**Dependency Status**

**Dependent Students**

Dependent students must report information for their parent(s). Typically, a student is considered dependent if they:

* are <24 years old
* are unmarried
* are working toward an undergraduate degree
* have no children OR provide <50% of their children's financial support
* since age 13, have **never**been in a legal guardianship; been in foster care; been a ward of the court; had both parent deceased; became an emancipated minor; or been determined to be an unaccompanied youth who is homeless, self-supporting, or at risk of being homeless
* are not on active military duty

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| Students with a Legal Guardian | For the FAFSA, students with a legal guardian are considered independent. For the CSS, we typically include the legal guardian as the custodial parent, but a few schools prefer something different. For students with 1-2 CSS schools, call ahead of time and find out the policy. |
| Married Students | For the FAFSA, students who are married are considered independent and they will need to include their spouse's financial information. For the CSS, married students are considered independent, but some schools still require parental information to be provided. |
| Students with Children | For the FAFSA, students with children are only independent **if they provide more than 50% of their children's financial support**. For the CSS, students with children include them in the registration process ONLY if they provide more than 50% of their financial support. If not, they should be included as additional family members. |
| Homelessness | For the FAFSA, students who have been homeless at any time since July 1 should indicate this on the dependency page, but only self-supporting/unaccompanied youth will be deemed independent. Students fleeing an abusive parent may be considered homeless even if the parent would provide support and a place to live. If students do not have an official determination of their status, they will need to apply for a dependency override (more information below) from each school on their FAFSA. |

**Independent Students**

**Dependency Override**  
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Financial aid administrators have the authority to change a student's status from dependent to independent in cases involving unusual circumstances. In these cases, we can help a student work with financial aid officers to prove independent status, which usually consists of a third party letter and potential proof of unusual circumstances.

Although these circumstances are not sufficient for a dependency override, they do not preclude it. Sometimes there are additional circumstances that occur in conjunction with these circumstances that do merit a dependency override. These can include the following:

* an abusive family environment (e.g. sexual, physical, or mental abuse or other forms of domestic violence)
* abandonment by parents
* incarceration or institutionalization of both parents
* parents lacking the physical or mental capacity to raise the child
* parents' whereabouts unknown or parents cannot be located
* parents hospitalized for an extended period
* an unsuitable household (e.g. child removed from the household and placed in foster care)
* married student's spouse dies or student gets divorced

The following circumstances do not merit a dependency override, either alone or in combination:

* Parents refuse to contribute to the student's education
* Parents are unwilling to provide information on the application or for verification
* Parents do not claim the student as a dependent for income tax purposes
* Student demonstrates total self-sufficiency