



Checklist for Unusual Circumstance Review for Independency Status

Dependent students requesting review for unusual circumstance for independency status must submit the following documentation to the CSU Financial Aid Office for consideration.

- Letter from student indicating request for independent status and reason for consideration. Documentation must include -
 1. Documentation of student's source and amount of income
 2. Explanation of how student supports self
 3. Living arrangements of student
- Letter from person that student is residing with verifying student's request for independency consideration.
- Letter from student's parent verifying student's request.
- Letter from reliable third-party source (non-relative) that explains the detail of student's unusual circumstance that warrants changing their dependency status. *Pastor, physician, counselor, etc. must provide documentation on letterhead.* Third-party documentation must include -
 1. Reason why student is not dependent upon parents (reasons must be detailed, and personal reasons are not acceptable)
 2. In addition to explaining student's unusual circumstance in detail, the letter should also indicate the length of time the student has been living independently and how student supported themselves in 2008, 2009 and (estimated) 2010.
- CSU Verification Worksheet. This document may be downloaded from the financial aid website at www.charlestonsouthern.edu.
- Signed copies of Student Federal Tax Return.

Upon receipt of all required documentation and valid FAFSA, student's file will be reviewed by a CSU Financial Aid Counselor. Additional information will be requested as necessary.

Review the guidelines for Federal Dependency Review on the back. If you have questions, please contact the CSU Enrollment Office in the Hunter Reception Center at 843-863-7050/ 800-947-7474, or by email at financialaid@csuniv.edu.

2010-2011 FEDERAL DEPENDENCY REVIEW GUIDELINES

The federal processor utilizes parental information in the calculation of federal student aid if the applicant does not meet any of the criteria (age, veteran status, graduate student status, marital status, ward of the court status, or have dependent children) that automatically qualifies a student as an independent student. The criteria for independence was placed into law by Congress in the Higher Education Amendments of July 23, 1993.

Federal regulations do grant financial aid offices discretion under sections 480(d) and 479A of the Higher Education Amendments of July 23, 1993 in the determination of a student's independent student status. However, the regulations also state that a dependency override can only be made on the basis of "unusual" circumstances. The Higher Education Act allows the financial aid office to make dependency overrides on a case-by-case basis for students with unusual circumstances. If an override is appropriate, the student must document the unusual circumstances. However, none of the conditions listed below, singly or in combination, qualify as unusual circumstances or merit a dependency override:

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

Unusual circumstances **do** include an abusive family environment or abandonment by parents and may cause any of the above conditions. In such cases a dependency override might be warranted.

Important: Changes resulting from this review do not guarantee an increase in aid.

Since student is claiming independence, the Parent(s) Information on the FAFSA was not completed. If it is determined that student does not meet the independence criteria after review, student will be required to make corrections on the FAFSA to submit Parent(s) Information. Additional documents that will need to be submitted are the CSU Verification Worksheet and Parents Federal Tax Return. The student's financial aid file is not complete until this information is provided.