

2020-2021 DEPENDENCY APPEAL FORM

Last name	First Name	M.I.	Social Security Number
Address (include apt. no.)			Date of Birth
City	State	Zip Code	Phone Number (include area code)

Federal regulations are based on the idea that students (and their parents or spouse) has the primary responsibility for paying for their post-secondary education. If you are considered a dependent student according to the federal aid definition, your aid eligibility is determined by using your parent's income and asset information in addition to your information. Dependent students are required by law to provide parental information and signatures to be considered for financial aid.

The federal definition of an independent student is that at least one of the following apply to you:

- was born before January 1, 1997,
- is married as of the date you apply,
- will be a graduate or professional student when the award year starts,
- is currently serving on active duty for purposes other than training,
- is a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces,
- has dependents other than a spouse,
- was an orphan, foster child, or ward/dependent of the court at any time since the age of 13,
- is an emancipated minor or in legal guardianship or was when you reached the age of majority in your state, or was determined at any time since July 1, 2019, to be an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or self-supporting and at risk of being homeless.

The Higher Education Act allows a financial aid administrator to make dependency overrides on a case-by-case basis for students with unusual circumstances. If the administrator judges that an override is appropriate, he/she must document the unusual circumstances. However, **NONE** of the conditions listed below, singly or in combination, qualify as unusual circumstances or merit a dependency override:

- 1) Parents refusal to contribute to the student's education;
- 2) Parents are unwilling to provide information on the FAFSA application or for verification;
- 3) Parents do not claim the student as a dependent for income tax purposes;
- 4) Student demonstrates total self-sufficiency.

Unusual circumstances **DO INCLUDE** (and may cause any of the above situations) an abusive family environment that threatens a student's health or safety, or the student being unable to locate his parents, or abandonment by parents. In such cases, a dependency override might be warranted and must be documented.

On a case-by-case basis, due to unusual circumstances, a student can be considered an independent student. A financial aid administrator will consider the following unusual circumstances:

- Both of your parents are incarcerated or deceased.
- Your parents reside in another country for at least six months and cannot be reached by normal means of communication.
- One parent is deceased and the other is incarcerated.
- You are a recent refugee, granted such status by the U. S. Immigration Status.
- Other reasons will be taken into consideration, but remember the financial aid administrator will not automatically do this and the decision is final. This decision cannot be appealed to any school or agency including the U. S. Department of Education.

To petition for a waiver of the federal regulations, please gather the appropriate documentation of your situation, including the items listed below. Then, submit all required documentation to the Financial Aid Office.

- 1) Write a personal letter requesting consideration for a dependency override, which outlines your unusual circumstance. Your signed and dated letter must include:
 - o Why you cannot provide parental financial information on the 2020-21 FAFSA.
 - o The whereabouts of your biological/legal mother and father and their current living arrangements. Please include any contact you have had with either and the frequency of contact.
 - o Your living arrangements over the past year.
 - With whom did you reside?
 - Who has provided financial support for you during the past year?
- 2) Third party documentation is required.
 - o Include documentation you feel will support your appeal for independent status; examples include:
 - court orders of permanent status
 - death certificates
 - verification of incarceration
 - letters from school counselors, clergy or family physicians
 - government agency
 - signed and dated letters from friends and family members are acceptable but should only be used as a last resort.
- 3) If you filed taxes, then you must submit a copy of your 2018 and/or 2019 Federal Income Tax Return Transcript. This can be requested online at www.irs.gov.
- 4) Copies of all 2018 and/or 2019 Wage and Income Transcript
- 5) Did anyone claim you on his or her 2018 and/or 2019 Federal Income Tax return? If so, please state who and their relationship to you: _____

NOTE: Failure to provide documentation to validate your claim of an unusual circumstance will result in the denial of the dependency override request.

When all the required documents have been received, a financial aid administrator will review your request and, if warranted, override your dependency status on the FAFSA. **THE FINANCIAL AID OFFICE RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REQUEST ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION TO DETERMINE IF A DEPENDENCY OVERRIDE IS WARRANTED FOR FINANCIAL AID PURPOSES.**

My signature below certifies that I have attached the appropriate documentation and that all information provided is true. I agree to provide additional documentation if requested. I understand that the dependency override decision does not remain in affect from one year to another. The school must approve an override appeal on a year-to-year basis and may deny the request for any given year.

I also understand that just because my parents do not support me; that I no longer reside in their house; my parents do not claim me on their tax return; my parents and I do not get along; or my parents refuse to pay for my college education **DOES NOT** warrant the financial aid office to override the federal definition of dependency. As of the Higher Education Act of 1992, a financial aid administrator does have the authority to override a student's default dependency determination, but only in unusual circumstances and with proper documentation.

Student's signature required: _____ Date: _____

For Office Use Only

_____ Approved under professional judgment _____ Denied under professional judgment

Reasons: _____

Financial Aid Professional: _____ Date: _____