



## Policy and Procedures

For the 2019-2020 academic year, you are automatically considered independent for federal student aid if you meet one of the following criteria:

- You were born before January 1, 1996;
- You were married on or before the date you applied for aid;
- You will be working on a master’s or doctorate program (such as an MA, MBA, MD, JD, or Ph.D, etc.) at the beginning of 2019-2020 school year (this is not applicable to students attending Hudson Valley Community College);
- You are currently serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for purposes other than training;
- You are a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces;
- You have children who will receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020;
- You have dependents (other than your children and spouse) who live with you and will receive more than half of their support from you, between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020;
- At any time since you turned 13, both your parents were deceased, you were in foster care or were a dependent/ward of the court;
- You are/were an emancipated minor as determined by a court in your legal state of residence immediately prior to that state’s recognized adult age;
- You are/were in legal “guardianship” as determined by a court in your legal state of residence immediately prior to that state’s recognized adult age;
- On or after July 1, 2018, your high school district homeless liaison determined that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless\*;
- On or after July 1, 2018, the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development determined that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless\*;
- On or after July 1, 2018, the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program determined that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless\*.

\*Unaccompanied homeless youth is defined as: 1. not living in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, and 2. lacking fixed, regular and adequate housing.

**USE OF PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT:** Federal regulations permit a financial aid officer to exercise professional judgment to give an otherwise dependent student status as an independent student. A student must be unable to obtain his/her parent’s information because of extenuating circumstances. Parents are defined in this situation as biological or adoptive. This determination is made on a case-by-case basis, and must be supported by documentation provided by the student.

**WHAT DOES NOT CONSTITUTE UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES:** Hudson Valley Community College maintains that certain circumstances cannot be considered unusual. For example, a parent’s refusal to provide information needed for the FAFSA, a parent’s inability to support the student’s college expenses, a student who does not want to ask parents for information, a student who has been “on his/her own” for several years, and/or a student who does not want to communicate with his/her parents, are not considered unusual circumstances.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Your living situation (whether or not you live with your parents or they claim you on their tax return) does not affect your dependency status. If you do not satisfy at least one of the federal criteria for independent status listed on the previous page, you are a dependent student for the purposes of federal student aid.

**STUDENT PROCEDURES:** If you are a dependent student by the federal definition, but you believe that unusual circumstances are present that establish you as “independent”, you can request a review of your situation by the Financial Aid Office. The following procedure is required:

- A. You must provide the Financial Aid Office, in writing, a full explanation of your unusual circumstances. This letter must provide all relevant information about your claim, including specific dates and court documentation (if applicable). Please provide specific dates and information regarding contact with both parents.
- B. You must provide written documentation from at least one disinterested professional, third party and/or agency confirming the specifics as described by you in (A). This documentation must be in writing, on the appropriate letterhead, and must be signed (see below for third party instructions).
- C. Complete a 2019-2020 FAFSA application, if it has not yet been filed.
- D. Complete a 2019-2020 Verification Worksheet (available online at [www.hvcc.edu/finaid/forms](http://www.hvcc.edu/finaid/forms)).
- E. Submit a copy of your 2017 federal tax return transcript and all related W2 forms. If you did not file a 2017 federal tax return, you must request a non-filing statement from the IRS. If you did not work you must provide a written explanation of how you were supported during the calendar year of 2017.

### **Instructions for Third Party Documentation**

The third party must be a disinterested professional who is aware of the student’s home situation and can verify from first-hand knowledge the information the student has provided. Examples of such a person include, but are not limited to: high school counselor, employer, clergy, social worker, attorney, court official, teacher, psychiatrist, psychologist, medical professional, law enforcement agent, etc.

Third party documentation must be a SEPARATE statement on official letterhead. Please include any information of which you have first-hand knowledge and that you feel best describes the student’s situation. The following information MUST be included in your letter:

- How long you have known the student.
- Your relationship to the student.
- The last time the student lived with and/or received financial support from his/her parents.
- State your direct knowledge of when the student last had contact of any type with his/her parents. Please include information regarding both parents.
- Any knowledge of his/her current relationship with his/her parents.
- The steps that the student has taken to establish independence from his/her parents.
- Please include your professional title, name and type of business, business address, telephone number, and where to contact you should any additional information be required.

The Financial Aid Office will determine if unusual circumstances exist based on the documentation submitted by the student and third party verification. The student will be notified in writing of the decision.