

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.

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.

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

Certain questions on the FAFSA 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 current 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. Will you be 24 or older by Dec. 31 of the school year for which you are applying for financial aid?
2. Will you be working toward a master's or doctorate degree (such as M.A., M.B.A., M.D., J.D., Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.)?
3. Are you married or separated but not divorced?
4. Do you have children who receive more than half of their support from you?
5. Do you have dependents (other than children or a spouse) who live with you and receive more than half of their support from you?
6. At any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care, or were you a ward or dependent of the court?
7. Are you an emancipated minor or are you in a legal guardianship as determined by a court?
8. Are you an unaccompanied youth who is homeless or self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?
9. Are you currently serving on active duty in the U.S. armed forces for purposes other than training?
10. Are you a veteran of the U.S. armed forces?

\*For additional dependency information see the FAFSA application online or visit [www.StudentAid.gov/dependency](http://www.StudentAid.gov/dependency)

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.

**WARNING:** According to the U.S. Department of Education, if you purposely give false or misleading information on any documentation you may be subject to a fine of up to \$20,000 or imprisonment for up to 5 years, or both.