



Student Unusual Circumstances



FAFSA PROCESS

STEP 1

Determine your Circumstances



If you are a dependent student on the FAFSA but are experiencing **unusual circumstances**, the FAFSA will consider you to be **provisionally independent**, and will allow you to fill out the form as an independent student (parental information not required).

A student may be experiencing **unusual circumstances** if they:

- Left home due to an abusive or threatening environment
- Are abandoned by or estranged from their parents and have not been adopted
- Have refugee or asylee status and are separated from their parents, or their parents are displaced in a foreign country
- Are a victim of human trafficking
- Are incarcerated, or their parents are incarcerated and contact with the parents would pose a risk to the student, or
- Are otherwise unable to contact or locate their parents and have not been adopted

STEP 2

Gather Supporting Documentation



Acceptable documentation (as defined by Federal Student Aid) in support of your **unusual circumstances** include but are not limited to:

- A documented interview between you and the Financial Aid Officer
- Submission of a court order or official Federal or State documentation that your parents or legal guardian(s) are incarcerated
- A documented phone call or written statement from an attorney, a guardian ad litem, a court-appointed special advocate (or similar), or a representative of a TRIO or GEAR UP program that confirms the circumstances and the person's relationship to you
- A documented determination of independence made by the Financial Aid Officer at another institution in the same or a prior award year
- Utility bills, health insurance, or other documents that demonstrate your separation from parents or legal guardians
- A documented phone call with or a written statement from a State, county, or Tribal welfare agency, OR an independent living case worker who supports current and former foster youth with the transition to adulthood, OR a public or private agency, facility, or program servicing the victims of abuse, neglect, assault, or violence

STEP 3

Meet with the Financial Aid Office



Your **Student Aid Index (SAI)** will remain provisional and not official until the Financial Aid Office(s) at the postsecondary institution(s) you listed on the FAFSA make a final determination. The Financial Aid Office will review the supporting documentation you have gathered, and may ask you additional questions about your circumstances.

The Financial Aid Office will determine if your circumstances make you eligible to apply independently and, if so, will make any necessary updates to your FAFSA to formally make you independent.

