

# APPEAL FOR UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCE 2023-2024

The Higher Education Act of 2008 requires parent information be reported for students who do not meet the independent student rules listed in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). However, if family conditions exist which prevent students from having contact with their parents, they can appeal for independent status.

**Please be aware that the following circumstances are not considered sufficient reasons for appeal:** You live separately from your parents; your parents do not claim you as a dependent on their taxes; your parents refuse to provide information for the FAFSA; or your parents feel they cannot afford to assist with college expenses. If one of these situations exist, they are not sufficient for an appeal and parental information must be included on your FAFSA. In the section below, we have provided examples of acceptable circumstances for appealing.

## REASON FOR APPEAL

- Severe circumstances within your family that prevent you from obtaining your parents' financial information, such as:
  - An abusive home situation that is detrimental to your physical or mental well-being
  - Abandonment by both biological parents
  - History of neglect due to parental alcohol or drug abuse
  - Incarceration of custodial parent
  - The death of a parent after filing the FAFSA, and the surviving parent meets at least one of the severe circumstances described above.
  - You are a non-citizen of the United States of America (who is otherwise eligible to receive Federal financial aid) and you are unable to communicate with your parents who live in a foreign country that has longstanding political or civil unrest.
- You have extenuating circumstances not described above, which prevent you from obtaining your parents' financial information.

## INSTRUCTIONS

### **STEP 1 – Submit the following items:**

- A signed and dated personal statement explaining the basis of your appeal.
- Attach a signed statement on letterhead from an **adult professional\*** (who is not a family member) who can verify the circumstances described in your personal statement.

**STEP 2 – Appeal is Reviewed:** A financial aid officer will review the appeal and notify you of their decision or if they require any additional information. Students will be notified in their MyInfo Secure Area with an Important Message.

### **STEP 3 – Appeal Decision:**

- If approved, the financial aid officer will change your FAFSA to indicate that you are an independent student and provide instructions on any additional steps needed to complete for the financial aid process.
- If denied, the financial aid officer will provide instructions on how to complete the financial aid process as a dependent student.

**NOTE:** Please contact the Financial Aid Office if you have any questions about this appeal process.

\*Examples of adult professionals include clergy members, attorneys, school guidance counselors, medical doctors, mental health professionals, teachers or professors, law enforcement officers, professional staff of Children and Family Services, or officers of the court. Statements from adult professionals must be signed on agency letterhead and must include the professional title of the person writing the statement. Other references not represented by an agency must be notarized.

**Certification and Signature(s):** I certify the information I am submitting is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that purposely giving false or misleading information may result in fines, penalties, and/or reduction or immediate repayment of aid. I understand that the information provided may affect my financial aid eligibility/award.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date