

## STUDENTS CONVICTED OF POSSESSION OR SALE OF DRUGS

The following information is excerpted from the *Federal Student Aid Handbook, Volume I – Student Eligibility*.

A federal or state drug conviction can disqualify a student for FSA funds. The student self-certifies in applying for aid that he is eligible; you're not required to confirm this unless you have conflicting information.

Convictions only count against a student for aid eligibility purposes (FAFSA question 23c) if they were for an offense that occurred during a period of enrollment for which the student was receiving Federal Student Aid—they do not count if the offense was not during such a period, unless the student was denied federal benefits for drug trafficking by a federal or state judge (see drug abuse hold sidebar, next page). Also, a conviction that was reversed, set aside, or removed from the student's record does not count, nor does one received when she was a juvenile, unless she was tried as an adult.

The chart below illustrates the period of ineligibility for FSA funds, depending on whether the conviction was for sale or possession and whether the student had previous offenses. (A conviction for sale of drugs includes convictions for conspiring to sell drugs.)

	Possession of Illegal Drugs	Sale of Illegal Drugs
<b>1st Offense</b>	1 year from date of conviction	2 years from date of conviction
<b>2nd Offense</b>	2 years from date of conviction	Indefinite period
<b>3+ Offense</b>	Indefinite period	

If the student was convicted of both possessing and selling illegal drugs, and the periods of ineligibility are different, the student will be ineligible for the longer period. VMCAD's financial aid office will provide each student who becomes ineligible for FSA funds due to a drug conviction a clear and conspicuous written notice of his loss of eligibility and the methods whereby he can become eligible again.

A student regains eligibility the day after the period of ineligibility ends or when he successfully completes a qualified drug rehabilitation program or passes two unannounced drug tests given by such a program. Further drug convictions will make him ineligible again.

Students denied eligibility for an indefinite period can regain it after successfully completing a rehabilitation program (as described below), passing two unannounced drug test from such a program, or if a conviction is reversed, set aside, or removed from the student's record so that fewer than two convictions for sale or three convictions for possession remain on the record.

In such cases, the nature and dates of the remaining convictions will determine when the student regains eligibility. It is the student's responsibility to certify to VMCAD's financial aid office that she has successfully completed the rehabilitation program; as with the conviction question on the FAFSA, you are not required to confirm the reported information unless you have conflicting information.

When a student regains eligibility during the award year, the college will inform the student of eligibility and is able to award Pell grant and Campus-based aid for the current payment period and Direct loans for the period of enrollment.

***Standards for a qualified drug rehabilitation program***

A qualified drug rehabilitation program must include at least two unannounced drug tests and satisfy at least one of the following requirements:

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

Note: If the student certifies that he has successfully completed a drug rehabilitation program, but the college has reason to believe that the program does not meet the requirements; the financial aid officer must find out if it does before paying the student any FSA funds.

Below you will find two holds in which the Department of Education will notify schools of any potential holds on student aid. In receiving such codes, the financial aid office will require documentation to resolve:

**Drug convictions**

HEA Section 484(r)

34 CFR 668.40

A student who self certifies that he or she has a qualifying drug conviction will receive a “C” code and comment code 053, 054, 056, 058, or 052 on his or her SAR and ISIR. See the SAR Comment Code and Text Guide on IFAP.

**Drug abuse hold**

The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 includes provisions that authorize federal and state judges to deny certain federal benefits, including student aid, to persons convicted of drug trafficking or possession. The Central Processing System maintains a hold file of individuals who have received such a judgment. All applicants are checked against this file to determine if they should be denied aid. This is separate from the check for a drug conviction via question 23; records matching the drug abuse hold file receive a rejected application (reject 19 and comments 009 or 055 on the SAR and ISIR). See the ISIR Guide on the IFAP publications page for more information.

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