

Drug Convictions and Financial Aid Eligibility

Under the Higher Education Act, a student may become ineligible for federal student aid upon conviction of any offense involving the possession or sale of illegal drugs while receiving Title IV federal financial aid. Federal aid includes Federal Stafford Loans, Federal PLUS Loans, Federal Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, Federal ACG Grants, and Federal Work Study.

Penalties for Drug Convictions

Possession of Illegal Drugs:

- First Offense: 1 year from the date of conviction
- Second Offense: 2 years from the date of conviction
- Third and Subsequent Offenses: Indefinite ineligibility from the date of conviction

Sale of Illegal Drugs:

- First Offense: 2 years from the date of conviction
- Second and Subsequent Offenses: Indefinite ineligibility from the date of conviction

How to Regain Eligibility for Federal Financial Aid After a Drug Conviction

There is a way that you can regain eligibility for the federal programs. You must successfully complete an acceptable drug rehabilitation program that meets the standards set by Congress and the Department of Education. You will regain eligibility on the date you complete the program.

What is an Acceptable Drug Rehabilitation Program?

An acceptable drug rehabilitation program must require passing **TWO** unannounced drug tests **AND** it must be either:

1. Be qualified to receive funds from a federal, state or local government agency or program, or from a state or federally licensed insurance company, or
2. Be administered or recognized by a federal, state or local government agency or court, or by a state or federally licensed hospital, health clinic, or medical doctor.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Question 23 on the FAFSA form asks if the student has ever been convicted of a drug related offense. Failure to answer this question will automatically disqualify the student from receiving Federal aid. Falsely answering this question, if discovered, could result in fines up to \$20,000, imprisonment, or both. If you are not sure how you should answer this question, call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243).

Convictions During Enrollment

According to the United States Department of Education, if a student is convicted of a drug offense after receiving Federal aid, he or she must notify the Financial Aid Office immediately and that student will be ineligible for further aid and required to pay back all aid received after the conviction.