

Drug Conviction and Your Financial Aid

Can I Lose My Federal Student Aid Because of a Drug Conviction?

Yes. Under the Higher Education Act (HEA), students become ineligible for federal student aid funds upon conviction of any offense involving the possession or sale of illegal drugs. Federal aid includes Pell grants, Stafford loans, PLUS loans, work study, and Perkins loans.

How Would the Federal Government Know that I Have a Drug Conviction?

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form asks if the student has ever been convicted of a drug-related offense. Failure to answer the question will automatically disqualify the student from federal financial aid. If a student is convicted while he or she is already receiving federal aid money, the student must notify the Financial Aid Office immediately, will be ineligible for further aid, and be required to pay back all aid received after the conviction.

What Constitutes a Conviction?

A conviction is a legal finding of guilt. If your case was dismissed, the prosecutor declined to prosecute, the case was put on the stet docket, or you received probation before judgment, these are not convictions and therefore, you do not have to report this on your FAFSA form or to the Financial Aid office.

How Long Am I Ineligible?

Possession of Illegal Drugs

First Offense - One year from date of conviction

Second Offense - Two years from date of conviction

Third & Subsequent Offense - Indefinite ineligibility from the date of conviction

Sale of Illegal Drugs

First Offense - Two years from date of conviction

Second & Subsequent Offense - Indefinite ineligibility from the date of conviction

NOTICE: Knowingly providing false information on your FAFSA form is considered a crime and can carry a fine up to \$10,000. In addition, students who provide false content on the form may also face College judicial sanctions.

How Can My Federal Student Aid be Reinstated After a Conviction?

If a student successfully completes a qualified drug rehabilitation program, he or she will regain eligibility for student aid funds as of the day the student successfully completes the program.

Does Washington College Have a Qualified Rehabilitation Program?

No. In order for a student's aid eligibility to be restored, the re-habilitation program must:

- 1) Include at least two unannounced drug tests, **and**
- 2) Be recognized as a federal, state, or local government agency run program.

Washington College does not operate a rehabilitation program. Therefore, a student who enrolls in a rehabilitation program to protect his or her financial aid status will have to do so at his or her own expense.

Other Questions?

If you have any other questions about your financial aid, the possibility of losing that aid because of a drug conviction, or regaining your aid after a drug conviction, you can contact the Office of Student Financial Aid at: 410-778-7214 or by e-mail at fa_office@washcoll.edu.