

Section 480(d) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA), defines an independent student as someone who fits into one of the following categories. Under these categories a student is independent if he or she:

- Was born before January 1, 1997;
- Is an orphan, in foster care or is a ward of the court at any time since age 13;
- Is an emancipated minor as determined by a court in his/her state of legal residence;
- Is in legal guardianship as determined by a court in his/her state of legal residence;
- Is an unaccompanied youth who is homeless or at risk of being homeless as determined on or after July 1, 2019, by a school district homeless liaison or the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program;
- Is a graduate or professional student;
- Is married;
- Has legal dependents other than a spouse for whom he/she provides more than half their financial support;
- Is currently serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for purposes other than training or is a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces; or
- Is a student for whom a financial aid administrator makes a documented determination of independence by reason of other unusual circumstances.

Examples of unusual circumstances include:

- family abuse or neglect,
- parental abandonment, or
- other situations where contact between you and your parents is non-existent.

According to guidance from the U.S. Department of Education, the following circumstances do **not** qualify as unusual circumstances and do **not** merit a dependency override:

- Parents refuse to contribute to the student's education;
- Parents are unwilling to provide information on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or to complete the verification process;
- Parents do not claim the student as a dependent for income tax purposes;
- Student demonstrates total self-sufficiency;
- Incarceration or confinement.

Definitions:

Ward of the Court – Page AVG-27 of the 2020-2021 Federal Student Aid Handbook: “A student is a ward of the court if the court has assumed legal custody of her/him. In some states the court may impose its authority over a juvenile who remains in the legal custody of the parents; such a student is **not** a ward of the court. Also, incarceration of a student does not qualify her/him as a ward of the court.” Having a legal guardian **does not** automatically make a student a ward of the court but will make the student independent on a separate FAFSA question. A legal guardian **must** have been appointed by the court **and** the parent's rights terminated for the child to be a ward of the court.

Homeless – At any time on or after July 1, 2019, lacking fixed, regular and adequate housing, which includes living in shelters, parks, motels, hotels, public spaces, campgrounds, cars, abandoned buildings or temporarily living with other people because you had nowhere else to go. Also, if you are living in any of these situations and fleeing an abusive parent, you may be considered homeless even if your parent would otherwise provide a place to live.

Unaccompanied - At any time on or after July 1, 2019, not living in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Please Note

- You will be notified in writing of the appeal committee's decision. This process may take up to 30 days.
- If your appeal is incomplete or submitted without the necessary documentation, processing of your appeal will be delayed until the additional information is obtained. **Appeals must be submitted by mid-term of the semester for which you are requesting aid.**
- Submission of an appeal does not guarantee your request will be approved.
- If approved, the dependency override is valid for only one academic year. Approval in one year does not guarantee approval in following years. Your status must be reassessed each academic year.
- An approval by the WNCC Financial Aid Appeal Committee is relevant only to your application at WNCC. Each institution to which you apply must make its own determination of your dependency status. No school is obligated to accept a decision made by another school.

Name _____ WNCC Student ID# _____
(please print)
Mailing Address _____
City, ST, Zip _____
DOB or Last 4 SSN digits _____ Phone _____
E-mail _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Complete ALL required information on this form.

- Attach a typed (or neatly hand-written), signed statement that explains in detail the extreme, unique, and/or unusual family circumstances that prevent you from obtaining and providing your parents' information for your financial aid application.
- Attach a **signed** copy of your 2018 and 2019 Federal Income Tax Returns if you filed, and a copy of your 2018 and 2019 W-2s. If you were not employed, provide a statement explaining how your living expenses were covered.
- Attach documentation of your 2020 income to date from all income sources.
- Attach a copy of your current lease agreement, mortgage statement or rent receipt. If you do not have a lease or mortgage in your name, attach a statement explaining your current living situation.
- Attach court or other official documentation of your status (e.g., guardianship, HHS documentation).
- Attach a signed statement from your guardian (if applicable) detailing your circumstances.
- Attach a signed statement from a third party who is knowledgeable of your family situation and can verify the reason you are unable to provide your parents' information. This third party should be someone unrelated to you and should be on letterhead. Appropriate third-party statements are from clergy, school counselors, teachers or similar professionals.

Please print neatly

Your address _____

City, State, Zip _____

How long have you lived at this address? _____ Years _____ Months

Is the lease or mortgage in your name?

- Yes (attach a copy of your lease or mortgage)
- No (attach a copy of your current lease agreement, mortgage statement or rent receipt. If you do not have a lease or mortgage in your name, attach a statement explaining your current living situation)

Mother's name _____ Father's name _____

Address _____ Address _____

City, State, Zip _____ City, State, Zip _____

Do you live with your parent(s) during school breaks? Yes No

When did you last live with your parent(s)? _____

When did your parent(s) last provide any monetary support for you? _____

When did you last have contact with your parent(s)? _____

How often do you have contact with your parent(s)? _____

Are you covered by your parent(s) medical insurance? Yes No

Are you covered by your parent(s) car insurance? Yes No

Check here if you have your own medical and/or car insurance. Attach a copy of your current policies.

Do you own your own vehicle?

Yes (attach a copy of your title, registration, and loan)

No (attach an explanation of your transportation arrangements)

Are all utilities (such as electricity, gas, telephone, cable) in your name?

Yes

No (attach explanation)

Cash support from people other than the student's parents (includes amounts paid by others for bills in the student's name).

Amount of cash support: \$ _____

In-kind support is support other than money (e.g., friends or relatives giving the student food or allowing him/her to live with them rent free).

Value of in-kind support: \$ _____

Student Certification

By signing below, I agree to provide additional information or documentation deemed necessary by the Financial Aid Appeal Committee, including court documents. I further certify that all information contained on this form and in the supporting documentation is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. Purposely providing false or misleading information can result in fines, imprisonment, or both.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Electronic signatures are not accepted

Submit this completed form to:
WNCC Financial Aid Office • 1601 E. 27th Street • Scottsbluff, NE 69361
(308) 635-6011 • fax (308) 635-6732
Secure filedrop <https://docsafe.wncc.edu/filedrop/FINAID>