



UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCE

2025-26 Dependency Change

Federal law assumes that the family has the primary responsibility for meeting the educational costs of students. Therefore, a student must meet certain federal criteria to qualify for financial aid as an independent student. If you do not meet one of the criteria listed on the FAFSA, you will be evaluated as a dependent student, meaning that your parents must provide income and asset information. If there are extraordinary circumstances that may warrant a re-evaluation of your dependency status, provide the following information so that the Financial Aid Office may make this determination.

A financial aid administrator may override a student's dependency status because of "other unusual circumstances" that exist in the family, which cause parents to be unable to assist the dependent student with his/her educational expenses. "Unusual circumstances" may include, but are not limited to:

- ✦ Student has been a victim of domestic violence and no longer resides with parents;
- ✦ Student has been part of an abusive family environment (e.g., sexual, physical or mental abuse);
- ✦ Abandonment by parents (i.e., no contact for one year and no support for at least one year);
- ✦ Incarceration or institutionalization of both parents; or
- ✦ Death of both parents (or death of only parent in a single family household)

The following circumstances **DO NOT** merit a dependency override:

- ✦ Student demonstrates total self-sufficiency;
- ✦ Parents refuse to contribute to the student's education;
- ✦ Parents are unwilling to provide information on the FAFSA or for verification;
- ✦ Parents do not claim the student as a dependent for income tax purposes

If you believe you have an unusual circumstance that would qualify you as independent from your parents, you are requested to complete the following:

1. Request for Change of Dependency (attached)
2. Personal Letter (attached) – A letter stating your extenuating circumstances, what has caused you to become independent from your parents, when you became independent and how you have provided for your own necessities (shelter, food, clothing, transportation, medical care, etc.).
3. Professional Letter – A letter on letterhead from a guidance counselor, teacher, coach, physician, social worker, clergy, or other individuals who have been involved in the circumstances in a professional capacity. All letters need to include a telephone number and address where the individual can be reached for follow-up questions.
4. Reference Letters (attached) – Two reference letters from third parties (friend, aunt, uncle, siblings, grandparents, etc.) who personally have knowledge of your situation and who can verify your circumstances.
5. Signed copies of your 2023 and 2024 federal tax returns. If a tax return was not filed, submit a statement of nonfiling from the IRS.

This information will be used to make a decision. In some cases a personal interview with the Director of Financial aid may be necessary to finalize a determination.



2025-26 Unusual Circumstances – Personal Letter

Student Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Current Address _____ City/State/Zip _____

EMAIL address _____

I have lived at this address since: Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

Describe your current relationship (even if it is non-existent) with your parent(s)

Provide the date and place of your last contact with your parent(s)

Provide information on how you have been supported (who you have been living with and for how long, the kind and amount of support that has been provided to you, and any kind of income you have earned or will earn)

Certification Statement:

I certify that all of the information reported is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that if all of the information requested is not supplied, my request will be denied.

Student's Signature

Date

Return this form and any attachments to:

Office of Financial Aid – East Texas Baptist University | One Tiger Drive, Marshall, TX 75670 | Phone: 903-923-2138

Email: financialaid@etbu.edu | Fax: 903-934-8120

