

## Dependency Override Appeal (FAFSA) 2018 – 2019 Aid Year – Instructions

Federal financial aid regulations assume that a student's family has primary responsibility for meeting educational costs. If you are considered a dependent student according to the federal financial aid definition, your aid eligibility is determined by using parent income and asset information in addition to your information.

### What makes a student Dependent or Independent?

Your student dependency status is determined by the U.S. Department of Education based on your responses to specific questions on the FAFSA. For financial aid purposes, federal regulations have defined an independent student as one who meets **AT LEAST ONE** of the following conditions:

- Born before January 1, 1995;
- Married as of the date FAFSA signed;
- Have children who receive **more than half their support** from the student, OR has legal dependents, other than a spouse or children, who live with student and who receive **more than half their support** from the student;
- Veteran of U.S. Armed Forces (or will be a veteran as of June 30, 2018), or have attended a service academy and were released under a condition other than dishonorable;
- Currently serving on active duty in U.S. Armed Forces (other than for training);
- Emancipated Minor or in Legal Guardianship as determined by the court in her/his state of legal residence;
- Orphan, Ward of Court, Foster Care (after age 13);
- A self-supporting unaccompanied youth who is homeless or at risk of homelessness (as certified by governmental or school agency).

A student who does not meet **ANY** of the above conditions is classified as a Dependent student.

### What is a Dependency Override?

A dependency override occurs when a financial aid administrator exercises professional judgment and overrides the Department of Education's criteria for dependent students. An override may only be granted on a case-by-case basis for students with unusual & exceptional circumstances. These circumstances must show compelling reason for a student to be considered independent rather than dependent.

### What Conditions COULD warrant a Dependency Override?

- Documented Abandonment
- Physical or Mental Abuse
- Parental Drug Abuse
- Severe Estrangement from Parents
- Parental Mental Incapacity
- Parental Incarceration

## What Conditions DO NOT warrant a Dependency Override?

By Federal Law, the following conditions **DO NOT** warrant a dependency override:

- Parents refuse to provide information on the FAFSA application or for verification
- Parents do not claim student as a dependent for income tax purposes
- Parents unwilling or unable to contribute to student's education
- Student demonstrates self-sufficiency
- Student reluctant to request the income information from parents
- Student does not wish to communicate with parents

## Instructions for filing a Dependency Override:

Financial Aid Policy at Sierra College requires a student seeking a dependency override to complete the Dependency Override Appeal form.

You should complete this form if you are considered a dependent student for federal financial aid and believe you have extenuating circumstances which should allow you to be considered an independent student. Return the completed form with the required documentation to the Financial Aid Office. ***We understand the sensitive nature of these circumstances; all documentation received by our office will be kept confidential.***

1. Complete the 2018 – 2019 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) online at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov) prior to completing and submitting the Dependency Override Appeal.
2. Sierra College Financial Aid policy requires a student seeking a dependency override to complete the Sierra College Dependency Override Appeal. ***Decisions made at other institutions are not accepted.***
3. The determination of whether or not to approve a dependency override is made by the Financial Aid Office at Sierra College – not the U.S. Department of Education. All Dependency Override decisions made by the Financial Aid Office are FINAL and not appealable.
4. ***Third-Party Statements:*** Provide at least three letters from third-party adult individuals who personally have knowledge of your situation and who can verify your circumstances. ***We recommend at least two letters (on letterhead) be from a guidance counselor, physician, social worker, clergy person, or another individual who has been involved in the circumstances in a professional capacity.*** All letters must include details as to how the person knows you, how long they have known you, and how they have been involved and/or have first-hand knowledge of your situation.
5. The individuals submitting letters should not be related to one another, nor reside at the same address. A telephone number and address where the individual can be reached for follow up questions must be included.
6. Complete Page 3 of the Dependency Override Appeal

## What to expect after filing your Dependency Override Appeal:

***If your appeal is approved:*** We will notify you via email, and will submit the override to the Central Processing System. Your financial aid will then be packaged based on independent status. PLEASE NOTE: Additional documents may be required after the CPS has processed the revision to your dependency status. Be sure to check your Financial Aid tab on Mysierra for any additional items.

***If your appeal is not approved:*** We will notify you via email of our decision. In order to receive a financial aid package, you will be required to provide parent financial information and parent signatures on your FAFSA, using the FAFSA website ([www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov))

***All decisions on dependency overrides are made based on Professional Judgment by the Financial Aid Office at Sierra College. All decisions are FINAL.***

2018-19  
Dependency Override Appeal

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID \_\_\_\_\_

1. **Personal Statement:** In the space below, provide a detailed explanation of the unusual & extenuating circumstances that you believe warrant a review of your dependency status. Attach additional pages if necessary. Be sure to include the following:

- The nature of your relationship with **BOTH** of your parents.
- The location of both parents **AND** when you last had contact with them.
- Why you cannot obtain information and/or support from your parents.


2. Did you receive financial aid during the 2017-2018 year (Fall 2017, Spring 2018, or Summer 2018)?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If you answered "Yes," list the institution(s) you attended during the 2017– 2018 Academic year: \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Student Certification:**

I certify that the information provided on this appeal and attached documents is true, complete, and accurate. I understand that purposefully providing false information could result in a reduction and/or repayment of aid, and/or denial of future appeals in this and future years.

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Return this appeal and supporting documentation to the Financial Aid Office at Sierra College