



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

April 24, 2017

GEN-17-04

Subject: Changes to 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 Verification Requirements

Summary: This letter provides information about changes we are making to certain aspects of the FAFSA[®] verification requirements as a result of the recent suspension of the IRS Data Retrieval Tool.

Dear Colleague:

In response to concerns about the impact of the suspension of the Internal Revenue Service Data Retrieval Tool (IRS DRT) on students and families who have been selected for verification of their Free Application for Federal Student Aid/Institutional Student Information Record (FAFSA/ISIR) information, we are providing institutions with flexibilities they may choose to use as part of their verification procedures. These flexibilities begin immediately and apply to both the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 FAFSA processing and verification cycles. This guidance replaces the guidance provided in the October 18, 2016, Electronic Announcement on alternative documentation for verifying 2015 income and tax information for the 2016-2017 FAFSA, and serves as the 2017-2018 guidance on alternative documentation that the October 18, 2016, Electronic Announcement stated would be provided at a later date. Because of the move to “prior-prior,” both of these FAFSA years use the same 2015 income and tax year information.

IRS Tax Return Filers – In lieu of using the IRS DRT, or obtaining an IRS transcript, institutions may consider a signed paper copy of the 2015 IRS tax return that was used by the tax filer for submission to the IRS as acceptable documentation to verify FAFSA/ISIR tax return information.

Verification of Nonfiling – Institutions are no longer required to collect documentation obtained from the IRS or other tax authorities verifying that the applicant, the applicant’s spouse or the applicant’s parents did not file a 2015 tax return (often referred to as Verification of Nonfiling). However, as currently required, the applicant, the applicant’s spouse or the applicant’s parents, as applicable, must provide to the institution—

- A signed statement certifying that the individual has not filed and is not required to file a 2015 income tax return, and a listing of the sources of any 2015 income earned by the individual from work and the amount of income from each source; and
- A copy of IRS Form W-2, or an equivalent document, for each source of 2015 employment income received by the individual.

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Additional Documentation Requirements – Some individuals may be required to submit additional documentation to verify their 2015 income and tax information. That information as well as all other verification requirements can be found—

For the 2016-2017 award year

- June 26, 2015, Federal Register Notice; and
- June 29, 2015, Dear Colleague Letter GEN-15-11

For the 2017-2018 award year

- April 1, 2016, Federal Register Notice; and
- April 5, 2016, Dear Colleague Letter GEN-16-07

We hope these flexibilities will provide some relief to students and families affected by the suspension of the IRS DRT. We thank institutions for their understanding and patience.

Sincerely,

/S/

Lynn B. Mahaffie
Acting Assistant Secretary