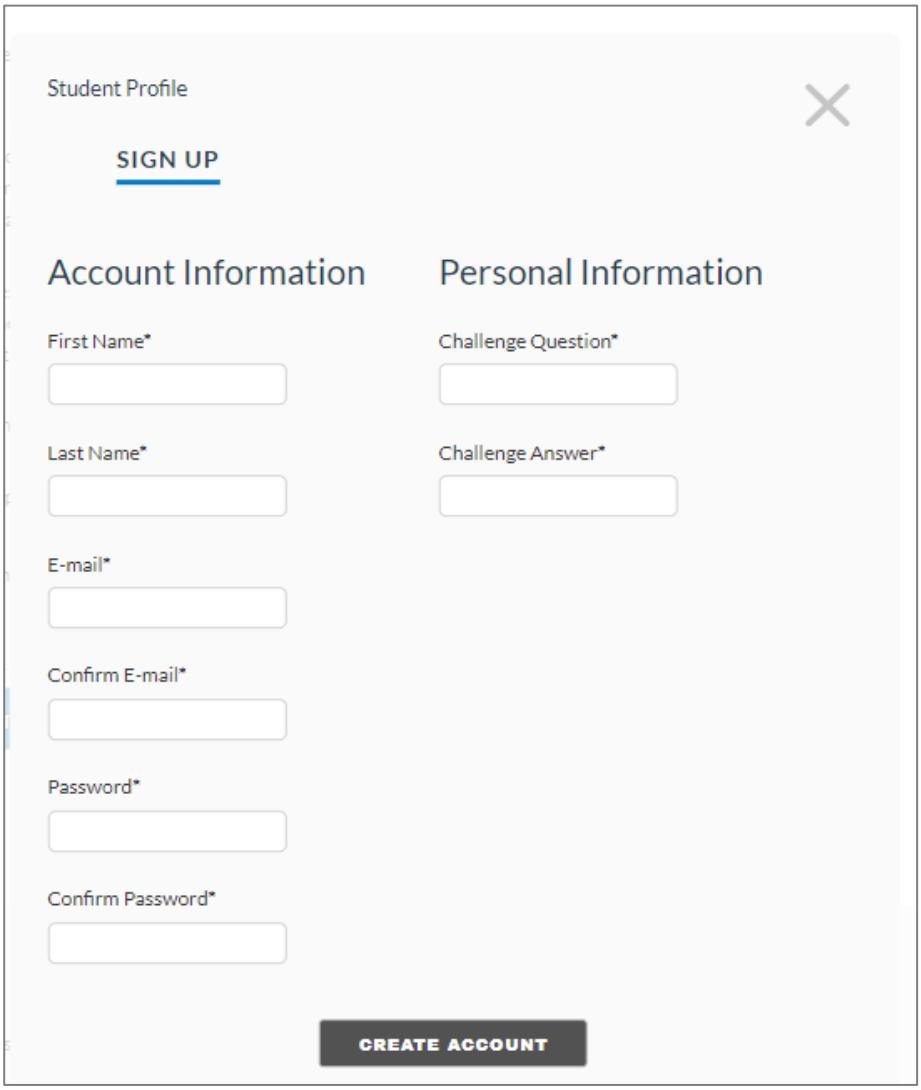


- If you are a first-time applicant, the pre-screening questions must be answered to determine if you are eligible to complete an application.
- These questions will help you determine if you should complete the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid or the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®).
- Renewal applicants will not have to answer the pre-screening questions.

Students who are not eligible for federal student aid may be eligible to apply for the Illinois Monetary Award Program by completing the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid.

A student who indicates they are a transgender student will be asked to provide a Social Security Number (SSN) which will only be used for ISAC purposes in furtherance of the student's application for MAP. The SSN will NOT be shared with your school or third parties.

STUDENT PROFILE



If it is determined that you are eligible to complete the Alternative Application, you will be prompted to create a Student Profile. All fields on this screen are required to proceed.

Be sure to make note of the e-mail, password and challenge question used for future reference.

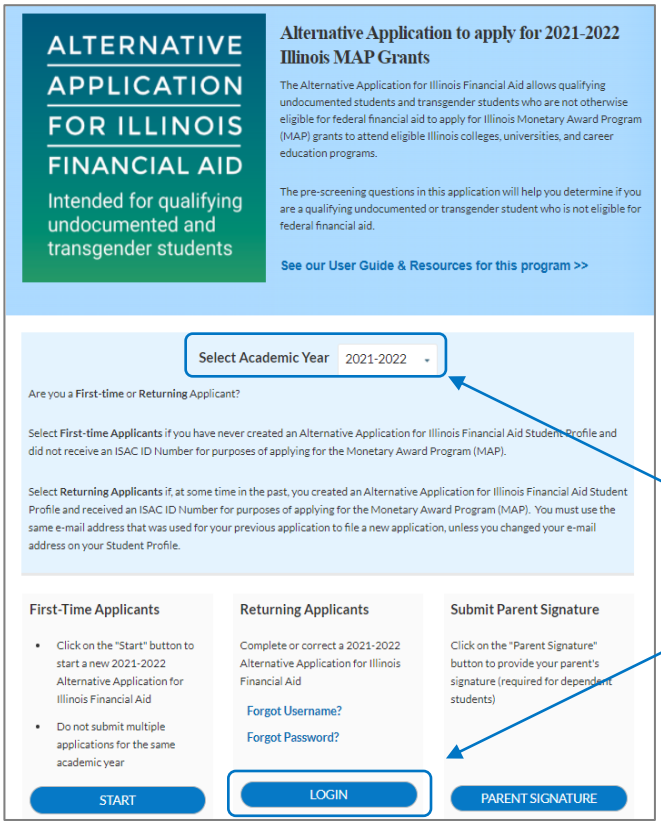
The e-mail address provided should be a personal, permanent e-mail address (such as gmail, yahoo or hotmail) rather than a school provided e-mail address that will change when you change schools.

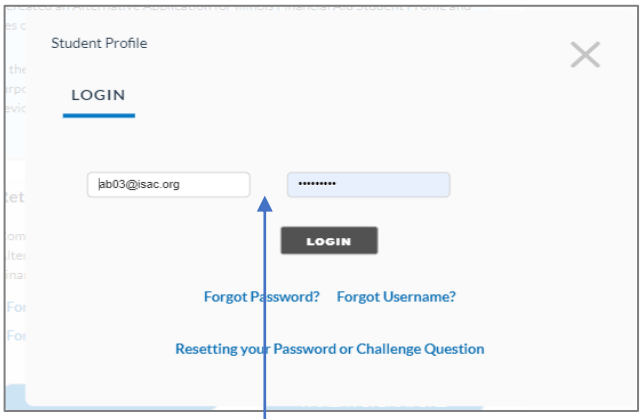
If you have an ISAC Student Portal Account, you will need to use a different e-mail address than the one used for the Student Portal.

Once you have created your Alternative Application Student Profile, ISAC will assign an ISAC ID Number to you and it will remain the same for all award years that you apply for MAP.

Your ISAC ID Number is unique to you, and you should make note of it in addition to the information you used to create your ISAC Student Profile, and keep the number secure.

CHANGING/UPDATING YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS

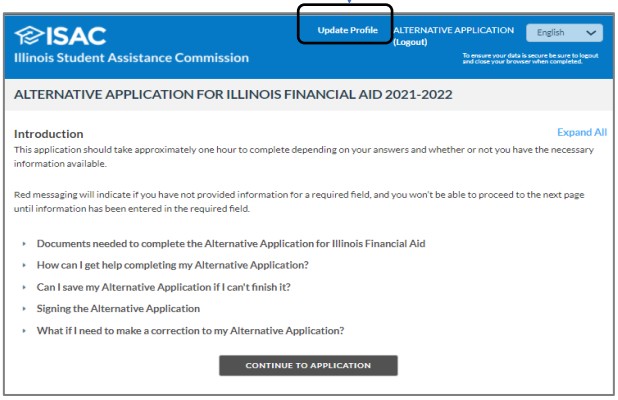


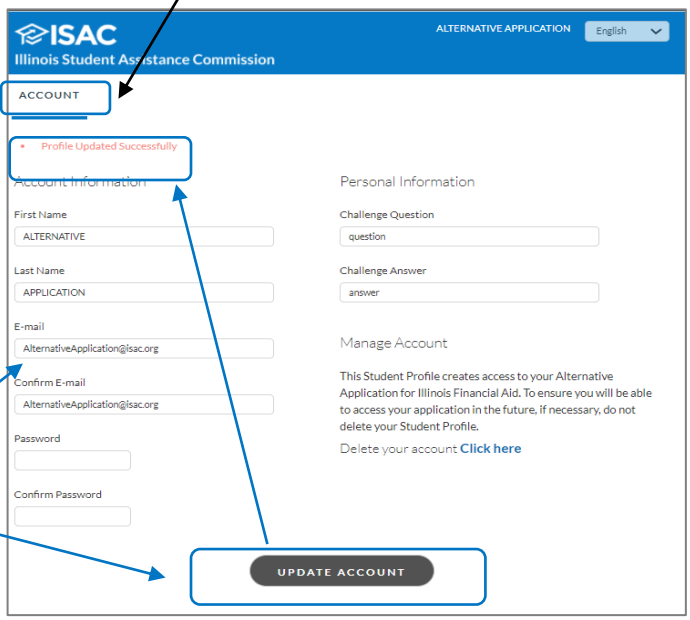


To change your email address, navigate to the Alternative Application home page, select the appropriate year, and click on the Returning Applicants Login button.

Log in using the e-mail address you used when creating your Alternative Application Student Profile.

Click on "Update Profile" and it will navigate to your "Account" Page.

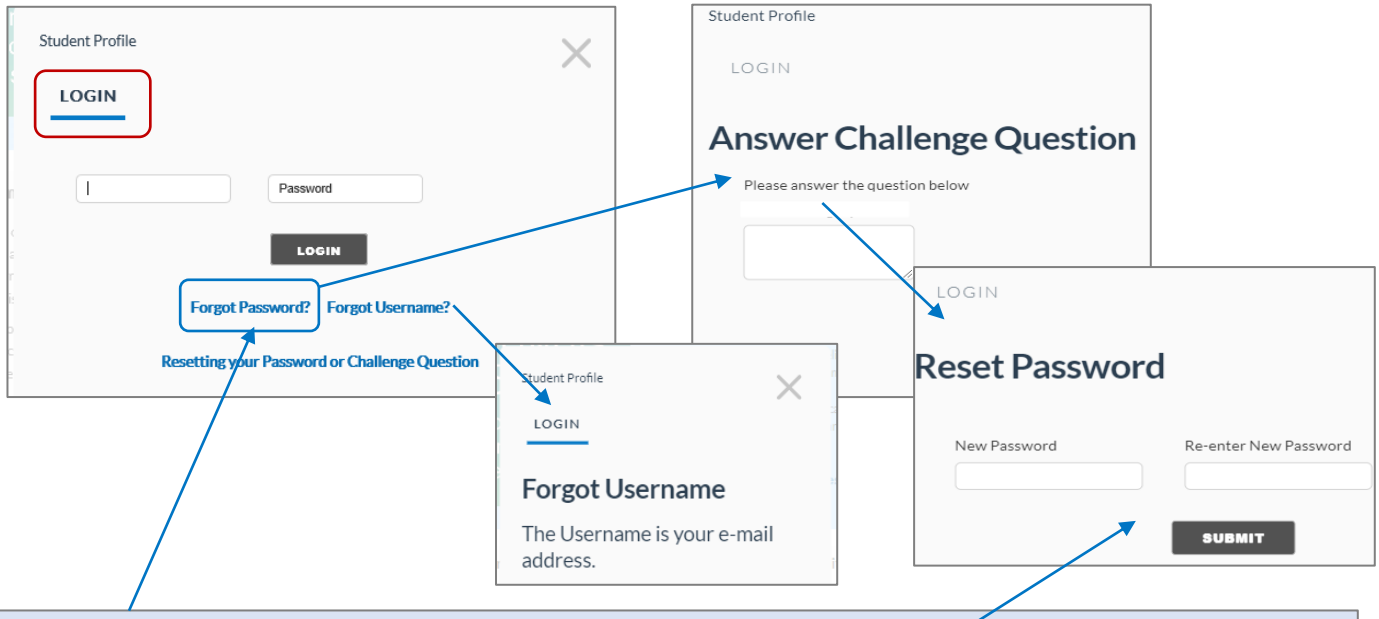




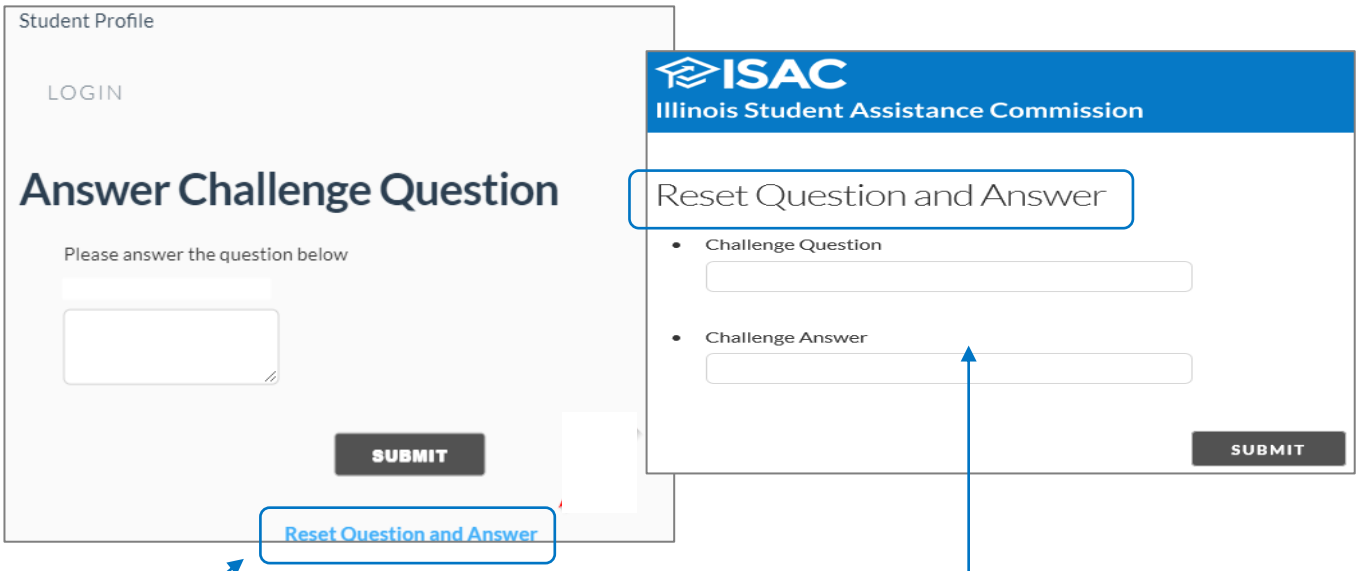
To change your e-mail address, enter your new address in the "E-mail" and "Confirm E-mail" fields, then click on "Update Account".

Once you click on "Update Account" a message will display indicating that your Profile was updated successfully.

RESETTING YOUR PASSWORD OR CHALLENGE QUESTION



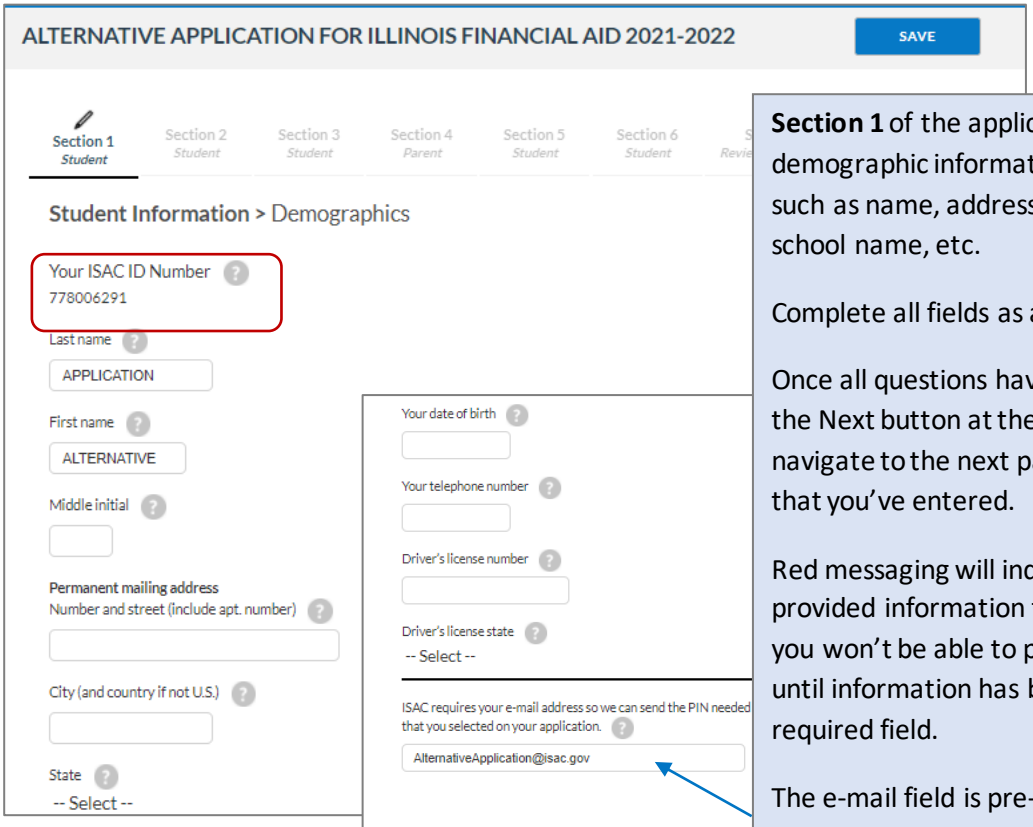
If you have forgotten your Student Profile password, you can easily reset it by clicking on the "Forgot Password" link on the Log In screen. You will be asked for your **User ID, which is the e-mail address you used when you set up your Student Profile**, and then you will be prompted to answer your challenge question. After correctly answering the question, you will be prompted to reset your password.



To reset your challenge question and answer, navigate to the Log In screen and select "Forgot Password" and then "Reset Question and Answer." **An e-mail will be sent to the e-mail address you used when you created your Student Profile with instructions on how to reset your challenge question and answer. Click on the URL in the e-mail** and you will be able to set a new challenge question and answer.

For additional assistance, you may contact ISAC Student Services at 1-800-899-4722 or isac.studentservices@illinois.gov.

STUDENT SECTIONS



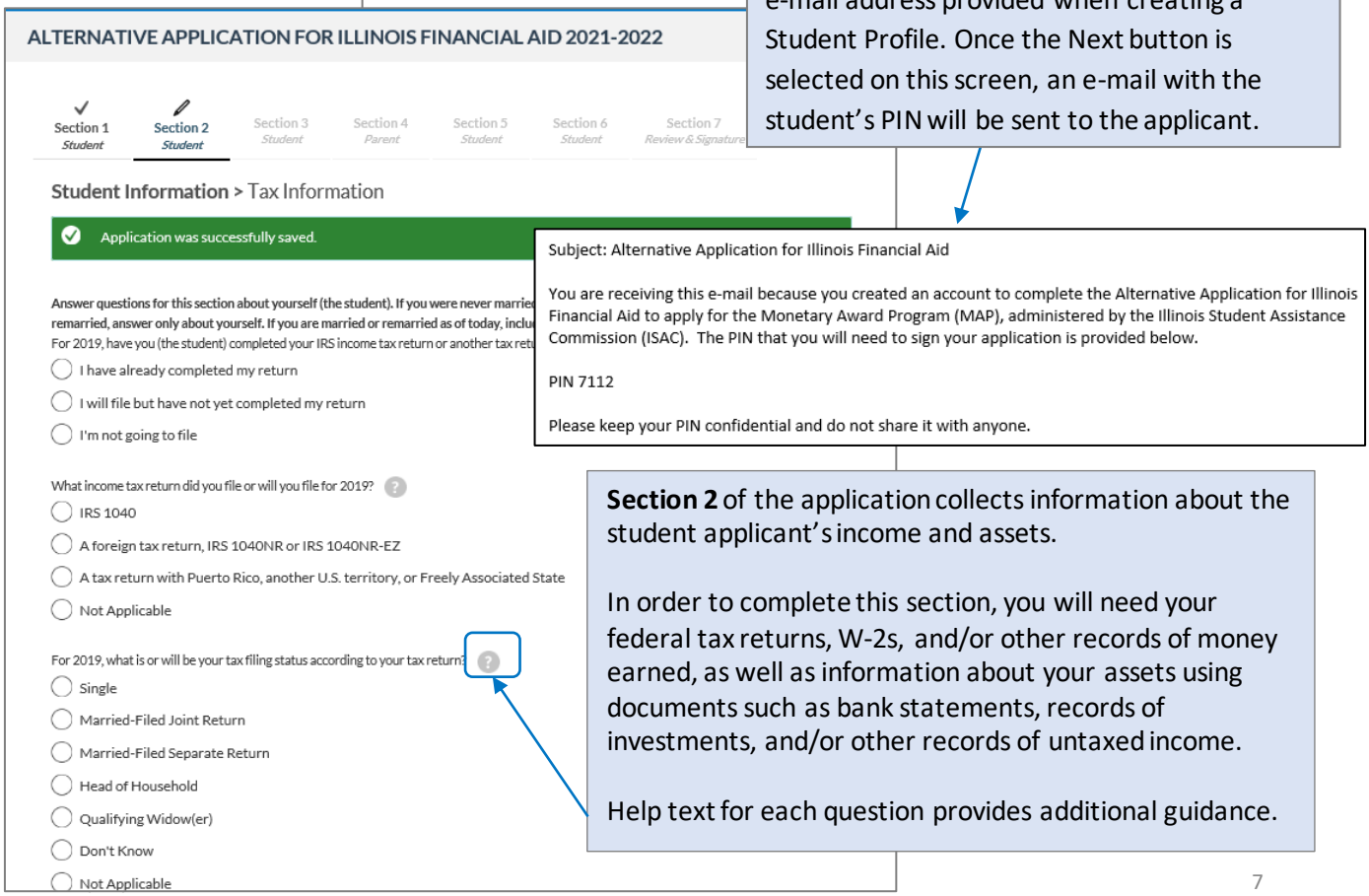
Section 1 of the application collects demographic information about the student, such as name, address, date of birth, high school name, etc.

Complete all fields as accurately as possible.

Once all questions have been answered, select the Next button at the bottom of the screen to navigate to the next page and save the data that you've entered.

Red messaging will indicate if you have not provided information for a required field, and you won't be able to proceed to the next page until information has been entered in the required field.

The e-mail field is pre-populated with the e-mail address provided when creating a Student Profile. Once the Next button is selected on this screen, an e-mail with the student's PIN will be sent to the applicant.



Subject: Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid

You are receiving this e-mail because you created an account to complete the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid to apply for the Monetary Award Program (MAP), administered by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC). The PIN that you will need to sign your application is provided below.

PIN 7112

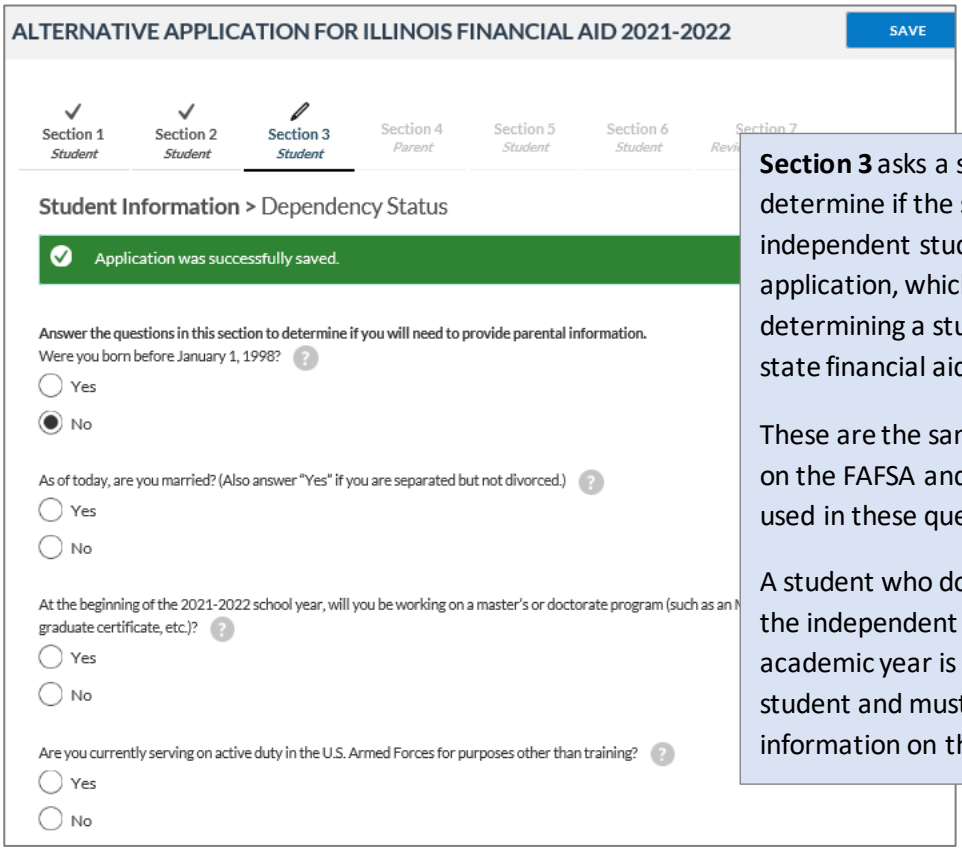
Please keep your PIN confidential and do not share it with anyone.

Section 2 of the application collects information about the student applicant's income and assets.

In order to complete this section, you will need your federal tax returns, W-2s, and/or other records of money earned, as well as information about your assets using documents such as bank statements, records of investments, and/or other records of untaxed income.

Help text for each question provides additional guidance.

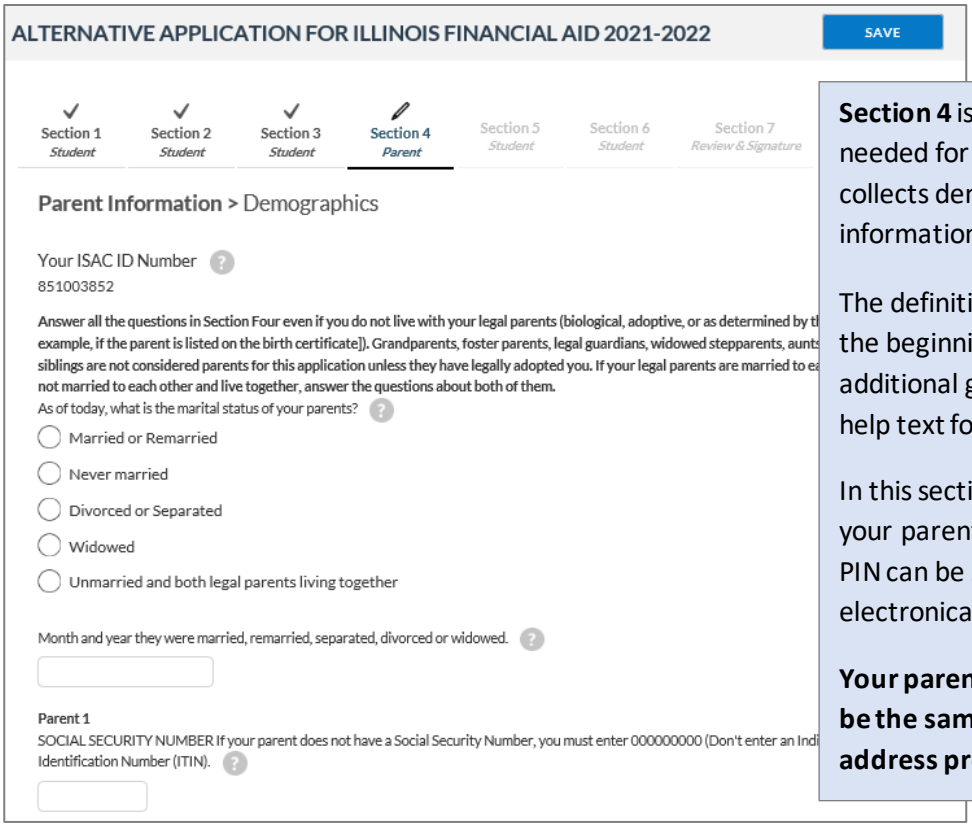
DEPENDENCY STATUS AND PARENT SECTION



Section 3 asks a series of questions to determine if the student is a dependent or independent student for purposes of the application, which is an important factor in determining a student's financial need for state financial aid.

These are the same questions that are asked on the FAFSA and the definitions for terms used in these questions are the same as well.

A student who does not meet at least one of the independent student criteria for the academic year is considered a dependent student and must also provide parental information on the application.



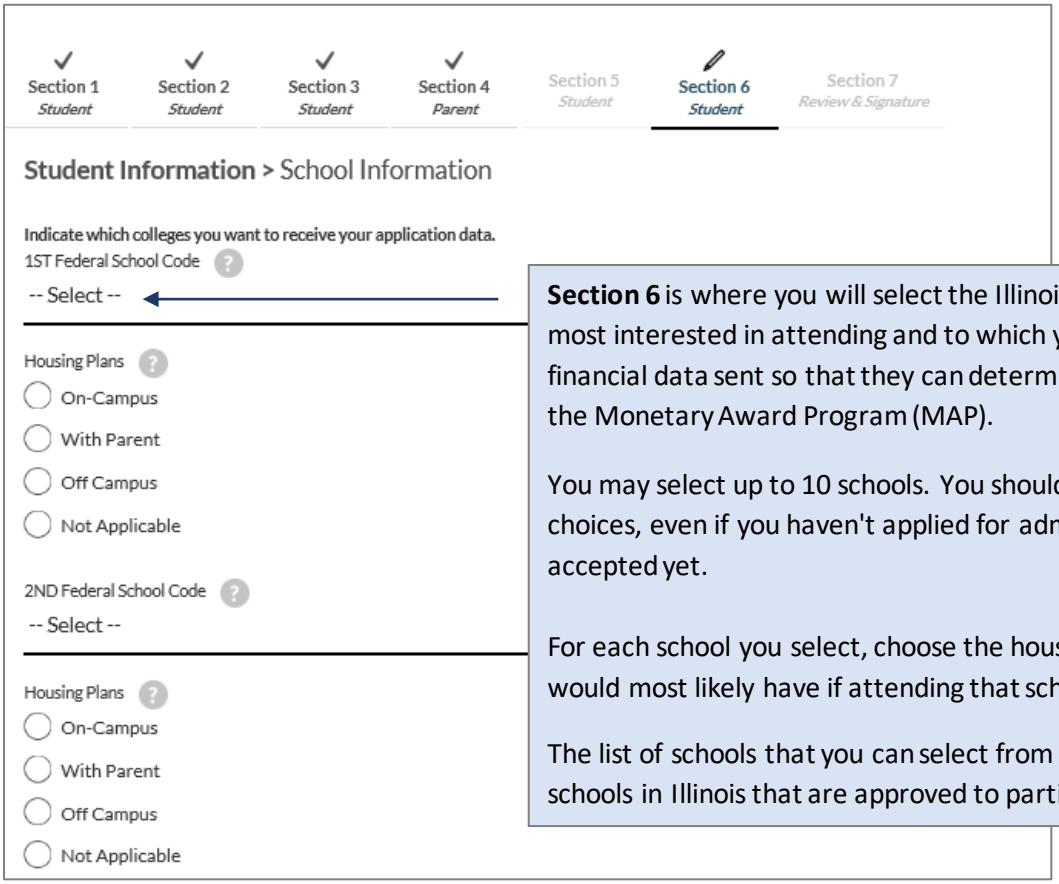
Section 4 is for parental data that is needed for dependent students. It collects demographic and financial information about the parent.

The definition of parent is provided at the beginning of the section and additional guidance is provided in the help text for each question.

In this section you must also provide your parent's e-mail address so that a PIN can be sent to your parent to electronically sign the application.

Your parent's e-mail address cannot be the same as your student e-mail address provided on the application.

SCHOOL INFORMATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

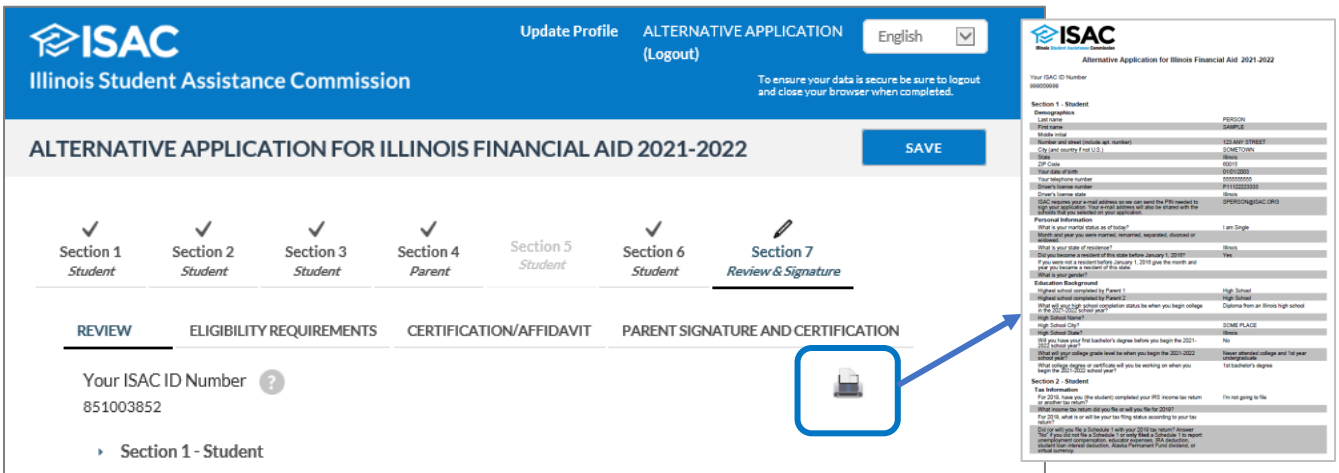


Section 6 is where you will select the Illinois schools that you are most interested in attending and to which you would like your financial data sent so that they can determine your eligibility for the Monetary Award Program (MAP).

You may select up to 10 schools. You should include your top choices, even if you haven't applied for admission or been accepted yet.

For each school you select, choose the housing plan that you would most likely have if attending that school.

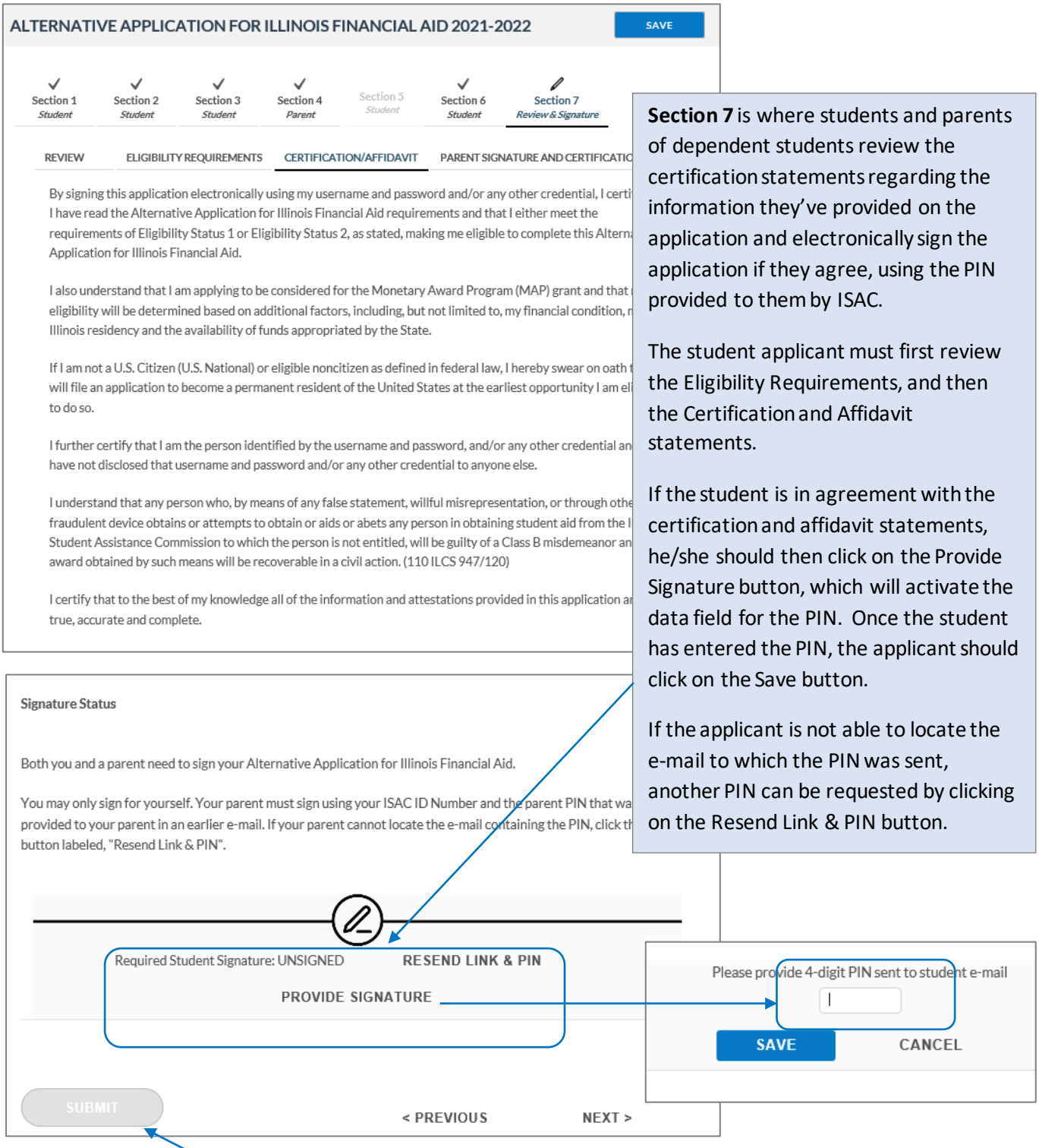
The list of schools that you can select from is the complete list of schools in Illinois that are approved to participate in MAP.



Once all required sections and data fields have been completed on the application, you will have an opportunity to review the information before submitting it. You can navigate back to an appropriate section if a correction or update is needed at this point.

Clicking on the print icon, will open a summary of your application in a pdf for printing. Applicants are encouraged to print a copy of their application summary for future reference.

SIGNING AND SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION



Section 7 is where students and parents of dependent students review the certification statements regarding the information they've provided on the application and electronically sign the application if they agree, using the PIN provided to them by ISAC.

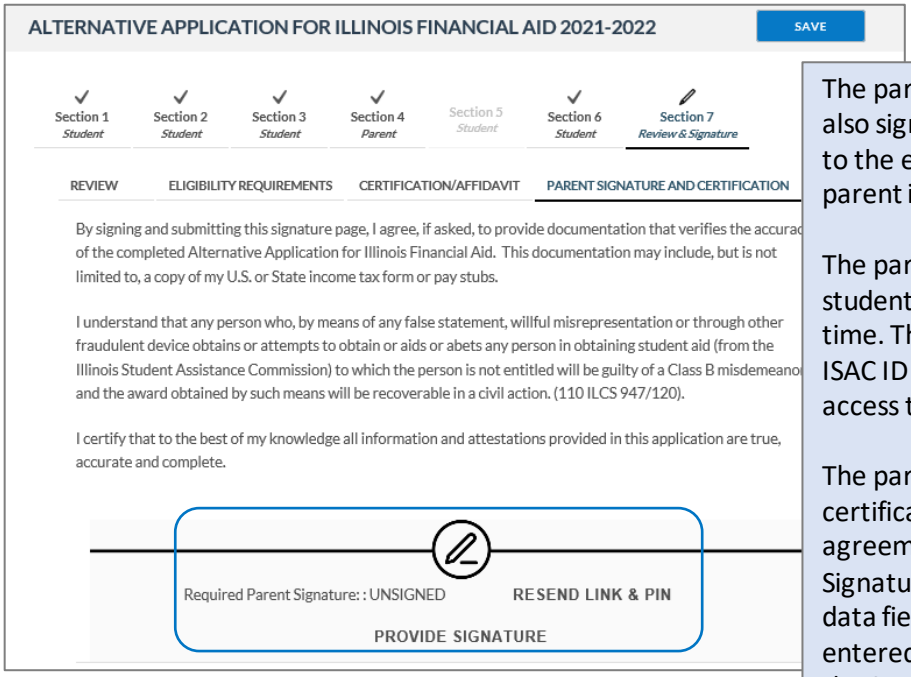
The student applicant must first review the Eligibility Requirements, and then the Certification and Affidavit statements.

If the student is in agreement with the certification and affidavit statements, he/she should then click on the Provide Signature button, which will activate the data field for the PIN. Once the student has entered the PIN, the applicant should click on the Save button.

If the applicant is not able to locate the e-mail to which the PIN was sent, another PIN can be requested by clicking on the Resend Link & PIN button.

The "Submit" button will remain grayed out until a parent signature is provided, if required. If a parent signature is not required, the applicant should click on the activated "Submit" button and that will complete the application process.

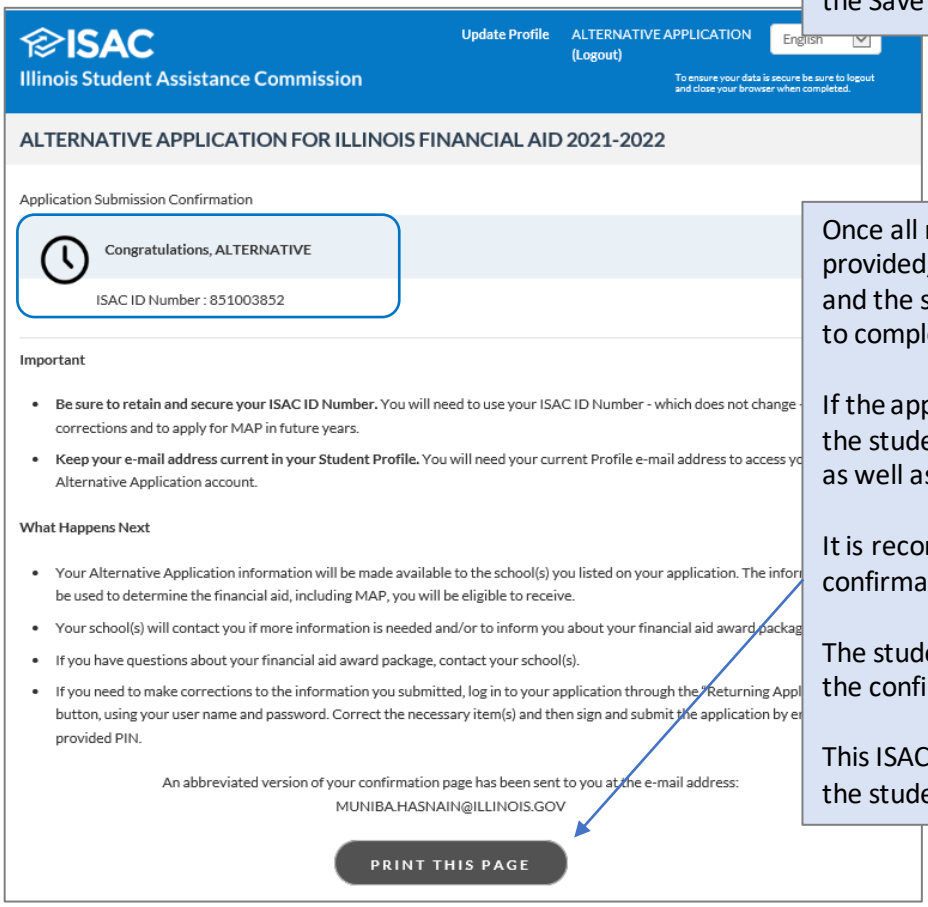
SIGNING AND SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION



The parent (for dependent applicants) must also sign the application using the PIN sent to the e-mail address provided for the parent in Section 4 of the application.

The parent may sign at the same time as the student, or the parent may log in at a later time. The parent will need the student's ISAC ID Number, and the parent PIN to access the application.

The parent will be provided with a certification statement to review, and if in agreement, must then click the Provide Signature button, which will activate the data field for the PIN. Once the parent has entered the PIN, he or she should click on the Save button.



Once all required signatures have been provided, the Submit button will be activated and the student can submit the application to complete the process.

If the application is successfully submitted, the student will receive a confirmation page, as well as an e-mail.

It is recommended that the student print the confirmation page for their records.

The student's ISAC ID Number is provided on the confirmation for future reference.

This ISAC ID Number will stay the same for the student for each award year.

8/26/2021

This e-mail confirms that your 2021-2022 Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid - used to apply for the Monetary Award Program (MAP), a
(ISAC) - was successfully submitted.

Application Receipt Date: 09/17/2020

Schools listed on your application:

MAKING CORRECTIONS TO THE APPLICATION

What kinds of changes can I make to my Alternative Application once it's been processed?

Generally, you should not update information that was correct as of the date you signed and submitted your initial Alternative Application because it is considered to be a "snapshot" of the family's financial situation as of that date. For example, if you spent some of your savings after filing the application, you should not update your information to show a change in that amount.

Correcting or updating information on your Alternative Application can have an impact on your eligibility and your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). If there will be a significant change in your or your parent's income since you submitted your initial application or if your family has other circumstances that cannot be reported on the application, it is recommended that you speak to the financial aid office at the school you plan to attend before making multiple and/or significant changes to your application. Following are general guidelines for making corrections and updates.

Corrections: If You Made a Mistake

If you made a mistake in what you reported on the Alternative Application, you'll need to make a correction.

Updates: If Your Situation Has Changed

You may update your mailing address, email address, and other contact information if it has changed.

There are certain items that you must update:

- You must update anything that changes your dependency status, except a change in your marital status. If your marital status changes, contact your financial aid office to determine if you should update the application.
- If (and only if) you are selected for verification by your school, you must update your application if there is a change in the number of family members in your parents' household or in your household.
- If (and only if) you are selected for verification by your school, you must update your application if there is a change in the number of people in your parents' household who are in college or the number of people in your household who are in college.

Changes to School Choices: If You Want to Add or Delete a School

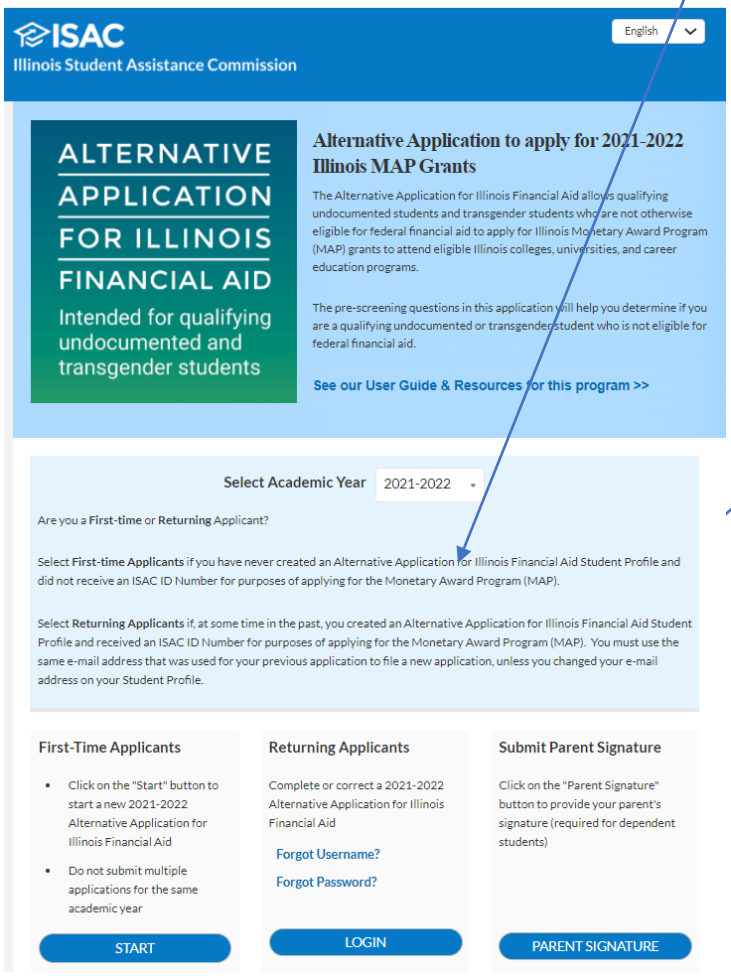
If you want to make your Alternative Application information available to an additional school after filing the application, you may add another school choice. However, no more than 10 schools may be listed on your application at one time. If you have already made 10 school choices, you will need to replace one of the choices with the new school. The school removed from the list will not have access to any new information you provide after you've removed that school.

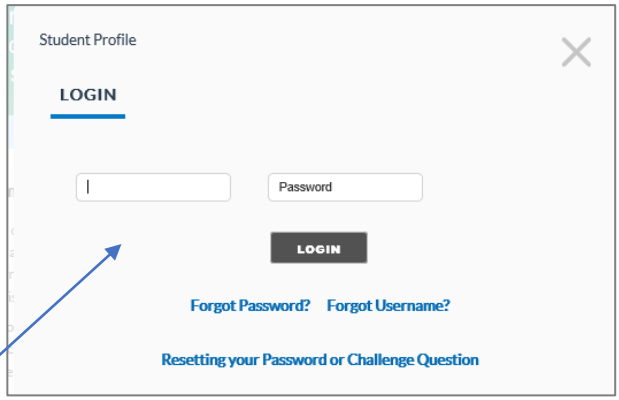
How do I make changes to my Alternative Application?

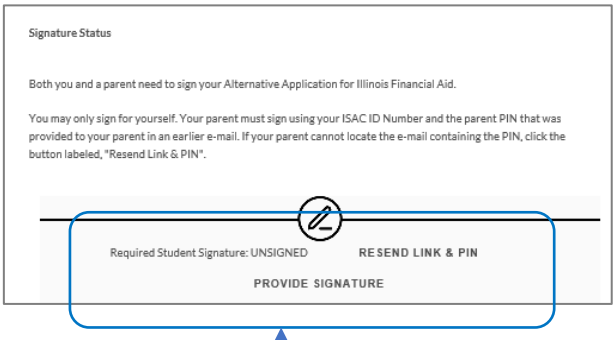
- Navigate to the Alternative Application home page and log in as a Returning Applicant.
    - Use the username (e-mail address) and password you provided when you created your Student Profile.
- Correct/update your information.
- Sign and submit your new information by providing your PIN on the signature page. If parent data was changed, your parent will also need to sign the application.
    - Use the same PIN provided to you for your initial application, or request a new PIN if you are unable to locate your original PIN.

MAKING CORRECTIONS TO THE APPLICATION

To correct your application, you will need to login as a **Returning Applicant** using the username (e-mail address) and password you provided when you created your Student Profile to complete your initial application.







All corrections, including changing or adding school choices, will require you to re-sign the application in order to confirm your changes and submit them for corrections.

If changes are made to parent data, then the parent will need to re-sign the application as well, following the same process used when they initially signed the application.

Both the student and the parent should use the same PIN provided to them in the initial application process. However, if you are unable to locate your PIN, you may request a new one on the signature page of the application and it will be sent to the e-mail address provided on your application.

Each time you make a correction or update to your application, it will generate a new student record at the school(s) listed on your application and could possibly result in a new EFC and/or impact your eligibility for MAP.

The colleges you have listed on your application will have access to the new information, and you will receive an e-mail from ISAC confirming that your corrections have been processed.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

About the RISE Act and the Application Process

What does RISE stand for and what's the purpose of the legislation?

The Retention of Illinois Students and Equity (RISE) Act provides the opportunity for a student attending college in Illinois who is deemed an Illinois resident for tuition purposes and is not otherwise eligible to receive federal financial aid to apply and receive consideration for state financial aid.

For residency under the RISE Act provisions, do the 3 years have to be consecutive?

No. The requirement that an applicant attended a school in Illinois for three years prior to high school graduation does not have to happen consecutively, but the three years must have been prior to high school graduation.

Is the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid available to print and mail in?

No. A paper application is not available. The application must be completed online and signed electronically.

Can I use my cell phone to complete and submit the Alternative Application?

No. You cannot use a mobile device with the Alternative Application. The application is not mobile-friendly.

Is the information that I provide when I apply through the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid being kept secure and protected?

The information collected on the pre-screening questions will be retained by ISAC and kept private according to the agency's privacy policies. The application data that is used to calculate the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and the eligible award amount for the MAP grant will be retained by ISAC and will be shared with the colleges you select on the application through ISAC's secure portal that colleges use to administer ISAC programs. ISAC respects your right to privacy and is committed to ensuring that your personal, professional and financial information is secure.

ISAC has taken numerous steps to help safeguard the integrity of our communications and computing infrastructure, including but not limited to authentication, monitoring, auditing, and encryption. Security measures have been integrated into the design, implementation and day-to-day practices of the entire ISAC operating environment as part of our continuing commitment to risk management.

About Eligibility

The criteria to complete the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid says that I had to have graduated from high school to be eligible to complete it, so if I'm currently a senior in high school, does that mean I have to wait until after I actually graduate to complete the application?

If you are currently a high school senior, you do not have to wait until after you have graduated from high school to complete the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid. If you are currently a high school senior, waiting until after you graduate to complete the application could impact your ability to receive limited MAP funds, so you are encouraged to complete the application as soon as possible after it becomes available in the academic year that you will graduate from high school.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

About Eligibility

Can any undocumented student apply using the new Alternative Application?

A state eligible noncitizen student may be eligible to apply for ISAC gift assistance programs under the RISE Act provisions if they are: "any person who is deemed an Illinois resident for tuition purposes under state law." To qualify, an applicant must meet all the criteria, which are based on Illinois statute regarding in-state tuition eligibility:

- the individual resided with his or her parent or guardian while attending an Illinois public or private high school;
- the individual graduated from a public or private high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma in Illinois;
- the individual attended school in Illinois for at least 3 years as of the date the individual graduated from high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma;
- the individual provides an affidavit stating that the individual will file an application to become a permanent resident of the United States at the earliest opportunity the individual is eligible to do so; and
- the individual has not established a residence outside of Illinois.

I am a DACA student. Can I apply for state aid using the RISE App?

Yes. If you meet the criteria specified by the RISE Act, you may be eligible to apply for state financial aid.

What's the definition of parent?

For purposes of the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid, the definition of "parent" is the same as the one used by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®), which is: a biological or adoptive parent or a person determined by the state to be a parent (for example, if the parent is listed on the birth certificate). If one of your parents is widowed or divorced and has remarried, answer the questions about that parent and your stepparent. Grandparents, foster parents, legal guardians, widowed stepparents, aunts, uncles, and siblings are not considered parents on the Alternative Application unless they have legally adopted you.

Would I be disqualified from being eligible for the MAP grant if my parents are not U.S. Citizens?

No, your parents do not have to be U.S. citizens in order for you to qualify to apply for MAP. If you are eligible to apply for MAP through either the FAFSA or the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid and your parents do not have Social Security Numbers, they should enter all zeroes in the SSN fields on either application.

Are undocumented parents subject to different Illinois residency rules and are they required to provide different types of documentation than documented parents?

No, once you have applied for MAP through either the FAFSA or the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid, you are subject to the same MAP eligibility requirements, including Illinois residency rules.

If I've already met the criteria to complete the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid, but my parents moved out of state at some point during or after my senior year, will I lose my eligibility for state financial aid?

The RISE Act defines the eligibility criteria that you must meet to qualify to complete the Alternative Application. However, you must also meet the eligibility criteria for ISAC's financial aid programs, including the Illinois residency requirement. For a dependent student to be considered an Illinois resident and be eligible to receive MAP, the parent of the dependent student who is required to complete the Alternative Application must physically reside in Illinois and Illinois must be his/her true, fixed, and permanent home.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

About Completing the Application

Should I start the Alternative Application even if I know I will not be able to provide my parents' information?

If you are unable to obtain your parents' information, complete as much of the application as you can, submit it to ISAC, and then contact your college's financial aid office as soon as possible. The financial aid office will evaluate your situation and let you know, if, based on their school policies, they can override the need for parent information. You will likely need to provide additional information to the college to help the financial aid office better understand your special circumstance and make a determination regarding your dependency status. ISAC does not have the authority to override dependency or financial information; that must be done by the college and they must have sufficient information to document the situation and make their decision.

If I update my e-mail address on Section 1 of my Alternative Application, will the e-mail address on my Student Profile be automatically updated?

No. If you update your e-mail address on Section 1 of the Alternative Application, the e-mail address you provided when creating your Student Profile is not automatically updated.

The e-mail address you provide when creating your Student Profile is pre-populated on the application. If you change or update the pre-populated e-mail address on the application, you will still need to use the Student Profile e-mail address to log in to the application.

If you update your e-mail address on your application, ISAC recommends that you also update the e-mail address on your Student Profile. While not required, it may help avoid confusion should you need to log back in to the application at a later time, and it will ensure that all communication about your application is directed to the same e-mail address.

The e-mail address that is provided in Section 1 of the Alternative Application is the e-mail address that your Personal Identification Number (PIN) will be sent to, is the e-mail address the college will see on your application record, and is the e-mail address that ISAC may use to communicate with you in the future.

When creating your Student Profile and completing the application, you are encouraged to use a personal e-mail address (such as gmail, yahoo, or hotmail) rather than a school provided e-mail address that could potentially change if you change schools.

How do I provide the affidavit that is part of the RISE Act eligibility criteria to ISAC or the college I plan to attend?

Before signing and submitting the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid, you, as the student applicant, will be presented with several statements to review, and if in agreement, you may proceed by selecting the option to provide an electronic signature. The Certification/Affidavit statement is included on the student signature page, and ISAC will retain the signature and certification information. A student applicant does not need to provide a separate affidavit to the college to apply for state financial aid.

Do I need to file my taxes to complete the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid?

The application for the 2021-22 award year collects information about income earned in 2019. If you filed your 2019 taxes, you should use information from your 2019 tax forms to complete the income sections of the application. If you were not required to file taxes or have not filed yet, you can use other records of income earned such as W-2s, income statements, or records of money earned. If you have questions about whether or not you are required to file taxes, visit the Internal Revenue Service website at irs.gov for more information, or consult with an accountant or tax specialist.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

About Completing the Application

I am having trouble updating/making a correction to the Alternative Application should I submit another application?

No. For additional assistance please contact ISAC's Student Services Call Center at 800.899.4722 or your ISACorps Member.

What if my parent does not have an e-mail address? Can parents and students use the same email on the application (to receive PINs)?

No, the student and parent cannot use the same e-mail address on the application. Separate e-mail addresses are required for security reasons. Your parent will need to establish an e-mail address in order to receive the Personal Identification Number from ISAC that he or she will need to electronically sign the application.

About Signing and Submitting the Application

How do I know that my Alternative Application was submitted and complete?

Your application is considered complete when all required information, including signatures, have been provided, at which point the "Submit" button will be activated and you may submit the application to ISAC. If you are a dependent student, both your signature and your parent's signature must be provided to complete the application process. If your application was successfully submitted, you will receive a confirmation page, which you are encouraged to print, and you will also receive a confirmation e-mail.

Why do my parents and I need to have PIN numbers to complete this application?

A PIN is an electronic personal identification number that serves as an identifier to allow access to personal information and act as a digital signature. The PIN, as opposed to other forms of digital signature, does not require any physical form of identification such as a driver's license, and secures the information provided by the student and parent.

When is my application considered complete?

When all signatures have been provided. If you are a dependent student, both your signature and your parent's signature must be submitted.

How do I know if I am eligible for a MAP award and how do I check on the status of my award?

To check on your eligibility and the status of a MAP award, check with the financial aid office at your college.

Resources

- ISAC Resources for Non-Eligible, Noncitizens -- www.isac.org/resources-for-non-us-citizens/
- Illinois Association for College Admission Counseling (IACAC) – College Advising Guide for Undocumented Students -- www.iacac.org/undocumented/
- National Immigrant Justice Center -- www.immigrantjustice.org/
- Human Rights Campaign, Understanding the Transgender Community -- www.hrc.org/resources/understanding-the-transgender-community