

Professional Judgment

The Office of Financial Aid may determine that unusual circumstances warrant a professional judgment to modify the data on a completed FAFSA. We will review your FAFSA and ask for documentation, on a case-by-case basis, to support your request for special consideration in adjusting your FAFSA information. **It is important to know that not all changes in circumstances will result in an adjustment to the student's eligibility.** Applications are reviewed after all supporting documents are received.

Deadlines

A request for professional judgment should be submitted in writing as soon as possible after the FAFSA has been completed. The absolute deadline for the request is January 1 of the award year for which the request is made (this would be the year of the current FAFSA). All documents must be in the office by February 1 of the award year.

It is best, however, to submit notification of any possible changes to FAFSA information as soon as possible so that financial aid award letters may be adjusted in a timely way.

Discretion of Financial Aid Administrators

The Department of Education states that “ A Financial Aid Administrator’s decision regarding adjustments is final and cannot be appealed to the Department.”

Special Circumstances

If you or your family has experienced a recent hardship that is not reflected on your current FAFSA form, such as loss of income or unusually high medical expenses, you may request a reevaluation of your financial aid eligibility. To begin the appeal process, contact the Financial Aid Office as soon as possible after completing your FAFSA. Examples of forms you may be required to submit are:

- W2 form(s) confirming a change in wages
- Current or final paycheck stubs
- Earnings summary from the unemployment office
- Termination notice from former employer
- Medical/dental payments not covered by insurance
- Legal documentation of marriage, divorce or separation
- Adoption or guardianship documents to verify changes in dependents
- Other documentation to verify changes in family income or assets

Dependency Override

In certain unusual cases, the Financial Aid Office can use professional judgment to make a dependent student independent through a process called Dependency Override due to extenuating circumstances. When a Dependency Override is approved, a student is no longer required to include parental information on the FAFSA. Extenuating circumstances must be verifiable and documented by a third party, and examples include:

- Parents hospitalized for an extended period
- Abandonment by parents
- Abusive situation in the home
- Unsuitable or unsafe household
- Incarceration of parents
- Death of spouse or divorce of married student
- Parents whereabouts unknown or parents cannot be located

Parental refusal to provide information on the FAFSA does not warrant a Dependency Override

The Financial Aid Office will advise you of the documentation required for a Dependency Override.