

Unusual Circumstances Information

(Dependency Override)

When you completed your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the questions in the student status section determined that you were required to apply for Financial Aid as a *Dependent* student and include your PARENT(S) information. Financial Aid administrators have the authority to change a student's dependency status, based on supporting documentation, from dependent to independent in cases of extreme, or unusual family circumstances.

****When referring to "Parent(s)" in this document we are referring to a student's biological parent(s) or adoptive parent(s) (if adopted at age 12 or earlier)*

What is considered Homeless/at Risk of Being Homeless?

- If at any time on or after July 1, 2023, you were considered unaccompanied and either (1) homeless or (2) self-supporting and at risk of being homeless additional documentation can be submitted to establish Homelessness/ Risk of Being Homeless.
 - Unaccompanied: You are not living in the physical custody of your parent or guardian. This could be on a consistent, prolonged, or irregular basis.
 - Homeless: Lacking fixed, regular, and adequate housing. You may be homeless if you're living in shelters, parks, motels, hotels, public spaces, camping grounds, cars, and abandoned buildings, or if you're temporarily living with other people because you have nowhere else to go. If you're living in any of these situations and fleeing an abusive parent, we may consider you homeless even if your parent would otherwise provide you with a place to live.
 - At Risk: Your housing may cease to be fixed, regular, and adequate. For example, you are being evicted or have been asked to leave your current residence and have been unable to find fixed, regular, and adequate housing.

What is an Unusual Circumstance/Dependency Override?

- A student for whom a financial aid administrator makes a documented determination of independence by reason of unusual circumstances and in which the student is unable to contact a parent or where contact with parents poses a risk to such student.
- ***Some examples of extreme, or unusual family circumstances:***
 - Abusive family environment (physical, mental, sexual abuse, or other forms of domestic violence)
 - Abandonment by both parents (usually in cases of one or more years)
 - Incarceration or institutionalization (mental and/or physical illness) of both parents
 - Parent(s)' whereabouts unknown or parent(s) cannot be located
 - An unsuitable household (child removed from household and placed in foster care)
 - Other extenuating circumstances that can be sufficiently documented.

What DOES NOT qualify as an Unusual Circumstance/ Dependency Override?

- Please note according to the Department of Education, the conditions listed below ***DO NOT*** qualify as unusual circumstances meriting a Dependency Override:
 - Parent(s) are refusing to contribute to the student's education
 - Parent(s) are unwilling to provide information on the FAFSA or for verification
 - Parent(s) are not claiming student as a dependent for income tax purposes
 - Student demonstrates total self-sufficiency
 - Student does not live with their parent(s)

Return completed form to Student Financial Services | Old Main 108

Email: financial@wtamu.edu Phone: (806)651-2055 Email: scholarships@wtamu.edu

INSTRUCTIONS:

Complete all requirements outlined below before submitting this appeal to the Financial Aid Office. Be thorough as the information provided on this appeal will ultimately determine your eligibility to receive financial aid at WTAMU.

1. Write a **SIGNED PERSONAL STATEMENT** on a separate piece of paper explaining your situation and attach it to this form. You must describe your current relationship (even if it is non-existent) with your biological or adoptive father and mother. Please address the following questions in your statement:
 - Describe the nature of your relationship with each of your parent(s) and provide a detailed account of your circumstances.
 - Provide the date and place of your last contact with your parent(s).
 - Do you live with someone other than your parent(s)? Does that person financially support you? How long have you lived with this person(s)?
 - Do you support yourself? If yes, what year did you begin supporting yourself?
2. Provide a **LETTER FROM A PROFESSIONAL** who is familiar with your case and can verify reasons for your independent status request (i.e. high school or college counselor, social services agency official, pastor or clergy member, mental health professional, law enforcement officer, teacher, etc.) The letter must be on *official letterhead* and must include the individual's name, title or position, address, contact number, and original signature. The letter must also contain the following information:
 - Describe the nature of the person's relationship with the student and length of time known.
 - Describe any knowledge of the student's relationship with his/her parent(s).
 - Describe when the last time the student lived with and/or received financial support from his/her parent(s).
3. Provide a **PERSONAL REFERENCE LETTER** - This individual should preferably be someone that is not related to you and should be able to verify the reasons why you are not able to provide your parent(s)' information on the FAFSA (i.e. friend, co-worker, neighbor, mentor, etc.). The letter must include the individual's name, relationship to you, address, contact number and original signature. The letter must also contain the following information:
 - Describe the nature of the person's relationship with the student and length of time known.
 - Describe any knowledge of the student's relationship with his/her parent(s).
 - Describe when the last time the student lived with and/or received financial support from his/her parent(s).
4. Provide **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION** that verifies/substantiates the reasons for your independent status request. This is an essential part of your petition as providing sufficient documentation supports your statements. Some examples of supporting documentation are:
 - Documentation confirming that a parent is deceased, institutionalized, or incarcerated.
 - Documentation confirming that there is a protection/restraining order prohibiting you from having contact with your parent(s).
 - Other legal documentation to explain why parental information could not be obtained to determine financial eligibility
5. Complete the **2024-2025 FAFSA**. If you do not have parent information available, you may leave responses to parent questions blank on the FAFSA, pending review of your Dependency Override Appeal by the Financial Aid Office. Note that your FAFSA will be considered rejected and incomplete without parental information. Make sure WTAMU's school code (003665) is listed on the FAFSA.
6. If indicating you are self-supporting financially, the following documents are required:
 - Your 2023 tax return and W2's
 - Your Year to date paycheck stubs



Unusual Circumstances Application

Student Name _____

Today's Date _____

Buff ID Number _____

A. Student Self Identification (*Homeless/At Risk*)

At any time on or after July 1, 2023, were you unaccompanied and either (1) homeless or (2) self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?

Y or N

If the Answer is "Yes," did any of the following determine you were/are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless? (Check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Director or designee of an emergency or transitional shelter, street outreach program, homeless youth drop-in center, or other program serving those experiencing homelessness	<input type="checkbox"/> The student's high school or school district homeless liaison or designee If this selection: Provide an official homelessness letter from your high schools homeless liaison or designee	<input type="checkbox"/> Director or designee of a project supported by a federal TRIO or GEAR UP program grant	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial aid administrator (FAA)	<input type="checkbox"/> None of these apply
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B. Student Self Identification (*Unusual Circumstance*)

Do you have contact with your Parent(s)/Legal Guardian?

Y or N

Is your Parent(s) /Legal Guardian refusing to provide information on the FAFSA?

Y or N

C. Student Acknowledgment (*student initial by each statement*)

By signing this form, I certify that:

_____ All statements and/or supporting documentation are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

_____ I understand that further documentation may be requested if needed in order to reach a decision.

_____ Once a decision has been made, I will be notified in writing via my WTAMU student email.

_____ I understand that if my petition is denied, my status will remain as a Dependent Student and I will need to provide parental information to continue with my application for financial aid.

_____ If my appeal is approved, I must adhere to the Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy posted on the WTAMU Financial Aid website to continue receiving aid at WTAMU.

My signature below affirms that the information provided above is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that providing false information can result in the denial of this request.

ACTUAL SIGNATURES ARE REQUIRED. (Typed names will not be accepted.)

Student's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Student's Name: _____

Buff ID # _____

This section is for SFS Director use only

Approved Denied Initials: _____

Approved Denied Initials: _____

Approved Denied Initials: _____

Date Reviewed: _____

Student Financial Services Representative Signature:

Additional Director Comments:
