

Documenting Extenuating Circumstances for Dependency Override

Dependency overrides can only be granted if an extenuating circumstance exists.

In reviewing appeals, the committee is looking for evidence that it is not reasonable to expect the student to seek out information from their parents because it would be unsafe, unhealthy, or the parents are inaccessible.

Examples of extenuating circumstances include:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Abandonment by both parents
- History of neglect due to parental alcohol or drug abuse
- Incarceration of the custodial parent
- Other circumstances which prevent the student from having contact with the parents

A parent's refusal to provide information on the FAFSA, or the fact that a student is self-supporting, in and of themselves, are not reasons for which a dependency override can be granted.

APPEAL PROCESS:

A student should start by completing the FAFSA online. When asked to provide parental information, they should say they are unable to do so. This will result in an incomplete FAFSA, pending the approval of the dependency override.

For institutional aid purposes:

The student then needs to submit the Unusual Circumstance Request for Independent Status to the Office of Financial Aid. Along with the form, they will need to submit a letter detailing the extenuating circumstances that prevent them from providing parental data. They will also need letters from two disinterested individuals who can confirm the student's situation. Disinterested individuals include, but are not limited to, teachers, counselors, pastors, adult relatives, or the parents of friends. The letters provided must address the relationship with both parents, even if the student has not had an ongoing relationship with both parents.

A committee within the financial aid office will then review the documentation provided and decide whether the appeal will be granted. A decision to grant independence for Federal aid purposes does not automatically grant independence for Institutional aid purposes.

Unusual Circumstance Request for Independent Status

Name: _____ CMC ID#: _____

This request is for the 2026-27 academic year.

The Higher Education Act of 1992 states that students may be considered independent of parental support for educational costs. These rules are explained in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). If you do not qualify under those rules, the Financial Aid Administrator may consider, under professional judgment, exceptional circumstances that would allow a student to be given independent status.

The following are situations that would **not** be considered Unusual Circumstances:

- Your parents do not want to provide their information on your FAFSA; or
- Your parents refuse to contribute to your college expenses; or
- Your parents do not claim you as a dependent on their income taxes; or
- You do not live with your parents.

If one of these four situations exists, they are not sufficient for an appeal and you are not an independent student. You and your parent must include parental information on your federal application (FAFSA). The website to submit your parent information is www.fafsa.ed.gov.

REASON FOR APPEAL: The Financial Aid Office is required to consider parent information and expect a parental contribution for students who are not independent according to the FAFSA definition unless exceptions are made. Exceptions are made only when adequate documentation of extenuating family circumstances exists. Extenuating circumstances are generally defined by students' inability to have contact with their parents.

Some examples are:

- An abusive home situation, which is detrimental to your physical or mental well-being
- Abandonment by both parents
- History of neglect due to parental alcohol or drug abuse
- Incarceration of the custodial parent
- You have extenuating circumstances not described above, which prevent you from having contact with your parents to obtain parental information for FAFSA filing

Instructions for requesting an Appeal for Independent Status:

If you cannot provide parental information due to some unusual reason, you may appeal to waive the federal regulations requiring parental information by following the directions below:

➤ **Your letter of appeal that explains your situation should address the issues below:**

- Identify the location of each of your parents.
- Describe the last time you had contact with each parent –when, where, and the nature of the contact.
- Explain why you cannot obtain parental information.
- Describe when and how you have been self-supporting or supported by someone other than your parents:
 - When did you or someone other than your parents start meeting your expenses without parental support?
 - How have you (or someone other than your parents) provided for yourself?

➤ **Supporting letters should:**

- Provide statements from two disinterested adults familiar with your situation who can corroborate the information you presented.
- Examples of such persons can include clergy, social workers or other social services personnel, court officials (or copies of court documents), teachers, high school counselors, or police officers. Statements from family or friends will not be accepted.

➤ **Required documents to be submitted for your appeal:**

- A completed Unusual Circumstance Request for Independent Status form (this form).
- Letter of explanation that describes your situation (must be attached).
- Letters of support (must be attached):

▪ Letter #1:

Name of individual: _____

Job title or relationship: _____

▪ Letter #2:

Name of individual: _____

Job title or relationship: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Warning: If you purposely give false or misleading information to help establish eligibility for federal student aid, you may be subject to a \$20,000 fine, a prison sentence, or both.