



EAST CENTRAL

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

DEPENDENCY STATUS REVIEW FOR UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES FOR TITLE IV (FEDERAL) FINANCIAL AID 2023-2024 Award Year

Independent Student Definition

Section 480(d) of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008 defines an **independent student as someone who meets one or more of the following criteria:**

1. Is 24 years of age or older by December 31 of the award year (for 2023-24 - born before 1/1/2000);
2. Is married as of the date he/she applies;
3. Will be working on a master's or doctorate program at the beginning of 2023-24 school year;
4. Is currently serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for purposes other than training;
5. Is a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces;
6. Has children who receive more than half of their support from the student between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024;
7. Has dependents (other than children or spouse) who live with the student and who receive more than half of their support from the student between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024;
8. Was an orphan (both parents deceased), foster child, or ward/dependent of the court at any time since the age of 13;
9. Is an emancipated minor as determined by a court in the student's state of legal residence;
10. Is in legal guardianship (other than parent or stepparent) as determined by a court in the student's state of legal residence;
11. Was determined at any time on or after July 1, 2022, to be an unaccompanied* youth** who was homeless*** by at least one of the following:
 - a) the student's high school or school district homeless liaison or
 - b) the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; or
12. Was determined at any time on or after July 1, 2022, by the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program to be an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or was self-supporting**** and at risk***** of being homeless

* **“Unaccompanied”** means student who is not living in the physical custody of a parent or guardian

** **“Youth”** means a person 21 years of age or younger or who is still enrolled in high school as of the day the FAFSA is signed

*** **“Homeless”** means lacking fixed (stationary, permanent, and not subject to change), regular (used on a predictable, routine, or consistent basis) and adequate (sufficient for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in the home) housing, which includes living in shelters, motels or cars, or temporarily living with other people because the student had nowhere else to go

**** **“Self-supporting”** means a student who pays for his own living expenses, including fixed, regular, and adequate housing

***** **“At risk of being homeless”** means when a student's housing may cease to be fixed, regular, and adequate, for example, a student who is being evicted and has been unable to find fixed, regular, and adequate housing

If you do not meet at least one of the above criteria, you will be evaluated as a dependent student and must provide the income and asset information of your parents unless you have unusual circumstances.

If you have unusual circumstances regarding your parents, read the information that follows to determine if you may request a review to possibly allow you to apply with student income and asset information only.

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Unusual cases/circumstances (dependency status)

In unusual cases/circumstances, an aid administrator can determine that a student should be treated as an independent student even though the student does not meet the criteria listed in the independent definition. Unusual circumstances do include, but are not limited to, parental abandonment or estrangement, an abusive family environment that threatens the student's health or safety, human trafficking, legally granted refugee or asylum status, or student or parental incarceration. The circumstances must be documented and approved by the financial aid administrator on a case-by-case basis. Requests for dependency overrides are not automatically granted and cannot be appealed to the U.S. Department of Education. Dependency override status must be confirmed each award year (approval in one award year does not automatically continue in the subsequent year).

Per the U.S. Department of Education, there are **four conditions** that, **individually or in combination with each other, do not qualify** as unusual circumstances **and do not merit a dependency override**. Those circumstances are:

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

East Central Community College Dependency Status Review Process

1. A student with very unusual circumstances may request a dependency review by writing and signing a detailed statement fully explaining the situation and indicating why it is inappropriate to include the parents on the FAFSA. In addition, the Documentation for Unusual Circumstances Dependency Review form and other requested documentation must be submitted. The required information must be sent to East Central Community College, Financial Aid Office, PO Box 129, Decatur, MS 39327.
2. Students who provide the required documentation which may also include an interview will receive a final decision as to whether the dependency override can be granted. (Note: Being granted a review does not automatically mean that a student will receive approval for the override.) If the student is not approved for a dependency override, the student must provide parent information in order to apply for federal aid.
3. The review will be completed as quickly as possible but not later than 60 days after the student's enrollment. In the event that the student submits the FAFSA or requests a review after enrollment, the review will be completed no later than 60 days after the student provides all required documentation.
4. Returning students who were approved in the previous year for a dependency override, will need to provide an updated statement indicating if the circumstances are the same or if they have changed. If changed, the student must explain what has changed.

6. Attach utility bills, rent receipts, and lease agreements for each residence listed in #5. If you lived with someone (for example a grandparent) and did not have these expenses, attach a written explanation.
7. Complete the following statement of your annual expenses for January – December of each year (actual 2021, actual 2022 and estimated 2023). (For zero amounts, provide an explanation – for example Housing, Food and Utilities may be paid by someone else if you are living in their house and not paying rent or for these expenses.)

Expenses	Actual 2021	Actual 2022	Estimated 2023
Housing			
Food			
Utilities			
Transportation (car payments, gas, etc.)			
Personal (clothing, entertainment, etc.)			
Other --- list			
Other --- list			
Total Expenses			

8. List the amount and source of your annual income for 2021 and 2022 and ATTACH DOCUMENTATION (U.S. Income Tax Return Form 1040, 1040A, 1040EZ, and W-2 forms). If these forms were not filed, submit a statement of your income from your employer and/or from the source of the income. In addition, give an estimate of your 2023 income.

Taxable and Untaxable Income & Benefits – List Source	Actual 2021 Annual Income	Actual 2022 Annual Income	Estimated 2023 Annual Income

CERTIFICATION: All the information provided by me or any other person on this form and on the attached documentation is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I agree to provide additional proof of the information I have given if requested. I realize that if I do not give proof when asked, I may be denied financial aid. If I receive federal student aid based on incorrect information, I will have to repay it and may also have to pay fines and fees.

Student's Signature _____ Date _____

NOTE: If this form and /or documentation is incomplete, your request will not be reviewed or considered. Submit form and documentation to East Central Community College, Financial Aid Office, PO Box 129, Decatur, MS 39327.