

# FAFSA Hot Topics



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- Special Circumstances
- Dependency Status
- Who is Considered a Parent

# *Special Circumstances*

# Special Circumstances



In certain circumstances the Financial Aid Office can adjust the income used on the FAFSA to recalculate eligibility. This re-evaluation is done on a case-by case basis and can vary by institution. Some acceptable conditions are:

- Unemployment
- Disability
- Retirement
- Death of a Parent
- Separation/ Divorce
- Loss of untaxed income
- Loss of child support/ alimony

# Special Circumstances (cont.)



Special circumstances does not allow a financial aid administrator to:

- Modify either the formula or the tables used in the EFC calculation
- Adjust data elements or the cost of attendance solely because you believe the tables and formulas are inadequate

Important Facts:

- The adjustment is only valid at the college making it
- The decision is final and cannot be appealed!!!

# Special Circumstances Steps



- Students must submit their FAFSA using prior-prior income regardless of their parents unusual circumstances
- Most schools will not consider reviewing the special circumstances until the student has made a commitment to attend
- The student must be prepared to pay the cost of the institution based on the initial financial aid offer
- There is no guarantee the special circumstances may be enough to cause an award to be provided or increased

# Examples of Documentation



- Federal Tax Return
- Termination Letter
- Unemployment Benefits
- Loss of Benefits Statement
- Divorce Decree
- Death Certificate

**\*Additional documentation maybe requested at the FAO's discretion**

# *Questions from Chat?*



# *Dependency Status*

# FAFSA Dependency Questions



45. Were you born before January 1, 1998?
46. As of today, are you married? (Also answer “Yes” if you are separated but not divorced.)
47. At the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year, will you be working on a master’s or doctorate program (such as MA, MBA, MD, JD, PhD, EdD, graduate certificate, etc.)?
48. Are you currently serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for purposes other than training?

# FAFSA Dependency Questions



49. Are you a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces?
50. Do you now have or will you have children who will receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022?
51. Do you have dependents (other than your children or spouse) who live with you and who receive more than half of their support from you, now and through June 30, 2022?

# FAFSA Dependency Questions



52. At any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care or were you a dependent or ward of the court?
53. As determined by a court in your state of legal residence, are you or were you an emancipated minor?
54. Does someone other than your parent or stepparent have legal guardianship of you, as determined by a court in your state of legal residence?

# FAFSA Dependency Questions



55. At any time on or after July 1, 2020, **did your high school or school district homeless liaison determine** that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?
56. At any time on or after July 1, 2020, **did the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development determine** that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?
57. At any time on or after July 1, 2020, **did the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program determine** that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?

# What Happens When...



- A student is unable to answer yes to any of the dependency questions and does not have contact or live with their parent, they should discuss their circumstances with their financial aid administrator
- Next:
  - Prepare Proof of Documentation
  - Contact Financial Aid Officer (FAO)

# Examples of Documentation



- Statement from Student
- Legal documentation (custody papers)
- Dependency Override Form (school specific)
- Third Party Statement- Firsthand knowledge of student's circumstances on letterhead
  - School Counselor
  - Minister
  - Mentor

\*Additional information maybe requested at FAO's discretion

# *Questions from Chat?*



# *Who is Considered a Parent?*

# Who is Considered a Parent?



- Dependent students are required to report parent information on the FAFSA
- Parent Means-
  - Biological
  - Adoptive
  - Stepparent

# Who is Considered a Parent? (cont.)



- Never Married
  - If your parent was never married and does not live with your other legal parent, or if your parent is widowed and not remarried, answer the question about that parent you lived with the most
- Unmarried and both parents living together:
  - If your legal parents (biological, adoptive or as determined by the state [for example, if the parent is listed on the birth certificate]) are not married but live together *regardless of gender*
  - If your legal parents are divorced but living together, select “Unmarried and both parents living together.”

# Who is Considered a Parent? (cont.)



## **Married or remarried:**

- If your legal parents are married, select “Married or remarried.”
- If your legal parents are separated but living together, select “Married or remarried,” not “Divorced or separated.”
- If your custodial parent is remarried to someone else, answer the questions about that parent and your stepparent.
- Divorced or separated:
- Answer about the parent you lived with more during the past 12 months.  
(If you did not live with one parent more than the other, give answers about the parent who provided more financial support during the past 12 months or during the most recent year that you actually received support from a parent.) If this parent is remarried as of today, answer the questions about that parent and your stepparent

## **Widowed:**

- If your widowed parent is remarried as of today, answer the questions about that parent and your stepparent.

# Who is Not Considered a Parent



The following people are not the parent unless they have legally adopted the student:

- Widowed Stepparent
- Grandparents
- Foster Parents
- Legal Guardians
- Older Siblings
- Aunts and Uncles
- Boyfriends/Girlfriends

# ***Final Questions from Chat!***

***Thank You!!!  
Be Safe!***