

## Unusual Circumstances affecting Dependency Status – Definitions and Documentation for the 2025-2026 FAFSA

Typically, a student is independent only if the student is married, has a dependent child, has other dependents, is over the age of 24, or is a veteran of U.S. Armed Forces. However, an applicant may be considered independent in the unusual circumstances described below

Status	Definition	Documentation to submit to the Bristol Financial Aid Office <small>Additional documentation may be requested</small>
Unaccompanied Youth	This is defined as a student who was determined by a high school or homeless liaison to be an unaccompanied youth who was homeless at any time after July 1, <b>2024</b> .	Letter from the school district liaison on official letterhead stating that student was considered an unaccompanied youth.
Homeless	For the FAFSA, homeless is defined by the McKinney-Vento Act and means individuals who lack fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, within the meaning of section 103(a)(1) at any time after July 1, <b>2024</b> . Generally, you are homeless if your primary nighttime residence is a public or private place not designed to be used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings; living in motels or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; living in emergency shelters.  You are NOT homeless UNTIL you do not have a place to sleep at night and must use shelters, outdoors, or places not meant to be homes. If you had to find a place to live, like with a friend, in a house, you are not homeless. If your parents no longer want you living with them, you are not homeless unless you can demonstrate that you were at risk for harm if you continued to live with your parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A personal statement which explains your homeless situation</li> <li>AND</li> <li>Letter from homeless shelter, social worker, professional counselor, physician on official letterhead affirming that you are homeless and the time period of homelessness or that you are currently homeless due to the risk for harm when living with parents.</li> </ul>
Emancipated Minor	An emancipated minor is an individual who has petitioned the court for legal emancipation to be freed from control by parents and the parents are freed from any responsibility for the child. This means that you, the student, would have filed a personal petition with the court for this decision. Note that this is not the same as a parent's request for child support emancipation.	Court document demonstrating the legal emancipation decision <small>(documentation must show that you are currently legally emancipated or that you were legally emancipated at the time you became 18 years of age)</small>
Legal Guardianship	Legal guardianship must be court-appointed. Note that you or your parents are not considered legal guardians for this situation.	Court order demonstrating legal guardianship <small>(court document must show that you are currently under legal guardianship or that you were under legal guardianship at the time you became 18 years of age)</small>
Foster Care or Ward of State	If you were in foster care or a ward of the state at any time after you turned age 13, you should check the appropriate box on the FAFSA.	Letter from social worker stating that you were in state care at some time after age 13.
Dependency Override	A dependency override can be requested in extreme, documentable situations in which parents' information cannot be obtained due to <i>estrangement</i> . Some conditions <i>do not</i> qualify as estrangement: parents refuse to contribute or are unwilling to provide information, parents do not claim student as an income tax dependent, the student demonstrates total self-sufficiency, or parent lives in another country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete the Request to Change Dependency Status form</li> <li>AND</li> <li>Letter from professional counselor, high school counselor, social worker, or clergy documenting estrangement</li> </ul>
Parents Refuse	If you are considered a dependent student but your parents refuse to provide financial information or support and you do not qualify for a dependency override, you can request that your parental information requirement be waived. However, you will remain a dependent applicant and be considered for federal unsubsidized loans only.	Complete the Parent Refuse Form