

## Foster Youth: Tips for Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Questions on the 2008-09 FAFSA which may cause difficulty for wards of the court or foster youth are listed below. Question **numbers** refer to the paper FAFSA. **Sections** refer to the FAFSA on the Web (FOTW) Worksheet.

**Worksheet A**  
**Question #40**  
**Section 6**

Welfare benefits, TANF

**Q:** My foster parents get Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or welfare benefits for me because I am a ward of the court. Is this my income?

**A:** No. These benefits are income for the person receiving them. Do not include as part of your income any TANF or welfare benefits received by another person even if they are designated for your support or care.

**Worksheet A**  
**Question #40**  
**Section 6**

Welfare benefits, TANF

**Q:** My grandmother (aunt, etc.) gets TANF or welfare benefits for me because I am a ward of the court. Is this my income?

**A:** No. These benefits are income for the person receiving them. Do not include as part of your income any TANF or welfare benefits received by another person even if they are designated for your support or care.

**Worksheet B**  
**Question #41**  
**Section 6**

Free child care

**Q:** I am a single mom with one child and will get free day care for my child (from a grandmother, aunt, or free day care center) while I go to college. Does this "free" income have to be reported on the FAFSA?

**A:** No, this service is not income and the information is not collected on the FAFSA. However, note that you need to let your school know that you are receiving free dependent care; an allowance for dependent care may not be added to your cost of attendance.

**Question #51**  
**Section 2**

"Do you have children who receive more than half of their support from you?"

**Q:** I have a child who will be living with me and my income will be from TANF. Do I answer "yes" to Question #51? Are TANF or welfare benefits considered to be like earned income?

**A:** You would answer "yes" to this question as long as you provide more than half of the child's support.

Note: TANF or welfare benefits that are paid to you are considered untaxed income and would be listed in Step 2, Worksheet A.

**Question #53**  
**Section 2**

"Are (a) both of your parents deceased, or (b) are you (or were you until age 18) a ward/dependent of the court?"

**Q:** I am a ward of the court but graduated from high school and then went to live with my mother for two months. Did I lose my independent status?

**A:** A student is considered to be independent if he or she is a ward of the court, or was a ward of the court until the individual reached the age of 18. If your ward of the court status changed before you reached age 18, you may be considered dependent on your parent. In that case, you should talk about your situation with the financial aid administrator at your college.

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**Question #90**  
**Section 4**

Number in household

**Question #99**

Signatures

**Q:** I am a dependent child of the court of my county. Is this the same as a "ward" of the court?

**A:** The term "ward" is used to mean "dependent" of the court. You are a ward of the court (regardless whether this status is determined by the county or state) if the court has assumed custody of you. You should have court ordered documents that designate you a ward of the court.

**Q:** I am no longer under the court because my foster parents took legal guardianship of me a few years ago. However, my foster parents do not support me with their own financial resources. They still get a foster care check each month for me. How do I answer question #53?

**A:** You can still be a ward of the court if you have a legal guardian or foster parents; check with the court to determine your current status.

Note: Neither legal guardians nor foster parents are considered parents when completing the FAFSA.

**Q:** My parents died when I was very young. My grandparents are my court appointed, legal guardians. They have provided support for me all my life. How do I complete the FAFSA?

**A:** You must complete the FAFSA as an independent student. A legal guardian is **not** considered a parent for purposes of completing the FAFSA.

**Q:** I turned 18 and graduated, so my court case was closed. My college is saying I am no longer an independent student because I'm no longer a ward of the court. Am I considered dependent or independent?

**A:** You are considered to be independent if you are a ward of the court, or **were** a ward of the court until you reached the age of 18. You should check "yes" to this question if you were a ward of the court until you reached 18.

**Q:** I live with my foster parents and their children. Are they my "family members?"

**A:** No. If you are considered independent (for example, because you are a ward of the court), and you have no dependent children of your own, you are a family of **one** (yourself).

**Q:** I have filled out this form as an independent student because I am a ward of the court. Do I need my father's and/or mother's signature(s)? I don't live with them, but I see them sometimes.

**A:** No. Because of your status as a ward of the court, you are considered an independent applicant; parental signatures are not required.

Source: National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) 0907