

The U.S. Department of Education determines a student's dependency status based on the information provided on the FAFSA. Financial aid administrators have the authority to change a student's status from dependent to independent in cases involving unusual circumstances. For financial aid purposes, a student is considered dependent and should provide parental information on the FAFSA unless the student is:

- At least 24 years old
- Married
- Serving on active duty in the US Armed Forces
- A veteran
- Providing more than half the support for a dependent child
- Homeless
- Assigned a Legal Guardian before the age of 18

What circumstances are considered?

The phrase "unusual circumstances" means a situation that make it inappropriate to expect a parental contribution for the student. Unusual circumstances may warrant a dependency override and can include, but are not limited to the following:

- Parent(s) are deceased
- Parent/s are incarcerated or institutionalized
- The student comes from abusive family (sexual, physical or mental abuse)
- Documented parental abandonment or estrangement

What situations NOT considered?

The U.S. Department of Education has given guidance regarding situations that do and do not qualify as unusual circumstances that merit a dependency override. In particular, the following circumstances **DO NOT** merit a dependency override, either alone or in combination:

- Parents refuse to contribute to the student's education
- Parents are unwilling to provide information on the application or verification process
- Parents do not claim the student as a dependent for tax purposes
- Student does not wish to communicate with parents

It is very important to note that there is a distinction between parents who are unable to provide information and parents who are unwilling to complete their student's FAFSA. Unfortunately, many parents will refuse to complete their section of the FAFSA which prevents the student from receiving financial aid. Students can remind their parents that submitting their information on the FAFSA does not obligate them to pay for college. However, their refusal to provide FAFSA data will prevent the student from receiving financial aid. Sometimes a parent is concerned about the privacy of their tax data. Students can remind their parents that all financial aid information is confidential and protected under the Family Education and Privacy Act (FERPA).

STUDENT'S FULL NAME: _____ **CWC ID #:** _____

Please mark below which special circumstances reflects your situation and submit the documentation to support your request:

Parent/s are deceased, incarcerated or institutionalized. Please provide documentation (example: death certificate)

Other: _____
