USER GUIDE: COMPLETING THE 2027-28 ALTERNATIVE APPLICATION FOR ILLINOIS FINANCIAL AID

The Retention of Illinois Students & Equity (RISE) Act, which went into effect on January 1, 2020, allows students who are ineligible for federal financial aid, including undocumented students to apply for state financial aid if they meet certain eligibility criteria.

The Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid provides a pathway for students who meet the provisions of the RISE Act to apply for the Monetary Award Program.

The Alternative Application collects much of the same data as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) but is administered by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission.



The Alternative Application Process

Complete Prescreening Questions

- Questions will be presented to help determine if you are eligible to complete this application.
- You will be provided with guidance on which application to complete after answering the prescreening questions.
- Data collected in the prescreening questions will be retained by ISAC and will not be shared with colleges.

Full Alternative Application Process or Supplemental Application Process

- If the prescreening questions determine that you should proceed with this application, then you will be prompted to create an ISAC Student Profile.
- An email address, password and challenge question/answer will be required.
- After creating your profile, if you will complete the full Alternative Application process an ISAC Identification (ID) Number will be assigned to you.
- For the supplemental process, you will be asked questions about your Illinois high school/community college attendance. You will not complete the full application.

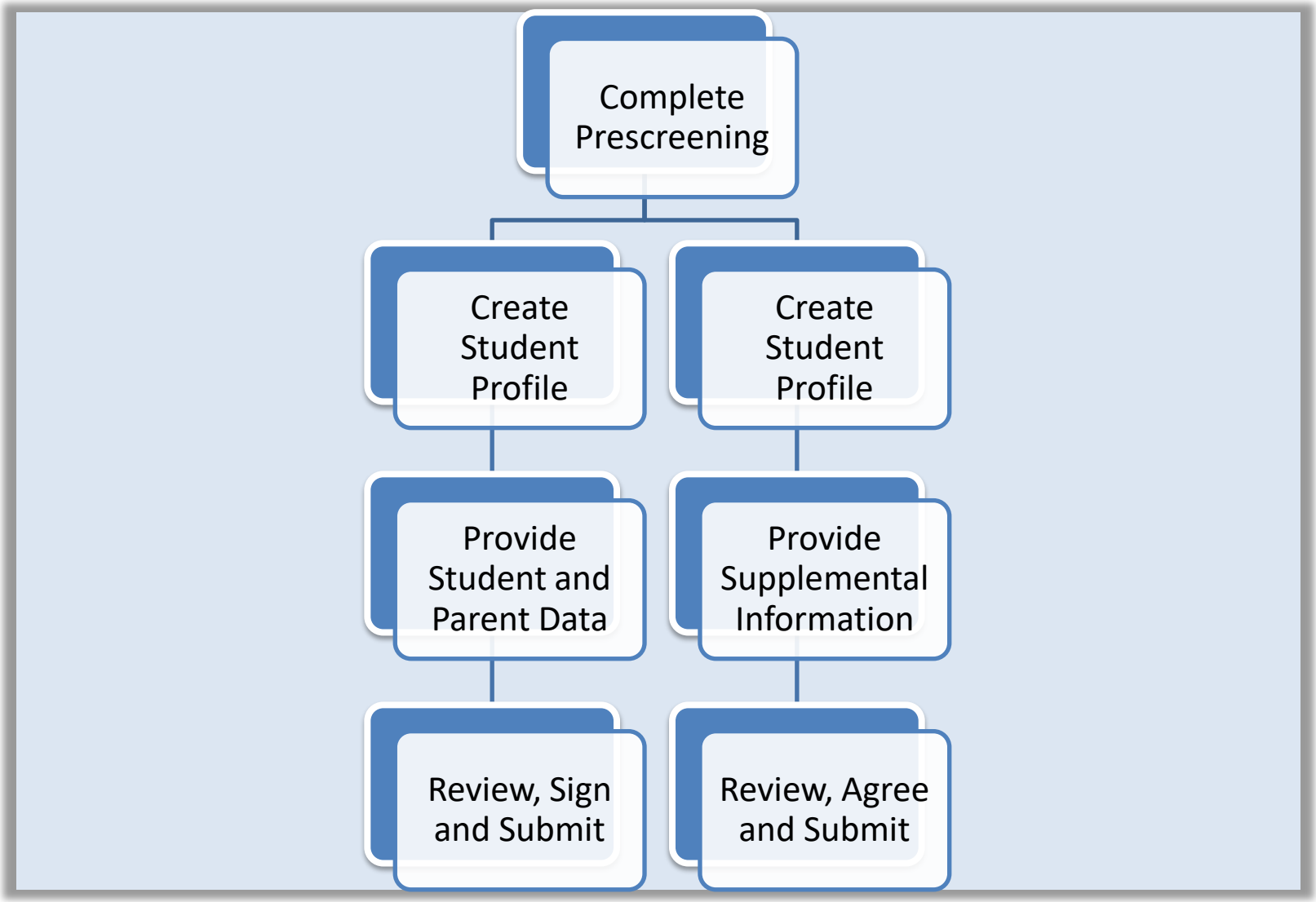
Full Application: Provide Student and Parent Data

- The full Alternative Application has seven sections in the application which collect demographic and financial information about the applicant and about the parent(s) for dependent students.
- Separate email addresses are required for the applicant and the parent so a Personal Identification Number (PIN) can be sent to each to electronically sign the application.
- For the 2027-28 award year application, both the student and parent(s) should provide 2025 tax and/or income information.

Full Application: Review, Sign, and Submit

- Messages will be sent to the email addresses provided in the application and each will contain the PIN number the student and parent will need to sign the application.
- Full Alternative Application students will be presented with an Eligibility and Certification/Affidavit statement which should be carefully reviewed. 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.

FULL ALTERNATIVE APPLICATION PROCESS OR SUPPLEMENTAL APPLICATION PROCESS



The prescreening questions will assist you in determining if you are eligible to complete the full Alternative Application process or a Supplementary Application process.

TIPS AND NOTES ABOUT COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FOR THOSE COMPLETING THE FULL ALTERNATIVE APPLICATION PROCESS

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 **what to expect for 2027-28**:

- The application is modeled after the 2027-28 FAFSA® and collects most of the same data, with a few important differences.
- Questions will not always follow the same order as they appear on the FAFSA®.
- Whenever possible, questions have been eliminated to simplify the application.
- Applicant data provided will be used to calculate a Student Aid Index (SAI) in the same manner as the FAFSA® form.
- Only one parent must electronically sign the Alternative Application for a dependent student, even when financial information is provided by more than one parent.
- Help text is provided in both English and Spanish.

Here is a **list of documentation needed** to complete the 2027-28 application:

- 2025 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 Illinois 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 email addresses that are provided on the application.
- The student and parent must provide two separate email addresses.
- The application is not considered complete and cannot be submitted until electronic signatures 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 an unusual circumstance (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.

TIPS AND NOTES ABOUT COMPLETING THE SUPPLEMENTAL APPLICATION

There is only one section of the application to complete:

- High School /Community College Information

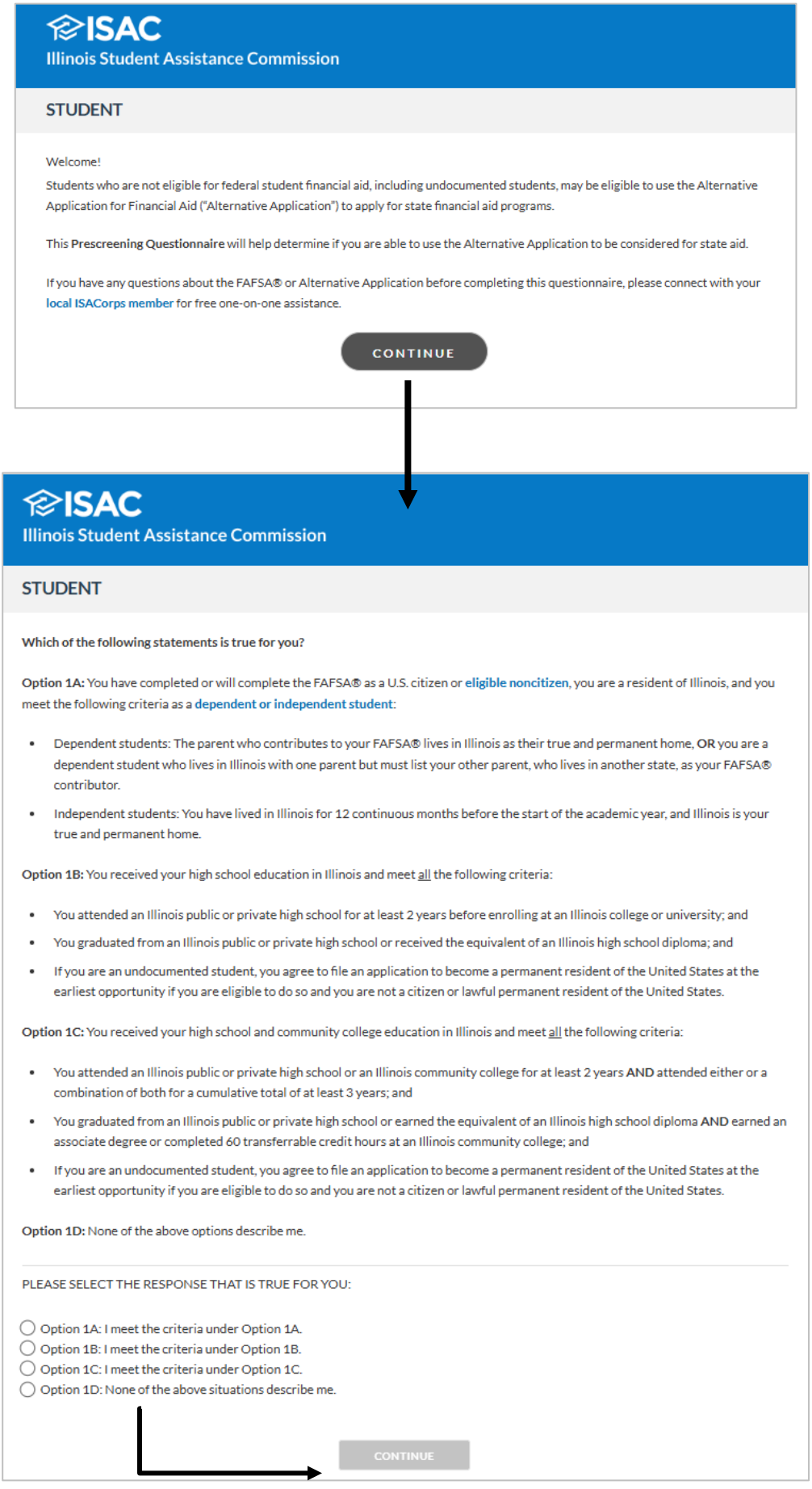
Here is what to expect for 2027-28:

- Since you have already completed a 2027-28 FAFSA® form, ISAC will not require any of your demographic information. The supplemental application provides ISAC with one additional key piece of information, your Illinois high school and/or community college attendance. Applicant data provided on your FAFSA® form will be used to calculate a Student Aid Index (SAI).

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.

PRESCREENING QUESTIONS



- The prescreening 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 full Alternative Application process, the supplemental process or the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®).

PRESCREENING QUESTIONS

PLEASE SELECT THE RESPONSE THAT IS TRUE FOR YOU:

- (●) Option 1A: I meet the criteria under Option 1A.
- ( ) Option 1B: I meet the criteria under Option 1B.
- ( ) Option 1C: I meet the criteria under Option 1C.
- ( ) Option 1D: None of the above situations describe me.

STUDENT

If you have completed the FAFSA® and are an Illinois resident, you will be considered for the Illinois Monetary Award Program (MAP) grant if you are eligible for an award. *There is nothing more that you need to do at this time*. The information gathered on your FAFSA® can also be used to determine financial need for other ISAC financial aid programs. Learn more about **ISAC Scholarship** and **ISAC Grant** programs.

If you have not completed the FAFSA® and are an Illinois resident, ISAC encourages you to complete the FAFSA® as soon as possible to be considered for state financial aid. You can **complete the FAFSA online**. Please make sure you apply for the correct award year. For help with financial aid planning, connect with your **local ISACorps member** for free one-on-one assistance.

PLEASE SELECT THE RESPONSE THAT IS TRUE FOR YOU:

- ( ) Option 1A: I meet the criteria under Option 1A.
- (●) Option 1B: I meet the criteria under Option 1B.
- ( ) Option 1C: I meet the criteria under Option 1C.
- ( ) Option 1D: None of the above situations describe me.

STUDENT

Which of the following statements is true for you?

Option 2A: I am a United States citizen, or I am an eligible noncitizen, which includes any one of the following:

1. U.S. National
2. Lawful or permanent resident with a Green Card
3. Have one of the following statuses from the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services:
    1. Refugee
    2. Asylum Granted
    3. Conditional Permanent Resident
    4. Cuban-Haitian Entrant
    5. Conditional Entrant (valid only if issued before April 1, 1980)
    6. Parolee (at least one year)
4. T-Visa Holder
5. Battered Immigrant Qualified
6. Citizen of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, or the Republic of Palau

Option 2B: I currently hold a temporary non-Immigrant visa or status which includes any one of the following:

1. A NATO visa
2. An A-1, A-2, or A-3 (foreign officials and attendants) visa holder;
3. A B-1 or B-2 visitor visa
4. A H or L series (temporary employment) visa
5. A U-Visa
6. An F-1, F-2, or M-1 nonimmigrant student visa, or a J-1 or J-2 nonimmigrant Exchange Visitor visa
7. A G series visa (pertaining to international organizations)

Option 2C: None of the above options describe me.

PLEASE SELECT THE RESPONSE THAT IS TRUE FOR YOU:

- ( ) Option 2A: I meet the criteria under Option 2A.
- ( ) Option 2B: I meet the criteria under Option 2B.
- ( ) Option 2C: None of the above situations describe me.

PLEASE SELECT THE RESPONSE THAT IS TRUE FOR YOU:

- ( ) Option 1A: I meet the criteria under Option 1A.
- ( ) Option 1B: I meet the criteria under Option 1B.
- (●) Option 1C: I meet the criteria under Option 1C.
- ( ) Option 1D: None of the above situations describe me.

Which of the following statements is true for you?

Option 2A: I am a United States citizen, or I am an eligible noncitizen, which includes any one of the following:

1. U.S. National
2. Lawful or permanent resident with a Green Card
3. Have one of the following statuses from the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services:
    1. Refugee
    2. Asylum Granted
    3. Conditional Permanent Resident
    4. Cuban-Haitian Entrant
    5. Conditional Entrant (valid only if issued before April 1, 1980)
    6. Parolee (at least one year)
4. T-Visa Holder
5. Battered Immigrant Qualified
6. Citizen of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, or the Republic of Palau

Option 2B: I currently hold a temporary non-Immigrant visa or status which includes any one of the following:

1. A NATO visa
2. An A-1, A-2, or A-3 (foreign officials and attendants) visa holder;
3. A B-1 or B-2 visitor visa
4. A H or L series (temporary employment) visa
5. An F-1, F-2, or M-1 nonimmigrant student visa, or a J-1 or J-2 nonimmigrant Exchange Visitor visa
6. A G series visa (pertaining to international organizations)

Option 2C: None of the above options describe me.

PLEASE SELECT THE RESPONSE THAT IS TRUE FOR YOU:

- ( ) Option 2A: I meet the criteria under Option 2A.
- ( ) Option 2B: I meet the criteria under Option 2B.
- ( ) Option 2C: None of the above situations describe me.

PLEASE SELECT THE RESPONSE THAT IS TRUE FOR YOU:

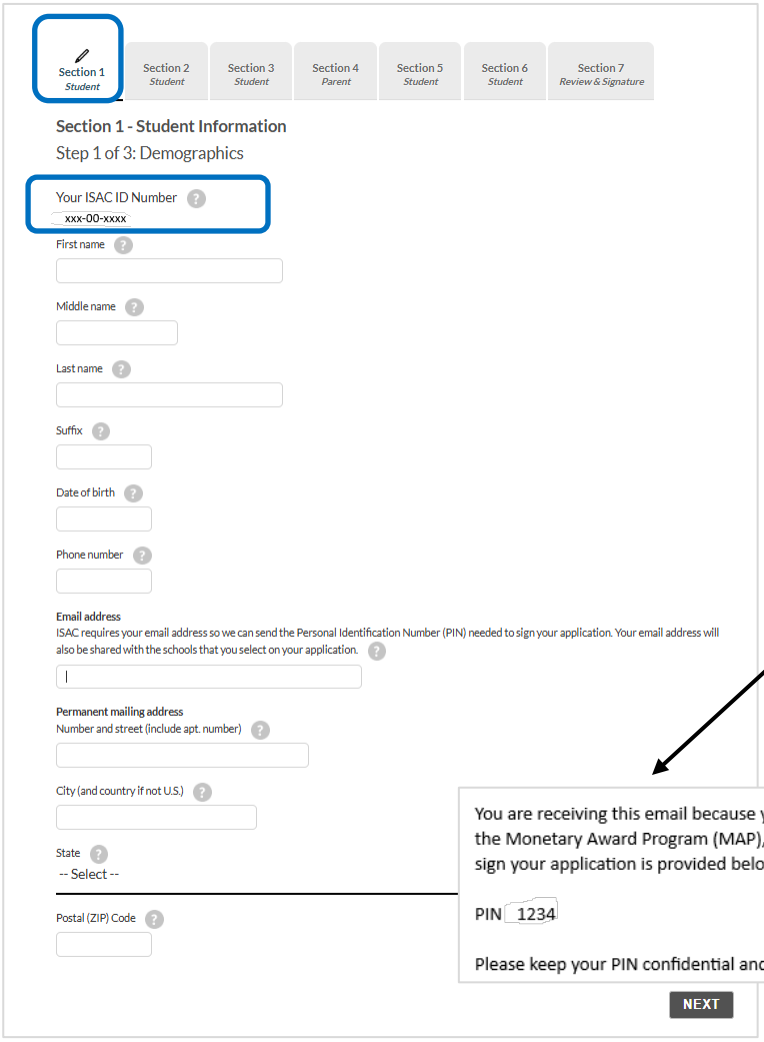
- ( ) Option 1A: I meet the criteria under Option 1A.
- ( ) Option 1B: I meet the criteria under Option 1B.
- ( ) Option 1C: I meet the criteria under Option 1C.
- (●) Option 1D: None of the above situations describe me.

STUDENT

You are not eligible to be considered for Illinois state aid through ISAC. However, many agencies, associations, and organizations (for example, corporations, civic, religious, and philanthropic groups, and associations connected with your field of interest) provide dollars for college students. Some resources you may wish to review for scholarships and financial aid include **Appily**, **Big Future**, **Peterson's**, **Scholarships**, or **Unigo**.

- If you are not eligible to complete the Alternative Application, you will be prompted to complete the FAFSA® or review other options.

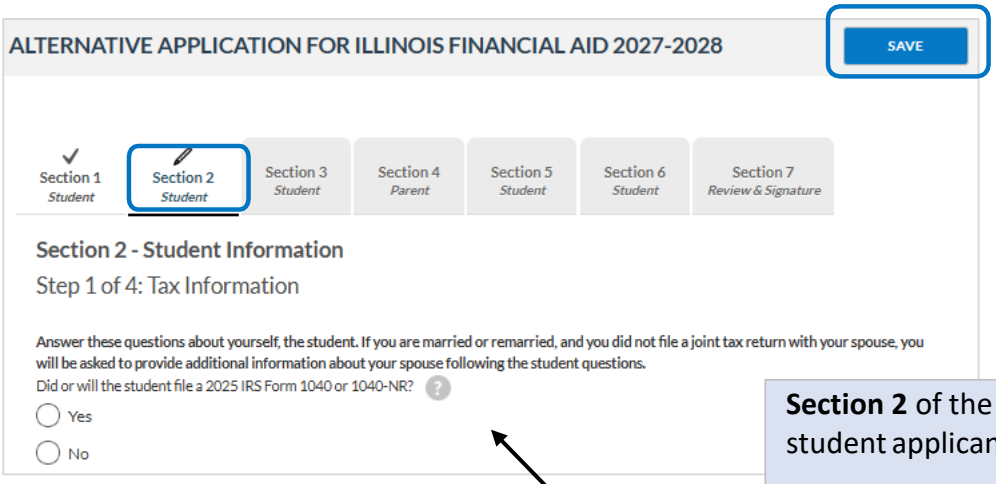
STUDENT SECTIONS FOR FULL ALTERNATIVE APPLICATION PROCESS



Once all questions have been answered, select the Next button at the bottom of the screen to navigate to the next page. Red messaging will indicate if you have not provided information for a required field, and you won't be able to proceed until all required information has been entered.

The email field is pre-populated with the email address provided when creating your Student Profile. Once the Next button is selected on this screen, an email with the student's Personal Identification Number (PIN) will be sent to the applicant.

Section 1 of the application collects demographic information about the student, such as name, date of birth, high school name, etc., and provides your ISAC ID number at the top of the page. Complete all fields as accurately as possible.

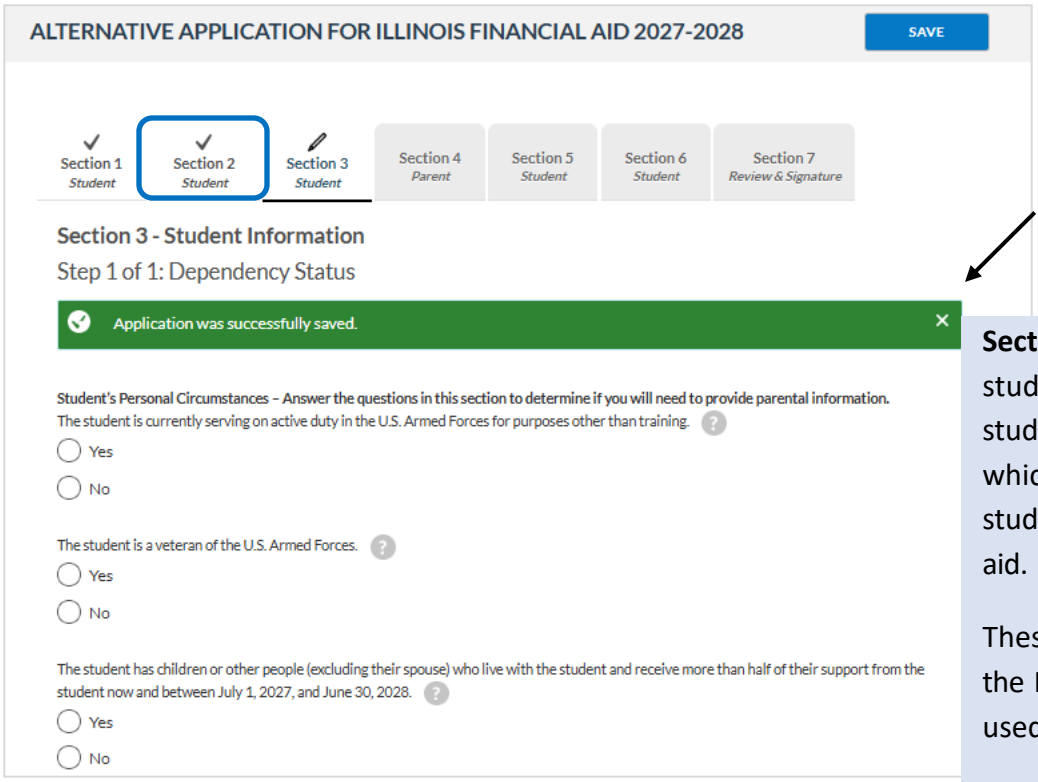


Section 2 of the application collects information about the student applicant's income and assets.

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 FOR FULL ALTERNATIVE APPLICATION PROCESS

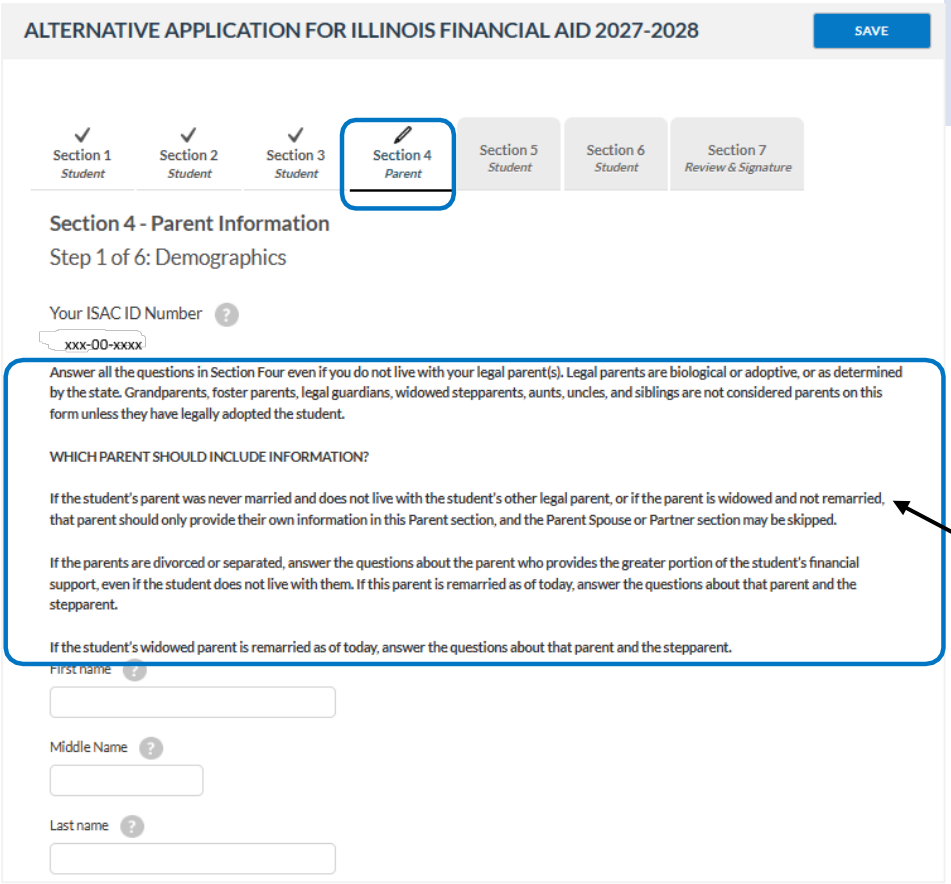


Data is automatically saved each time you navigate to a new section. You may also use the Save button at the top of the page. A message will appear in a green notification bar when data has been successfully saved.

Section 3 asks 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 asked on the FAFSA®, and the definitions for terms used in these questions are also the same.

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.



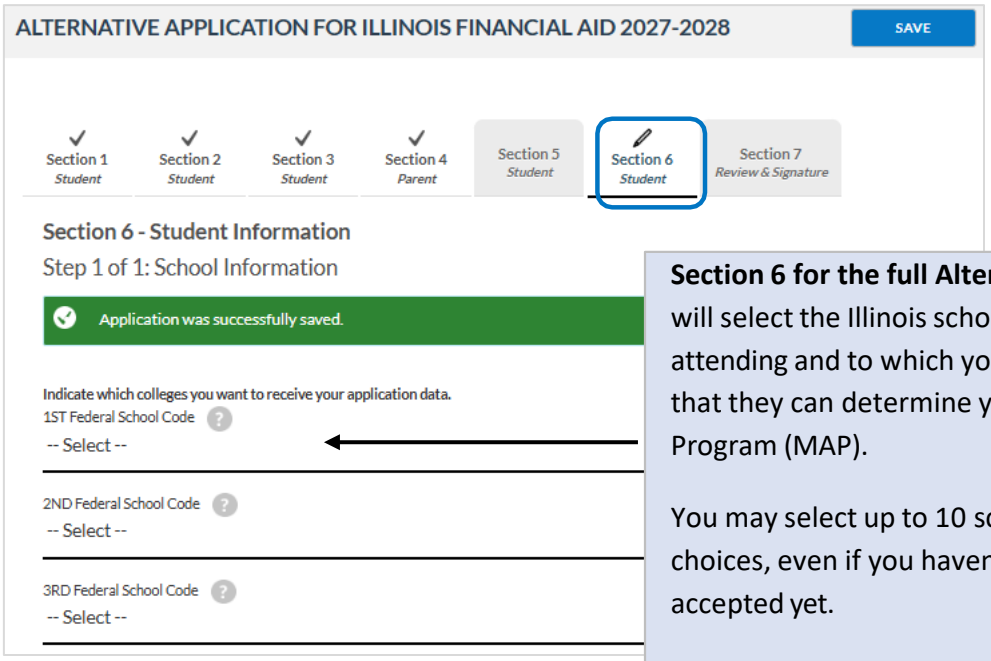
Section 4 is for parental data that is needed for dependent students. It collects demographic and financial information about the parent.

The definition of a legal parent is provided in this section, and additional guidance is now provided at the beginning of section 4 as well.

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

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

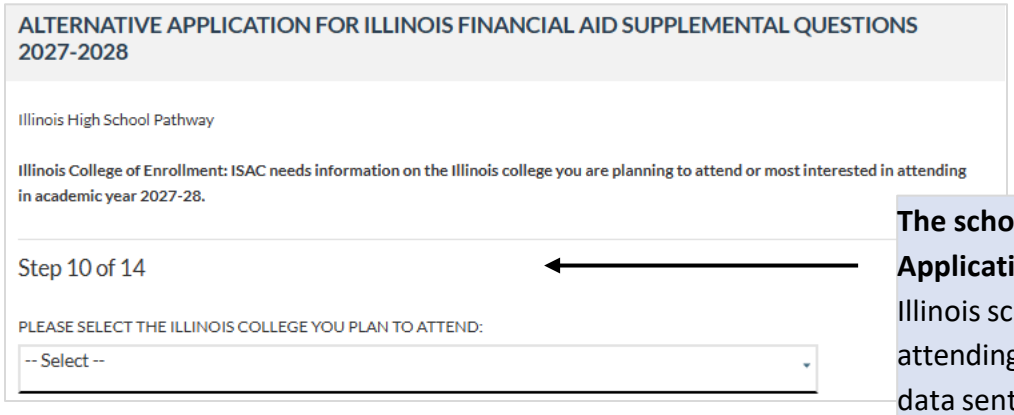
SCHOOL INFORMATION AND FULL AND SUPPLEMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS



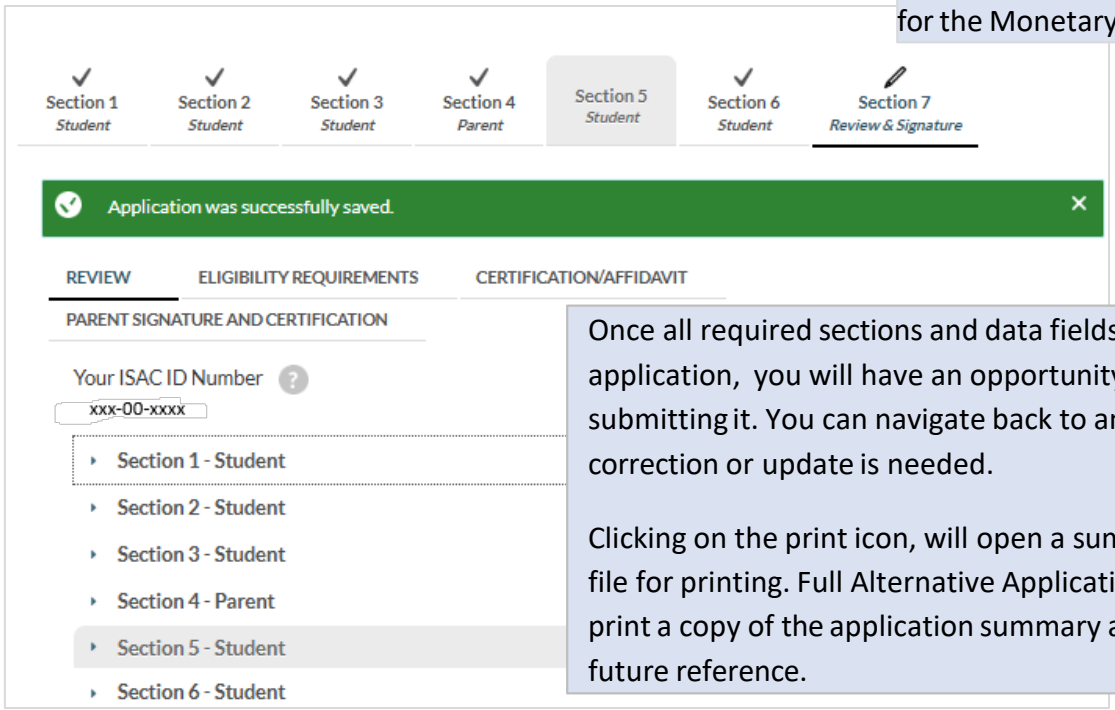
Section 6 for the full Alternative Application process is where you will select the Illinois schools that you are most interested in attending and to which you would like your financial data sent so that they can determine your eligibility for the Monetary Award Program (MAP).

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.

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



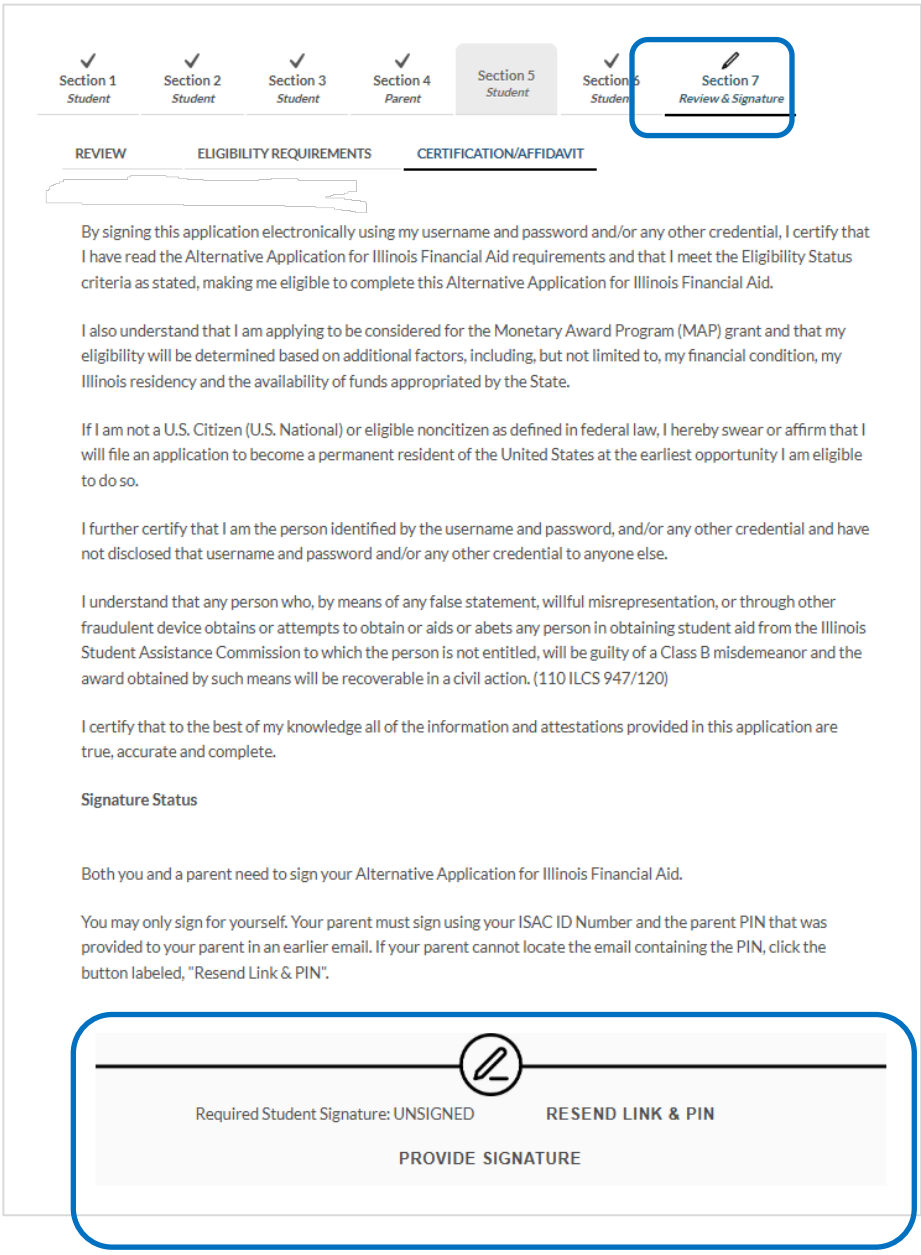
The school section for the Supplemental Application process is where you will select the Illinois school that you are most interested in attending and to which you would like your financial data sent so that they can determine your eligibility for the Monetary Award Program (MAP).



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.

Clicking on the print icon, will open a summary of your application in a PDF file for printing. Full Alternative Application students are encouraged to print a copy of the application summary and note their ISAC ID number for future reference.

SIGNING AND SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION FOR FULL ALTERNATIVE APPLICATION PROCESS

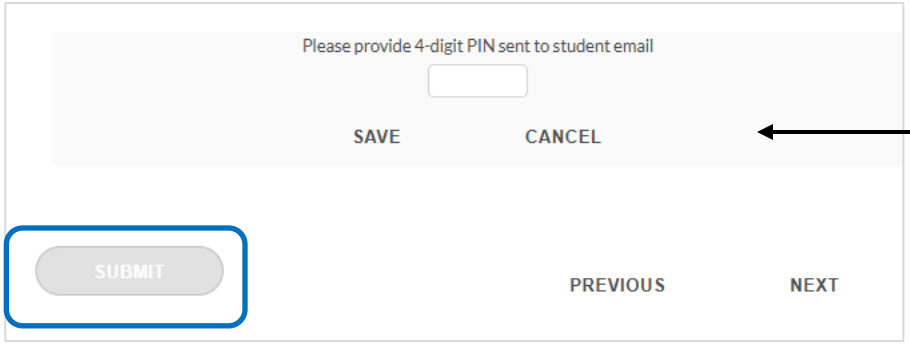


Section 7 is where students and parents of dependent students review the certification statements regarding the information they've provided on the application and electronically sign the application if they agree, using the PIN provided to them by ISAC.

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

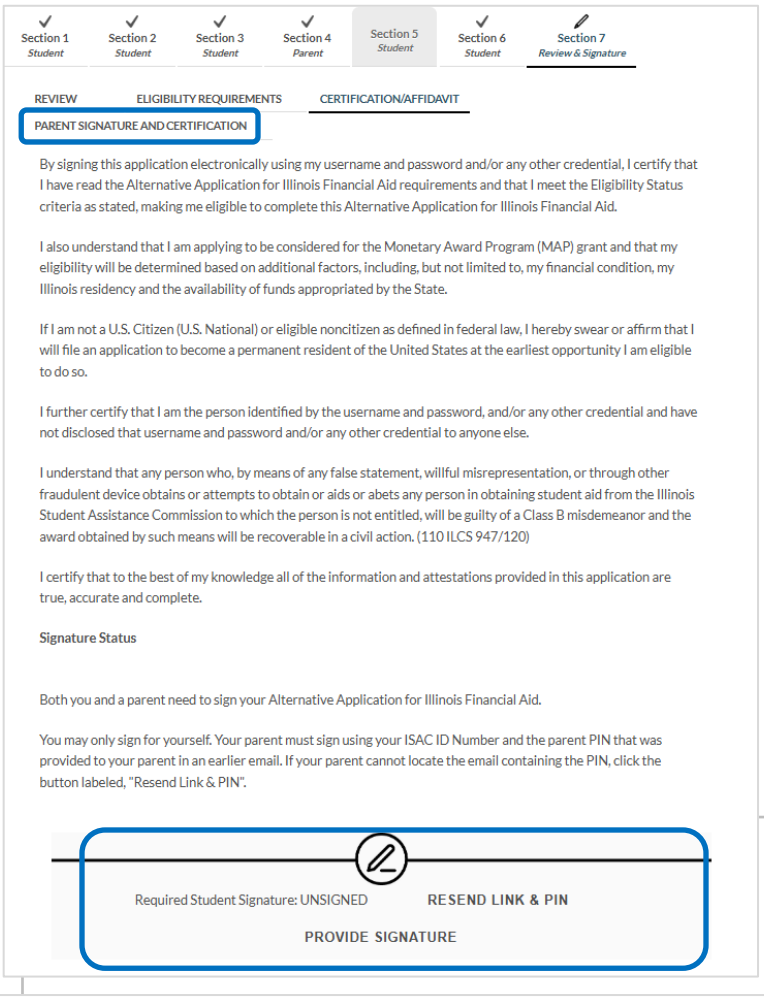
If the student applicant is in agreement with the certification and affidavit statements, the student applicant should click on the Provide Signature button, which will activate the data field for the PIN. Once the student applicant has entered the PIN, the student applicant should click on the Save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

If the applicant is not able to locate the email 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.

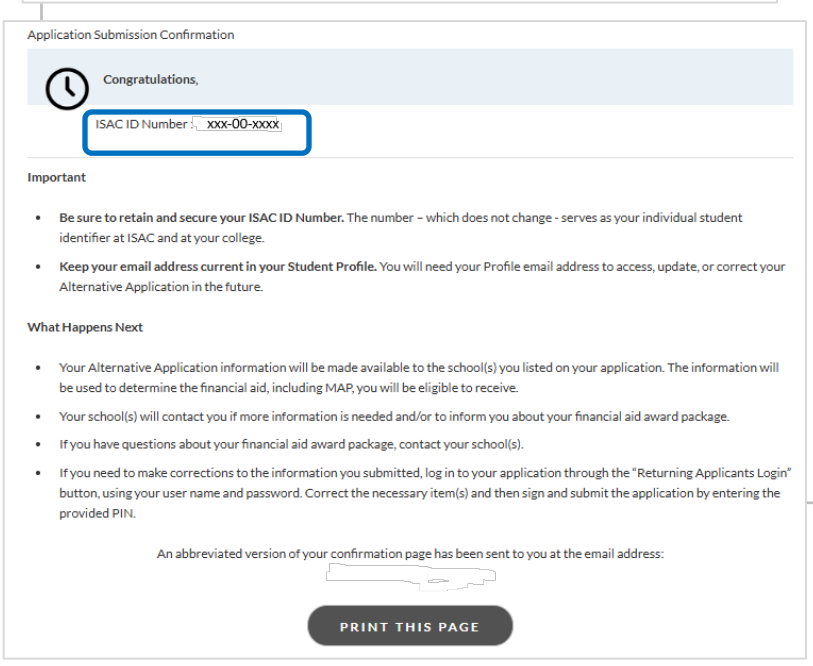
SIGNING AND SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION FOR THE FULL ALTERNATIVE APPLICATION PROCESS



The parent (for dependent applicants) must also sign the application using the PIN sent to the email 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, the parent should click on the Save button.



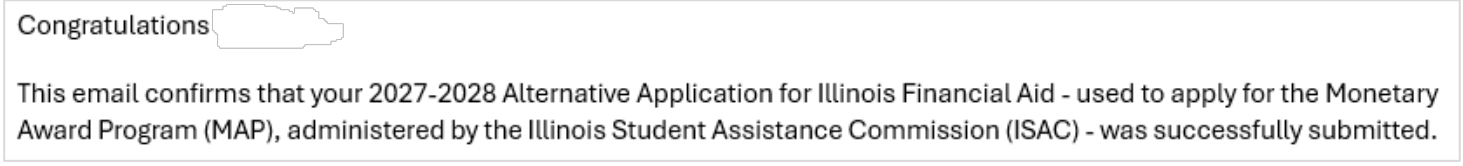
Once all required signatures have been provided, the Submit button will be activated and the student can submit the application to complete the process.

If the application is successfully submitted, the student will receive a confirmation page, as well as an email from ISAC.

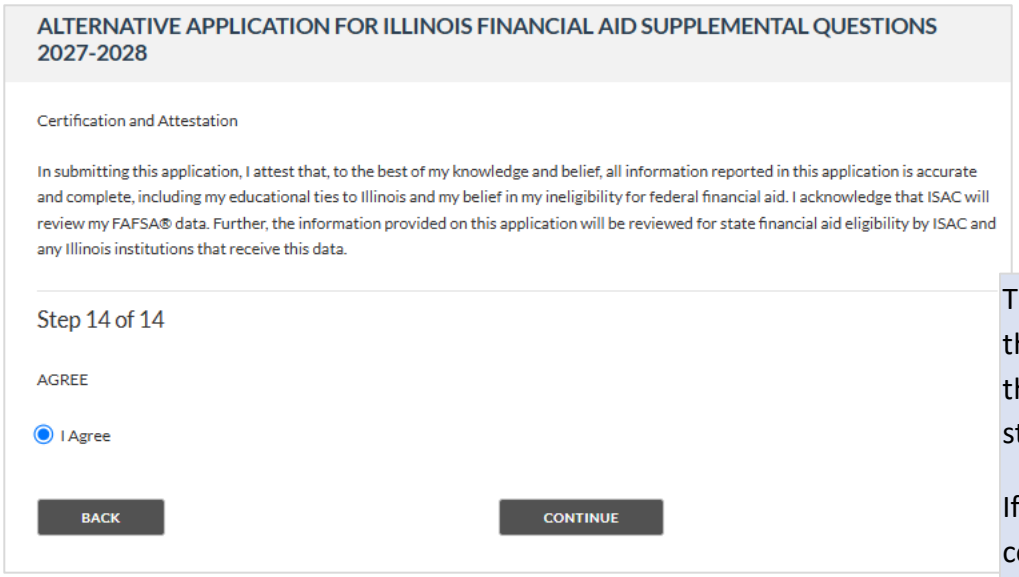
It is recommended that the student print the confirmation page for their records.

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.



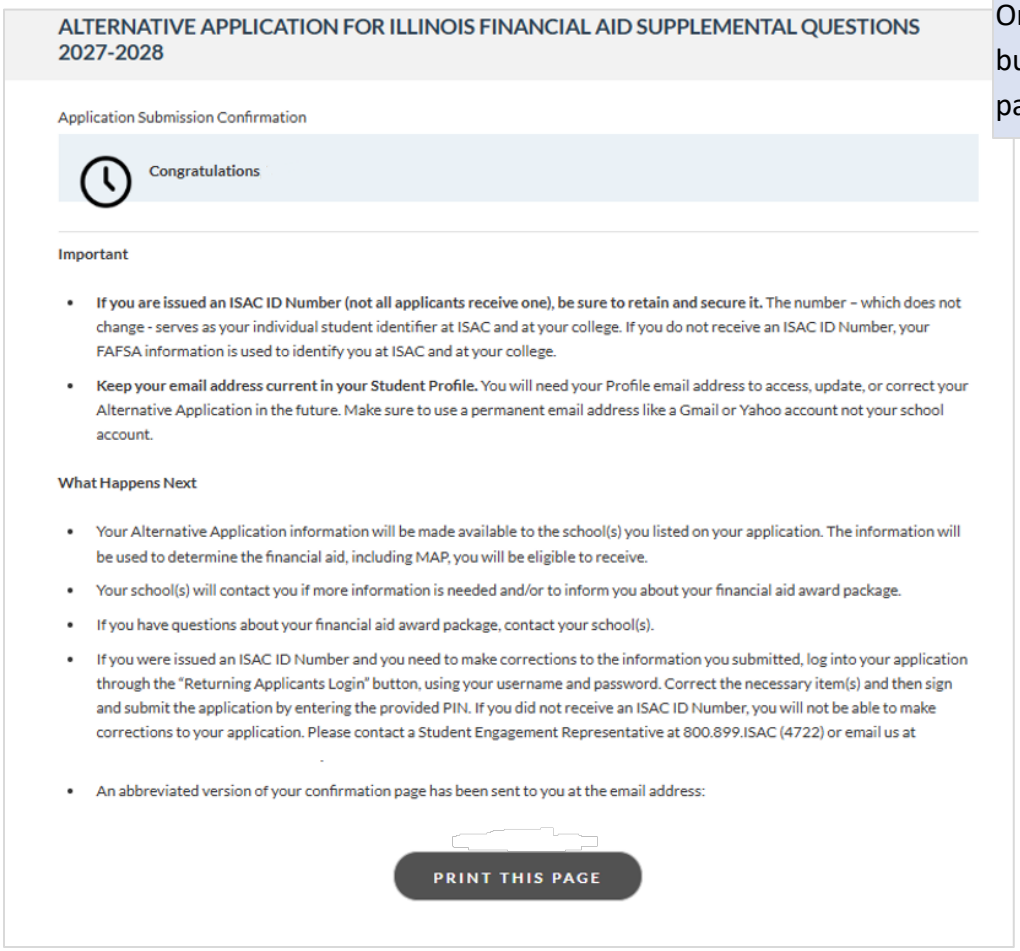
SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION FOR SUPPLEMENTAL APPLICATION PROCESS



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

If the student is in agreement with the certification and attestation statements, the applicant should click, “I Agree” and choose the “Continue” button.

Once the student selects the “Continue” button, they will get the confirmation page.



MAKING CORRECTIONS TO THE APPLICATION FOR FULL ALTERNATIVE APPLICATION PROCESS

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 submitting 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 Student Aid Index (SAI). 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 will 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.

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?

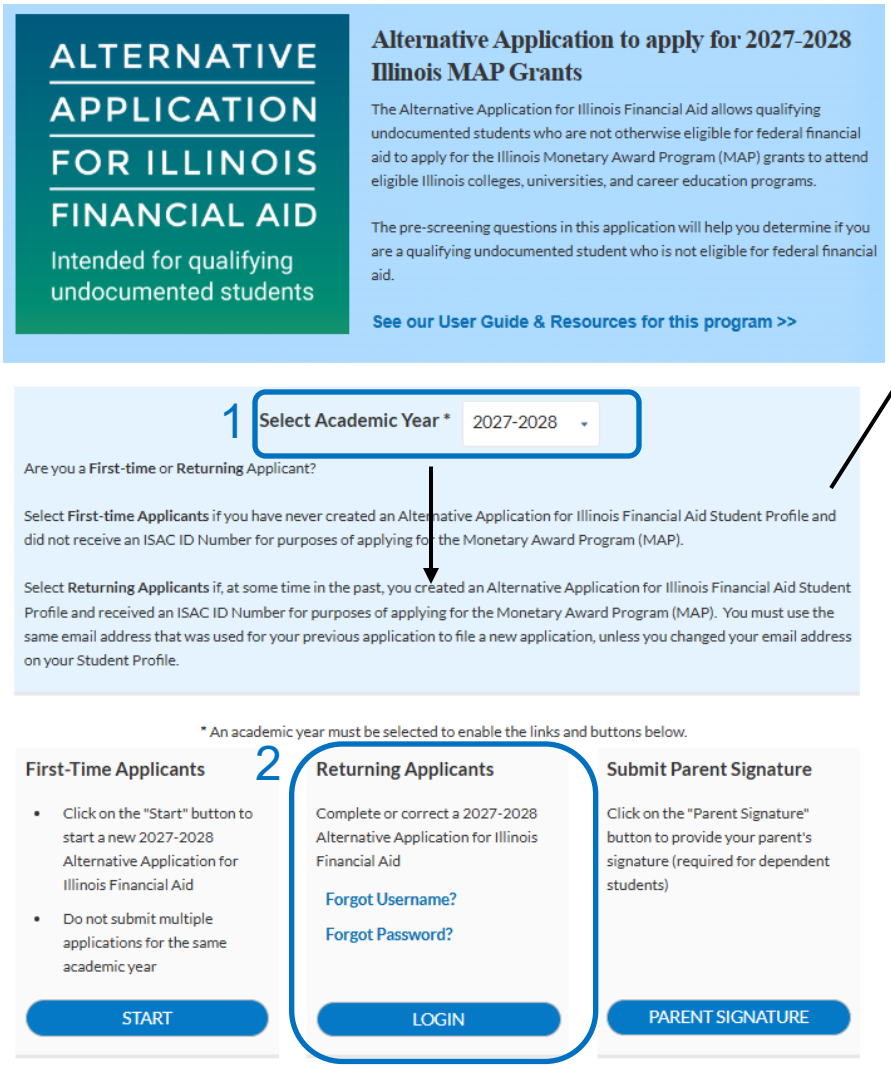
- Navigate to the Alternative Application home page and log in as a Returning Applicant.
  - Use the username (email address) and password you provided when you created your Student Profile.
- Correct/update your information.
- Sign and submit your new information by providing your PIN on the signature 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.

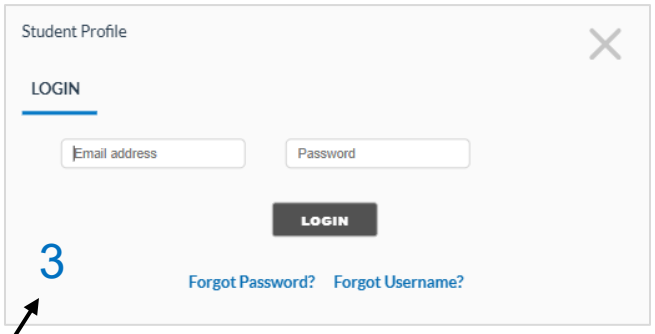
MAKING CORRECTIONS TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL APPLICATION PROCESS

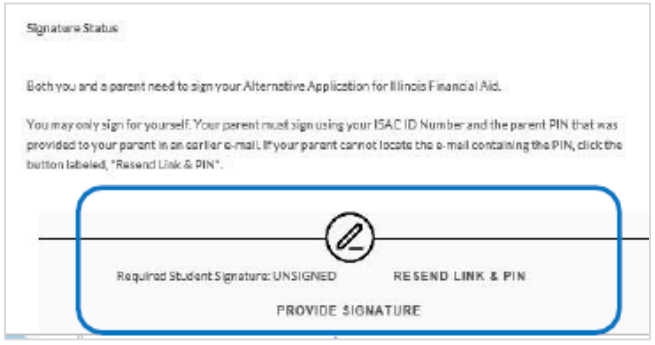
- You will not be able to make corrections to your application. Please contact a Student Engagement Representative at 800.899.4722 or email us at isac.studentservices@illinois.gov.

MAKING CORRECTIONS TO THE APPLICATION FOR FULL ALTERNATIVE APPLICATION PROCESS

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







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

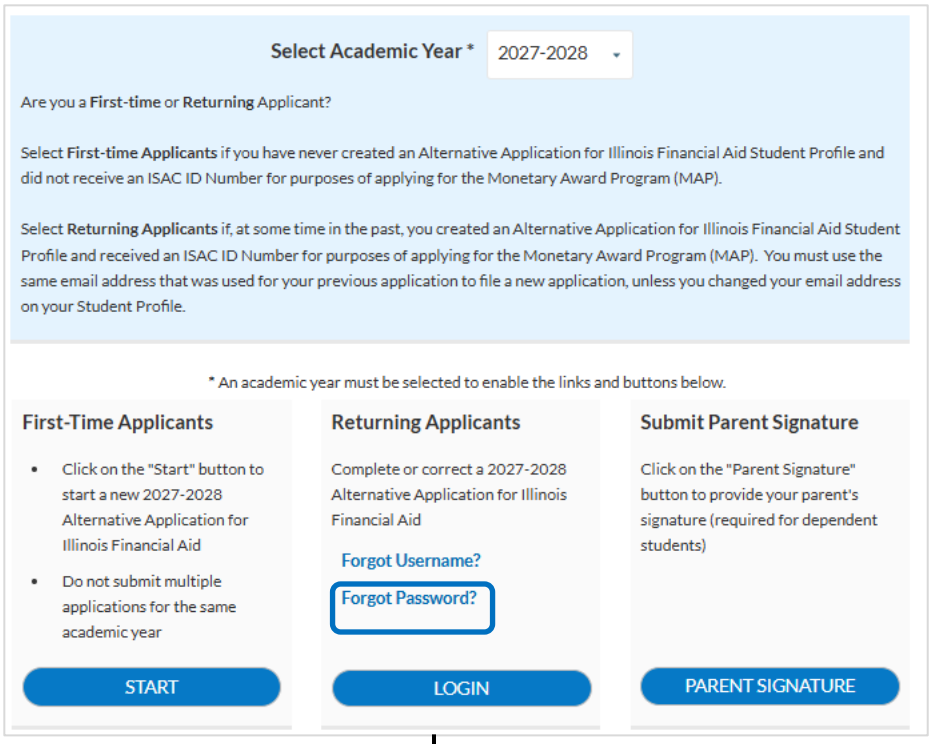
If changes are made to parent data, then the parent will need to re-sign the application as well, following the same process used when they initially signed the application.

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 email address provided on your application.

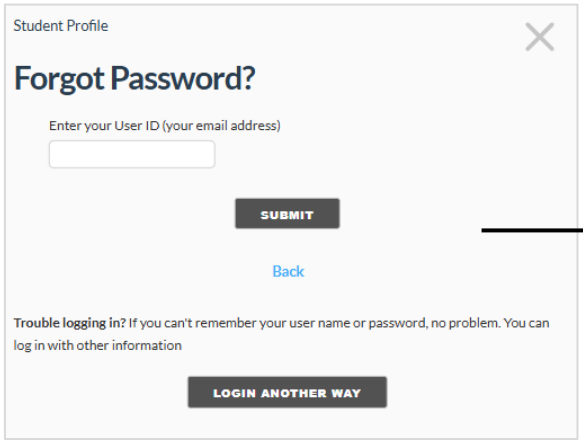
Each time you make a correction or update to your application, it will generate a new student record at the school(s) listed on your application and could possibly result in a new SAI and/or impact your eligibility for MAP.

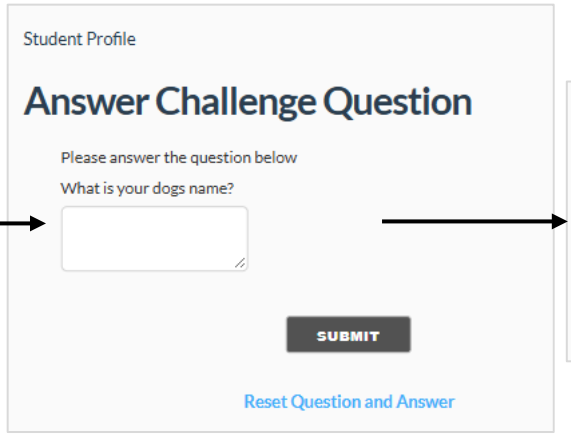
The colleges you have listed on your application will have access to the new information, and you will receive an email from ISAC confirming that your corrections have been processed.

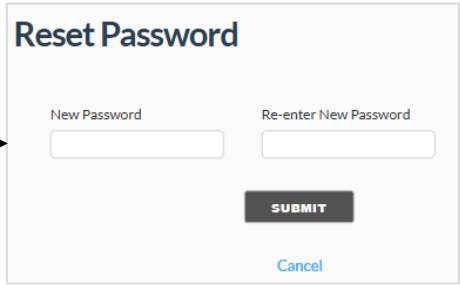
LOGIN RESET OPTIONS



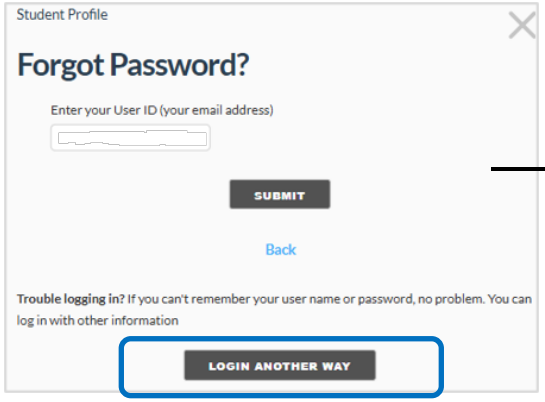
- Renewal applicants will have to provide their username and password.
- If you cannot access the application there will be an option to reset password. You will need to have access to the email you used when creating your student profile.
- You will also need to know the answer to the challenge question you created when signing up.
- Your username is your email.

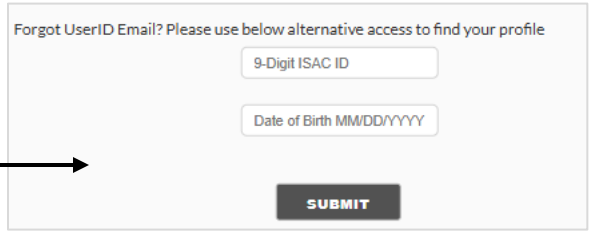






FOR FULL ALTERNATIVE APPLICATION PROCESS





- In the case that you can't remember your username or password; you can log in with other information.
- For this you will need your 9-digit ISAC ID and your Date of Birth.