

Drug Conviction 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 Direct Loans, Federal Direct PLUS Loans, Federal Direct Graduate PLUS Loans, Federal Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, Federal ACG Grants, Federal SMART Grants, Federal TEACH Grants, Federal Work Study, and Perkins Loans.

Penalties for Drug Convictions

Possession of Illegal Drugs:

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

Sale of Illegal Drugs:

- First Offense: Ineligible to receive aid for 2 years from the date of conviction
- Second and Subsequent Offenses: Indefinite ineligibility from the date of conviction

How to Regain Eligibility

A student can regain eligibility for federal student aid funds by successfully completing a drug rehabilitation program. To be sufficient to reinstate financial aid eligibility, the program must:

- include at least 2 unannounced drug tests
AND
- be recognized as a Federal, State, or local government agency program

A student will regain eligibility on the date of successfully completing the program.

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.

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 Department immediately and that student will be ineligible for further aid and will be required to pay back all aid received after the conviction.