

Explanation of Dependency Status for Financial Aid (2025-26)

Warning: According to the U.S. Department of Education, if you purposely give false or misleading information, you may be subject to a fine of up to \$20,000, imprisonment for up to five years, or both.

Dependency Status (FAFSA Questions)

Students are classified as dependent or independent because federal student aid programs are based on the idea that student's contributors have the primary responsibility of paying for their children's education. Certain questions on the student aid application will determine whether you are considered **dependent** on your contributors and will be required to report their income and assets as well as your own, or whether you are **independent** and will only be required to report your own income and assets.

For the 2025-2026 academic year, a student is **automatically determined to be an independent applicant** for Federal Student Aid if he/she meets any one of the following criteria:

1. Born before January 1, 2001
2. Married or separated but not divorced (as of the day the FAFSA was completed)
3. Currently 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 or will have children who receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026
6. Have dependents (other than your children or spouse) who live with you and who receive more than half of their support from you, between July 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026
7. At any time since you turned age 13, both your contributors were deceased, you were in foster care or you were a dependent or ward of the court
8. As determined by a court in your state of legal residence, you are or were an emancipated minor
9. As determined by a court in your state of legal residence, you are or were in legal guardianship
10. At any time on or after July 1, 2024, your high school or school district homeless liaison, the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, or the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program determined that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless

A student is not considered independent for financial aid purposes solely on the basis of living outside of the contributor's home or being self-supporting.

Unusual Circumstances (Dependency Override)

Sometimes students have unusual circumstances and ask that the financial aid office review their dependency status. The financial aid office provides the following guidelines to students requesting a status review.

1. Independent status will be considered if an irrevocable severance of family ties due to extremely difficult/life threatening situations exist, **and** the student no longer resides with or has contact with his/her contributors.
2. Acceptable situations may include that the student was abandoned by the contributors or was forced to sever ties because of physical or mental abuse, or was faced with a life-threatening situation, **and** the student no longer resides with or has contact with his/her contributors.

Detailed documentation supporting the change of status request must be provided by the student.

Unwarranted Situations

Students requesting to change their status to independent or self-supporting should be aware that the following situations do not warrant such a change of status:

1. Contributors refuse to contribute to the student's education
2. Contributors refuse to provide required information on the FAFSA
3. Contributors live out-of-state or out of the country
4. Student chose not to live with the contributors
5. Student chose to live with other relatives
6. Student chose not to have communication with the contributors
7. Student will not qualify for aid if contributor's income is used
8. Student demonstrates total self-sufficiency