

# Dependency Overrides

The federal government developed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid as the tool for calculating all students' aid in a fair way. For the vast majority of students it allows for a reasonable calculation of financial responsibility and aid eligibility. On very rare occasions, a student's situation may need to be reviewed more closely for possible adjustment.

In cases where a student is in an abusive family situation which creates extreme hardship preventing them from attending college, a dependency override may be considered by the Director of Financial Aid. Documented child abuse cases, release into DHS or court custody, or parental incarceration are examples of extreme situations that can be considered for an override. Such situations must be documented by two non-family sources and must involve a total abandonment by the parents from all emotional, financial and physical support for the student.

Note that factors such as:

**Parental willingness to give information or financial help to student,  
Whether or not the parents claim the student on their federal tax return and  
Whether or not the student lives with the parent  
...do not make a student eligible for a dependency override by themselves.**

To have a Dependency Override request considered, students must supply the following:

1. A letter written by the student requesting consideration as an independent student. This must clearly explain their relationship with their parents and detail how the family structure has been completely dissolved.
2. Completed FAFSA form or a Student Aid Report (SAR) if the initial aid application has already been submitted.
3. Copy of current year completed federal tax return for student showing sufficient income to have paid for all expenses.
4. At least two supporting letters submitted (preferably on letterhead) from independent agencies validating the student's breakdown in family structure. This may include, but is not limited to, letters from social services, foster-care givers, high school counselor, youth protection agency, church pastor, or copies of police records confirming abuse. No provider of a letter should be a family member. Other documentation may be submitted as the student deems appropriate.

## DEPENDENCY OVERRIDES ARE SIGNIFICANT

They are essentially a request to shift the responsibility of financing your education from your parents to the taxpayers. The government's expectation is that parents meet their own responsibility first. If parents choose to not help their children, their choice creates a great burden on the student, but does not justify by itself shifting their obligation to others. If it did, every parent would be wise to choose such an option. So dependency overrides are only approved for extreme cases which involve more than parent choice.