

# Special Circumstances

In accordance with federal regulations, the Financial Aid Office may take into account special circumstance(s) that affects the family's ability to pay for a college education that are not reflected in the information provided on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Financial Aid administrators can make adjustments to a student's expected family contribution (EFC) for education expenses and/or financial aid dependency status as determined by federal guidelines. These adjustments are only made after receiving sufficient documentation from a student to justify an exception to normal federal financial aid program guidelines.

## Change of Circumstance/Professional Judgment Request

Significant changes in your family's income may merit recalculating your financial aid eligibility. Please review the information below to determine if you have an eligible reason for a Change of Circumstance Request.

### *Eligible Reasons for a Change of Circumstance Request*

- **Loss or reduction of income.** This income reduction must be documented.
- **Loss or reduction of untaxed income.** This includes the loss of social security, AFDC/TANF, child support, alimony, disability payment, worker's compensation, or other untaxed income.
- **Change in marital status during the calendar year.** The student (dependent or independent) marries or parent (if dependent) or spouse (if independent) is no longer residing in household due to separation or divorce **AFTER** the FAFSA has been filed.
- **Death of parent or spouse.** The parent (if dependent) or spouse (if independent) passes away **AFTER** the FAFSA has been filed.
- **Permanent and total disability.** Parent (if dependent), student or spouse (if independent) suffered a permanent and total disability.

## [Professional Judgment Form](#)

# Petition for Independent Status/Dependency Override

The U.S. Department of Education determines your student dependency status based on the information you provided in the FAFSA. In certain situations, students may submit an appeal to the Financial Aid Office requesting that their dependency status to be overridden. The Financial Aid Office will use this process to review your situation and determine if you are eligible to be considered an independent student. A petition can only be approved in certain limited and exceptional circumstances.

*Important Notice: The unwillingness and/or inability of your parents to financially support you and/or living on your own and paying your own bills are not by themselves reasons that demonstrate "exceptional circumstances" and cannot be considered.*

1. A signed and dated statement that includes a complete history of

- Your relationship with your biological and/or legally adoptive parents
- Specific dates of events that caused your separation from your parents
- Additional information regarding your self-support may be requested.

2. A signed and dated letters from a professional (on their letterhead) documenting their first-hand knowledge of your exceptional circumstance. Additionally, two other letters detailing first-hand knowledge of your home situation must be submitted. The two additional letters should be written by friends, coworkers, or other family members who have first-hand knowledge of your situation. The Financial Aid Office may contact any and all references for additional information or clarification of your situation.

- Professionals include clergy, counselors, social workers, police, teachers, physicians, etc.
- Letters should be detailed and refer to actual events—they should not be restatements of information you have shared about relevant events, but should reflect the writer's direct knowledge.
- Police reports may, in some cases, substitute for one of the required letters.

To begin the process, please [finaid@snead.edu](mailto:finaid@snead.edu). We will discuss your situation and provide instructions on how to begin the process.