

The Department of Education determines a student's status as dependent or independent by the answers the student provides on certain questions of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Students are classified as dependent or independent because Federal student aid programs are based on the principle that students (and their parents) are considered the primary source of support for postsecondary education. Information about Federal Student Aid dependency can be found at <https://studentaid.gov/apply-foraid/fafsa/filling-out/dependency>.

Self-sufficiency of the student or parent's unwillingness to financially contribute to a student's education are not sufficient reasons for determining a student's status as independent.

Federal Student Aid allows schools to use professional judgement to approve a dependent student to be independent if the following circumstances can be documented:

1. A student's voluntary or involuntary removal from their parent's home due to an extreme situation that threatened the student's health and/or safety.
2. Incapacity of parent(s) due to incarceration, mental or physical illness, or the inability of the applicant to locate the parent(s).
3. Death of both biological parents on or after the student's 18th birthday.
4. Other extenuating circumstances that can be sufficiently documented.

By completing the independent appeal form, you are attesting that you are independent for a reason other than financial independence or self-sufficiency and that you will provide all documentation required for your appeal to be reviewed. If your appeal is approved, your FAFSA will be updated to reflect your independent status and you will be asked to sign an independent appeal renewal form on an annual basis to confirm your independent status persists. If your appeal is not approved, you will provide parent information on your FAFSA to be considered for financial aid.

Name: _____ University ID: _____

1. Did anyone claim you on their 2025 federal income tax return?

- ☐ No
☐ Yes – Person's name: _____ Relationship to you: _____

2. Did anyone claim you on their 2025 federal income tax return?

- ☐ No
☐ Yes – Person's name: _____ Relationship to you: _____

3. See page two for details about supplemental documentation that must be provided with your independent appeal:

- ☐ **Letter from you, the student**, explaining why you are independent for a reason other than loss of financial support or financial independence
☐ **Personal letter of support from anyone of your choice** who can attest to why you are independent for a reason other than loss of financial support or financial independence
☐ **Professional letter of support or professional documentation**

I certify the information listed on this form and all supporting documents concerning my request for an Independent Appeal are correct and completed. I also understand the Financial Aid Administrator's decision is final and cannot be appealed to the U.S. Department of Education.

Student Signature (electronic signatures are not accepted)

Date

The following documentation must be included for your independent appeal to be reviewed:

- 1. You, the student, must provide a statement explaining why you are independent for a reason other than loss of financial support from your parent(s) and/or financial self-sufficiency.**

The following must be included in your statement:

- ☐ A description of the circumstances that resulted in you becoming independent from your parent(s) and include a timeline of when the circumstances occurred. *The circumstances must include estrangement from your parent(s) for a reason other than loss of financial support from your parent(s) or your own financial independence.*
- ☐ A general description of the relationship with your parent(s) prior to the event(s) that resulted in you being independent, as well as a description of what your relationship is like with your parent(s) now.
- ☐ Describe any communication or contact you have with your parent(s). Include any other details that substantiate why you are independent for a reason other than financial self-sufficiency, financial unwillingness of your parent(s) to provide you support, or financial independence.

- 2. You must provide a personal letter of support from anyone of your choice. The letter must include the following:**

- ☐ The personal letter of support's relationship to you and how long they have known you.
- ☐ A general description of the event(s) that resulted in you becoming independent from your parent(s). The event(s) must be for a reason other than loss of financial support from your parent(s) or your own financial self-sufficiency.
- ☐ A general description of the relationship dynamic between you, the student, and your parent(s).
- ☐ A general description of the impact becoming independent has had on you, the student.
- ☐ Any other details that support why you, the student, are independent from your parent(s).

- 3. You must provide a professional documentation to substantiate your independent status.**

You must provide professional documentation from one of the two following options:

1. A professional who has worked with you in their professional capacity in the last 12 months and can attest to your family dynamics, relationship with your parent(s), event(s) that resulted in you becoming independent from your parent(s), and the impact being independent has had on you. *The professional letter of support must be written by a mental health clinician, education administrator or teacher, legal counsel, homeless shelter director, or clergy.*

OR

2. A copy of your parents' death certificate(s), proof of incarceration of your parent(s), police reports, DHS reports, or other legal documentation that substantiates you are independent because of abandonment, harassment, abuse, neglect, and/or you are homeless.

Document return information

Drop off: Financial Aid Office
Email: fa@waldorf.edu
Fax: 641-585-8541

Mail: 106 S. 6th St.
ATTN: Online Financial Aid
Forest City, Iowa 50436