2026-2027 Request for Unusual Circumstances Adjustment Instructions

Federal Aid Programs include Pell Grants, Subsidized Loans, Unsubsidized Loans, TEACH Grants, Work-study, Parent PLUS Loans, and other programs. When awarding these aid programs, the federal government classifies all students as either dependent upon their parents for aid purposes or independent.

Dependent students are required to include parental information on their FAFSA, such as income and asset data, while independent students are not. By default, the federal government considers all students to be dependent for aid purposes unless the student meets one of the following conditions:

- Satisfies one of the federal automatic criteria for independence; or
- Unusual circumstances beyond a student's control warrant a dependency override

Note that a student's dependency status for aid purposes is a different designation than their dependency status for tax purposes. Because of this, a student can be considered independent for tax purposes, yet dependent for aid.

AUTOMATIC CRITERIA

If a student satisfies any one of these criteria, the federal government considers them independent for aid purposes and parental information is not required on the FAFSA.

1. Born before January 1, 2003
2. Married or graduate student
3. Serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for purposes other than training
4. A veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces
5. Have children who will receive more than half of their support from the student
6. Have dependents who live with the student and who receive more than half of their support from the student
7. An orphan, ward of the court, or in foster care at any time since age 13
8. Emancipated minor as determined by a court in the student's state of legal residence
9. In legal guardianship as determined by a court in the student's state of legal residence
10. Unaccompanied homeless youth, determined by high school homeless liaison, director of an emergency shelter, or director of runaway youth basic center

ADJUSTMENT TO DEPENDENCY STATUS

Federal regulations allow the Financial Aid Office to use professional judgment to grant dependency overrides on a case-by-case basis for students with unusual circumstances beyond their control that are documented by reliable third-party sources.

Unusual circumstances do include (but are not limited to):

- Human trafficking, as described in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7101 et seq.);
- Legally granted refugee or asylum status;
- Parental abandonment or estrangement;
- Student or parental incarceration;

Federal regulations specifically state that none of the conditions listed below, singly or in combination, qualify as circumstances meriting a change in dependency status:

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

2026-2027 Request for Unusual Circumstances Adjustment Form

Student Name:	Student ID#:

The Financial Aid Office will make a determination regarding this request using documentation provided with this form. After reviewing the documentation, the Financial Aid Office will notify the student via e-mail regarding the outcome. Allow two to three weeks for notification.

1. LETTER FROM THE STUDENT

1. Explain the unusual circumstance beyond your control.
2. Describe your current living situation.
3. Summarize your method of financial support since leaving your parent's home.

2. SUBMIT AT LEAST TWO LETTERS FROM RELIABLE THIRD PARTIES

1. Include a signed letter from a reliable third party who can support and verify your circumstances. Third parties may include adults who are familiar with your situation, such as a counselor, teacher, clergy, and attorney. Third parties do not include your parents or other relatives. Letters must be signed and on professional letterhead.
2. Include a second signed letter from a different third party who can also support and verify your circumstances. If this is not possible, you can substitute a signed letter from an adult relative besides your parents who can support and verify your circumstances. Letters must be signed and also on letterhead if the third party is a professional (ex. school counselor).
3. Any additional documentation or signed letters of support (optional).

3. SIGNATURE CERTIFICATION

By signing below, I certify that this request for a unusual circumstance adjustment does not include any false or misleading information.

Student Signature:	Date:

Please print, sign, and submit the completed form to the Office of Financial Aid. To avoid processing delays, please email all documents. .