

2021 · WHAT ISSUES SHOULD I CONSIDER TO FUND MY CHILD'S COLLEGE EDUCATION?



fpPATHFINDER

FINANCIAL AID ISSUES	YES	NO
<p>Do you need help determining which financial aid form to complete (FAFSA, CSS, 568 group)? If so, consider contacting each school to verify which forms must be completed.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>If completing FAFSA, do you need help estimating your Expected Family Contribution (EFC)? If so, consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The income and assets of a child will impact EFC more than the parent's income and assets. ■ Income is based on prior, prior year (for 2021, figures will be based on 2019 income). Asset values are based on the day the FAFSA is submitted. ■ Qualified distributions from a 529 account owned by a child or their parent will not be included in income (but would be included if the account were owned by a grandparent or other third party). 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Are you divorced or separated from your spouse? If so, consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Schools that use FAFSA will consider the income and assets of the custodial parent. ■ Schools that use the CSS Profile may also require information from the non-custodial parent. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Has your financial situation changed since the financial aid decision? If so, consider appealing the financial aid decision.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

FUNDING ISSUES	YES	NO
<p>Does the cost of college exceed your Expected Family Contribution as calculated by FAFSA? If so, Federal student aid such as Pell Grants, work-study programs and FSEOG may be awarded.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Do you hope to find grants, scholarships or awards? If so, consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Complete the FAFSA form as it is used by colleges and states to determine need and eligibility. (continue on next column) 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

FUNDING ISSUES (CONTINUED)	YES	NO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Apply early as many awards are given on a first come first served basis. ■ Consider looking for awards either online, at college, affinity groups, professional or civic organizations. 		
<p>Do you expect relatives (such as grandparents) to gift money? If so, consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Direct payments of tuition are not subject to gift tax, and do not use the donor's annual exclusion amount or lifetime exemption. ■ For financial aid purposes, many gifts (including distributions from third-party owned 529 accounts) will be treated as income of the child, which will impact needs-based financial aid eligibility if used more than two years before graduation. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Does your child expect to become an elementary or secondary teacher? If so, your child may be eligible for a TEACH Grant if the school has a TEACH Grant program.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Did you or your spouse serve (or currently serve) in the military? If so, your child may be eligible for certain benefits.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Would your child consider military service? If so, the Reserve Officers' Training Corps will cover most college expenses as long as the child serves at least four years in active duty and four years in reserves.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Do you expect to need a loan to cover additional education related expenses? If so, consider loans with the most favorable terms, which are generally in this order: Federal Direct Subsidized Loans (needs based), Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loans, Federal Direct PLUS Loans, and private loans (banks, colleges, states).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will your child have loans and plan to work in the government or for a nonprofit for 10 years? If so, your child may be eligible for Public Service Loan Forgiveness.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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QUALIFIED ACCOUNT ISSUES	YES	NO
<p>Do you have an IRA, Roth IRA, or qualified employer plan? If so, consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Distributions from a traditional IRA to pay for qualified education expenses may be subject to ordinary income taxes but there is no 10% penalty. ■ Distributions from a Roth IRA to pay for qualified education expenses may be subject to ordinary income taxes on the gain element but there is no 10% penalty. ■ Distributions from a traditional IRA or Roth IRA may impact needs-based financial aid eligibility if used more than two years before college graduation. ■ Some employer plans, such as a 401(k), allow employees to take loans. There are no tax ramifications for the loan and a loan does not count as income on the FAFSA, however it may count as an asset if not spent. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Do you have a 529 account? If so, consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ You can use your gift tax annual exclusion amount to contribute up to \$15,000 per year to a beneficiary's 529 account, gift tax-free. ■ Alternatively, you can make a lump sum contribution of up to \$75,000 to a beneficiary's 529 account, and elect to treat it as if it were made evenly over a 5-year period, gift tax-free. ■ You may be eligible for a state income tax deduction or credit if you contribute to a plan sponsored by your state. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Do you have a Coverdell Education Savings Account? If so, consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Coverdell Education Savings Accounts tend to be more restrictive than a 529 account. ■ Coverdell Education Savings Accounts can be rolled over to a 529 account, as long as the account beneficiaries are the same. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Do you own Series EE or I Bonds? If so, you may be able to exclude from gross income the interest paid upon the redemption of the bonds to pay for qualified education expenses. Subject to income limitations.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

TAX PLANNING ISSUES	YES	NO
<p>Is your MAGI less than \$90,000 (\$180,000 if MFJ)? If so, consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ You may be eligible for the American Opportunity Tax Credit for 100% of the first \$2,000 of qualified education expenses and 25% of the next \$2,000. ■ You may be eligible for the Lifetime Learning Tax Credit for 20% of the first \$10,000 of qualified education expenses. ■ The phase-out range for these credits for a single filer is \$80,000 - \$90,000 (\$160,000 - \$180,000 if MFJ). 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Does your state offer an income tax deduction or credit for 529 plan contributions? If so, consider an "in-and-out" strategy where deductions or credits may be allowed on contributions that are immediately withdrawn to pay for qualified education expenses.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Are you eligible for any education tax credits and have a 529 account? If so, be aware that there is no double-dipping. See the "Is The Distribution From My 529 Plan Taxable?" flowchart.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will you or your child have student loans? If so, consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ You can deduct up to \$2,500 of interest on qualifying student loan debt, per tax return. Phase out range for single filer is \$70,000 - \$85,000 (\$140,000 - \$170,000 if MFJ). ■ If you have a 529 account, up to \$10,000 can be used to pay down student loans. This is a lifetime limit per person. An additional \$10,000 may be distributed to each of the beneficiary's siblings. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>