



Dependency Override Policy

Financial Aid Office

Often unmarried students who are under the age of 24 are required to provide parental data on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). They are referred to as dependent students. However, dependent students with unusual circumstances may appeal to the Financial Aid for a dependency override. A dependency override would allow the student to be considered an independent student (for financial aid purposes only) and exempt the student from providing parental data on his/her FAFSA.

Dependency Override Policy

Annually, and on a case-by-case basis, the Financial Aid Office may permit a dependency override for otherwise dependent students with unusual circumstances.

*Conditions which **qualify** for a dependency override include students, under the age of 24, who cannot rely on parental support from either parent because each parent meets one of the following criteria:*

- Parent is deceased.
- Parent is incarcerated.
- Unusual parental circumstances (e.g., parent's whereabouts are unknown, abusive family environment, abandonment by parent, etc.).

*Conditions, singly or in combination, that **do not qualify** for a dependency override include:*

- Parents refuse to contribute to the student's education.
- Parents are unwilling to provide information on the FAFSA or for FAFSA verification.
- Parents do not claim the student as a dependent for income tax purposes.
- Student demonstrates total self-sufficiency.

Dependency Override Process

Students must provide the Financial Aid Office a written statement for appeal for a dependency override and submit supporting documentation. Appeals will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and all information will be kept confidential. The submission of an appeal does not guarantee appeal approval.

Students with unusual circumstances that qualify for a dependency override will be deemed an independent student for the aid year.

Students who have their appeal approved will be required to complete the FAFSA verification process, and additional documentation may be requested.

Contact Us!

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Supporting Documentation

Students are required to submit supporting documentation with their appeal. The supporting documentation will vary depending on the student's unusual circumstances. Students must provide documentation for each parent. For the conditions which qualify for dependency override, the following items are requested:

Circumstance	Requested Documentation
Parent is deceased	A copy of the parent's death certificate
Parent is incarcerated	Documentation that verifies the parent is incarcerated and lists the parent's anticipated release date
Unusual parental circumstances	A signed statement from a third-party professional that knows the student's current unusual parental circumstances

Signed statements from third-party professionals must document the student's unusual circumstances as they relate to the parent in question. If a written statement is required for both parents, one written statement from a third-party professional that documents the student's unusual circumstances as they relate to both parents is acceptable. This person should know and understand what the student's *current* circumstances are.

Examples of a third-party professional relationship include your:

- Current/former teacher
- Counselor (school or wellness)
- Members of clergy
- Social worker
- Employer

Third Party Professional Letters should document the following:

- A **signed** statement from a third-party professional should be on letterhead of the business or organization that they represent. If letterhead is not obtainable, the person's name, title, phone number, business/organization, address should be included.
- The student's name as it appears in our records
- The relationship between the professional and the student should be stated

The Financial Aid may contact third-party professionals who provide supporting documentation.

Definitions

- **Unaccompanied**—when a student is not living in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.
- **Homeless**—lacking fixed, regular, and adequate housing. For example, temporarily living with other people because he/she has nowhere else to go; living in substandard housing; living in emergency or transitional shelters (FEMA trailers after disasters); living in motels, camping grounds, cars, parks, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, or any public place not designed for humans to live; or living in the school dormitory (e.g., on-campus housing) if the student would otherwise be homeless.
 - **Self-supporting**—when a student pays for his/her own living expenses, including, fixed, regular, and adequate housing.
 - **At risk of being homeless**—when a student's housing may cease to be fixed, regular, and adequate, for example, a student who is being evicted and has been unable to find fixed, regular, and adequate housing.
 - **Fixed housing**—stationary, permanent, and not subject to change.
 - **Regular housing**—used on a predictable, routine, or consistent basis.
 - **Adequate housing**—sufficient for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in the home.
- **Parent**—a student's biological or adoptive parent. A student's stepparent, foster parent or legal guardian is not considered a parent unless they have adopted the student.

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