



Financial Aid Office
 Aber Hall 5th Floor
 Missoula, MT 59812
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 Fax: (406) 243-4930
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Special Circumstance Request for Independent Status

Name: _____ UM ID#: 790 _____

E-Mail: _____ Phone#: _____

This request is for attendance beginning (circle term): Autumn / Spring of _____ year.

The Higher Education Act of 1992 clearly states which students shall be considered independent of parental support for educational costs. These rules are explained in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). If you do not qualify under those rules, the Financial Aid Administrator may consider, under professional judgment, exceptional circumstances that would allow a student to be given independent status.

Note: Any decision rendered from an office applies only to the school that makes the decision.

The following are situations that would not be considered a special circumstance:

- Your parents do not want to provide their information on your FAFSA; or
- Your parents refuse to contribute to your college expenses; or
- Your parents do not claim you as a dependent on their income taxes; or
- You do not live with your parents.

If one of these four situations exists, they are not sufficient for an appeal and you are not an independent student. You and your parent *must* include parental information on your federal application (FAFSA). The website to submit your parent information is www.fafsa.ed.gov.

REASON FOR APPEAL: The Financial Aid Office is required to consider parent information and expect a parental contribution for students who are not independent according to FAFSA definition **unless exceptions are made. Exceptions are made only when adequate documentation of extenuating family circumstances exists.** Extenuating circumstances are generally defined by students' inability to have contact with their parents.

Some examples are:

- a) An abusive home situation, which is detrimental to your physical or mental well-being
- b) Abandonment by both parents
- c) History of neglect due to parental alcohol or drug abuse
- d) Incarceration of the custodial parent
- e) You have extenuating circumstances not described above, which prevent you from having contact with your parents to obtain parental information for FAFSA filing.

Instructions for requesting an Appeal of Special Circumstance for Independent Status:

If you cannot provide parental information due to some unusual reason, you may appeal to waive the federal regulations requiring parental information by following the directions below:

- **Your letter of appeal that explains your situation should address the issues below:**
 - Identify the location of each of your parents.
 - Describe the last time you had contact with each parent –when, where, and the nature of the contact.
 - Explain why you cannot obtain parental information.
 - Describe when and how you have been self-supporting or supported by someone other than your parents:
 - a. When did you or someone other than your parents start meeting your expenses without parental support?
 - b. How have you (or someone other than your parents) provided for yourself?
- **Supporting letters should:**
 - Provide statements from two adults familiar with your situation who can corroborate the facts you present.
 - Examples of such persons would include clergy, social workers or other social services personnel, court officials (or copies of court documents), teachers, high school counselors, or police officers.
 - *At least one statement should be from someone who is not a relative or friend.*

Required documents to be submitted for your appeal:

- A completed *Special Circumstance Request for Independent Status* form (this form).
- Letter of explanation that describes your situation (attached).
- Letters of support (attached):
 - Letter #1:
Name of individual: _____
Job title or relationship: _____
 - Letter #2:
Name of individual: _____
Job title or relationship: _____

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** ____ / ____ / ____

Warning: If you purposely give false or misleading information to help establish eligibility for federal student aid, you may be subject to a \$20,000 fine, a prison sentence, or both.