

AN EXPLANATION OF DEPENDENCY STATUS FOR FINANCIAL AID FOR THE 2009-2010 YEAR

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Students are classified as dependent or independent because Federal student aid programs are based on the idea that student's parents 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 parents and must report their income and assets as well as your own, or whether you are **independent** and must report only your own income and assets.

For the 2009-2010 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. the student was born before January 1, 1986;
2. at the beginning of the 2009-2010 academic year, the student is working on a master's or doctorate program;
3. the student is married (*as of the date the FAFSA is completed by the student*);
4. the student has children who receive more than half of their support from the student; or
5. the student has dependents (other than a spouse or children) who live with the student and receive more than half of their support from the student, now and through June 30, 2010;
6. both of the student's parents are deceased or the student is/was an orphan or ward of the court until the age of 18;
7. the student is a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces (*called to active duty for service other than training*).
8. Are you currently serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for purposes other than training?
9. At any time since you turned age 13, if both parents deceased, were in foster care or if you were a dependent or ward of the court.
10. If you are or were an emancipated minor as determined by a court in your state of legal residence.
11. If you are or were in legal guardianship as determined by a court in your state of legal residence.
12. If at anytime on or after July 1, 2009, did your high school or school district homeless liaison determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless. If a director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development determined that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless. Or 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.

You will be required to provide documentation if any of these situation have been selected on your FAFSA application.

Where a student lives really does not matter in determining how a student files for aid. A student who lives outside of the parent's home is not automatically independent for financial aid purposes. A student may be independent for financial aid purposes, and still be living in the parent's home.

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 exists, and the student no longer resides with his/her parents.
2. Acceptable situations may include that the student was abandoned by the parents, 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 his/her parents.

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

Students who want us to change their status to independent or self-supporting should be aware that the following situations do **not** warrant such a change of status.

- *parents refuse to contribute to the student's education
- *parents refuse to provide required information
- *parents live out-of-state
- *student chose not to live with the parents
- *student chose to live with other relatives
- *student has no communication with the parents
- *student will not qualify for aid if parent's income is used
- *student demonstrates total self-sufficiency