



(Filing this form does not guarantee that your request will be approved.)

**YOU ARE CONSIDERED AN INDEPENDENT STUDENT FOR FINANCIAL AID PURPOSES IF YOU MEET ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS AT THE TIME YOU COMPLETE AND SIGN THE 2020-2021 FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA):**

- Were you born before January 1, 1997?      Yes      No
- As of today, are you married? (Also answer “Yes” if you are separated but not divorced.)      Yes      No
- At the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year, will you be working on a master’s or doctorate program (such as an MA, MBA, MD, JD, PhD, EdD, graduate certificate, etc.)?      Yes      No
- Are you currently serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for purposes other than training?      Yes      No
- Are you a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces?      Yes      No
- Do you now have children or will you have children who will receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022?      Yes      No
- Do you have dependents (other than your children or spouse) who live with you and who receive more than half of their support from you, now and through June 30, 2022?      Yes      No
- At any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care or were you a dependent or ward of the court?      Yes      No
- As determined by a court in your state of legal residence, are you or were you an emancipated minor?      Yes      No
- As determined by a court in your state of legal residence, are you or were you in legal guardianship?      Yes      No
- At any time on or after July 1, 2020, did your high school or school district homeless liaison determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?      Yes      No
- At any time on or after July 1, 2020, did the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?      Yes      No
- At any time on or after July 1, 2020, did the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?      Yes      No

Note: If you meet one of the above conditions, you do not need to complete this form.

Many students feel they are independent because they currently live on their own or because their parents no longer claim them on their income taxes. Others feel they should be considered independent because their parents refuse to provide information on the FAFSA or because their parents cannot afford to help with college expenses. However, these reasons are not sufficient for a student to be considered independent. The Financial Aid Office is required to consider parent information and expect a parental contribution for students who are not independent according to the above FAFSA definition unless exceptions are made. Exceptions are made only when adequate documentation of extenuating family circumstances exists. Extenuating circumstances are generally defined by student's inability to have contact with their parents. Review the following reasons for request for the one that describes your circumstance. If none of these circumstances apply to your situation, do not complete this form.

**Personal Statement and Documentation:** Attach a written personal statement (preferably typed) which completely and explicitly explains the basis of your request. Please note that your statement will be used only to determine if a dependency exception should be made and the information will be held in strictest confidence. Make sure your statement is signed and dated. Attach documentation from at least two acceptable sources, which verify all the facts of your request. Required sources of documentation to validate the reason for your request are as follows:

1) There are severe circumstances within your family preventing you from obtaining your parents' financial information.

**Examples:**

- an abusive home situation which is detrimental to your physical or mental well-being
- abandonment by both parents
- history of parental alcohol or drug abuse
- incarceration of the custodial parent

**Required documentation:** Signed statements from two adult disinterested persons, who are not family members, which verify the family circumstances described in your personal statement. Adult disinterested persons include clergy members, attorneys, school guidance counselors, medical doctors, mental health professionals, teachers or professors, law enforcement officers, professional staff of Children and Family Services (Public Assistance Department), and officers of the court. Letters must be signed originals on agency letterhead with the professional title (Counselor, Pastor, etc.).

2) The death of a parent occurred after filing the FAFSA, and the surviving parent meets one of the conditions listed above in number 1.

**Required documentation:** Signed statements from two adult professionals, who are not family members, which verify the family circumstances described in your personal statement. Adult professionals include clergy members, attorneys, school guidance counselors, medical doctors, mental health professionals, teachers or professors, law enforcement officers, professional staff of Children and Family Services (Public Assistance Department), and officers of the court. Letters must be signed originals on agency letterhead with the professional title (Counselor, Pastor, etc.).

3) You are a non-citizen of the United States of America (who is otherwise eligible to receive federal financial aid) and your parents currently reside in a foreign country. However, you are unable to communicate with your parents because of a long-standing political policy or civil unrest in your parents' country of residence.

**Required documentation:** Signed statements from the embassy or consulate of the country in which your parents live that clearly state the policies of that country or of the United States of America prevent mail and funds to be readily transferred between residents of the United States and their country. If an official government statement is not readily available, a similar statement from a refugee organization on their letterhead is acceptable. In addition, a statement from your sponsors (if applicable) or a family member verifying the level and type of support you receive from family, friends, or sponsors is required.

4) You are divorced after being married for at least two years and maintained a residence apart from you and your former spouse's parents during the time you were married. You now maintain a separate residence from your parents and pay all expenses from your own income and assets.

**Required documentation:** Please provide complete copies of your marriage license(s), divorce decree(s), federal tax return transcript with W-2 forms for the period in which you were married. Also include mortgage or rental agreements for the period in which you were divorced. A signed statement from both of your parents verifying amounts of financial support of any kind (other than reasonable gifts for birthdays and holidays) or the absence of such support after you married.

5) You have extenuating circumstances not described above which prevent you from having contact with your parents to obtain parental information for FAFSA filing.

**Required documentation:** Signed statements from three adult disinterested persons who are not family members which verify that your extenuating circumstances prevent you from having contact with your parents. Adult disinterested persons include clergy members, attorneys, school guidance counselors, medical doctors, mental health professionals, teachers or professors, law enforcement officers, professional staff of Children and Family Services (Public Assistance Department), and officers of the court. Letters must be signed originals on agency letterhead with the professional title (Counselor, Pastor, etc.).

### **To file a Request to Apply for Financial Aid as an Independent Student:**

- Complete and sign the attached form.
- Attach required documentation.
- Attach your signed personal statement.
- Attach your signed 2019 federal tax return transcript and W-2 forms (or if you did not file, attach your W-2 forms or other documentation of your 2019 income).
- Attach documentation of any untaxed or in-kind (expenses covered by others) support.
- File your 2021-2022 FAFSA.

*Incomplete and/or unsigned requests will be denied.*