

Change of Circumstance

The Office of Financial Aid knows there are many circumstances that may impact your ability to pay for your education and that the FAFSA may not always reflect your true situation or changes that happen after the FAFSA is complete. If you or your parents experience a significant and prolonged decline in income, you may request a review of your financial aid eligibility through the special circumstance process.

The U.S. Department of Education provides strict regulatory guidance under which special circumstances are to be reviewed. Special circumstances that will be considered include:

- Loss of employment
- Loss of another form of income (such as child support or Social Security benefits)
- Separation or divorce
- Death of a parent or spouse
- High medical and/or dental expenses that were not reimbursed by health insurance
- One-time payment received

Special circumstances do not include consumer indebtedness (house or car payments, living without roommates, credit card debt, etc.). Additionally, while this process is used to address financial hardships, it does not always result in additional financial aid eligibility.

To request a review of your financial aid due to your special circumstances, contact the Financial Aid Office for the campus you are attending and speak with a financial aid administrator, who can help you with this process. Since the review will require you provide documentation regarding your special circumstance, the following form will help guide you:

[Dependent Special Circumstance Review Request Form](#) (for students who provided their parent information)

[Independent Special Circumstance Review Request Form](#) (for students who were not required to provide parental information)

Once the Financial Aid Office at your campus has receive the *Special Circumstance Review Request Form* and all requested supporting documentation, a financial aid administrator will advise you of the decision and any changes that will occur on your account within ten business days.

Note: We strongly encourage families who are selected for FAFSA verification to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool to expedite the completion of both their verification and Special Circumstance review.

Request a Dependency Override Review

Most students entering USC are considered financially dependent on their parents. This means your parent must provide their financial information on the FAFSA. However, the Financial Aid Office recognizes that you may face challenging family circumstances and need to request reconsideration of your dependency status. This review is performed on a case-by-case basis for students with unusual circumstances, when conditions exist that would prevent you from gaining access to parent information.

The following are examples of unusual circumstances that may be considered for a dependency override:

- Abandonment by the student's parents
- An abusive family environment that threatens the student's health or safety
- An inability to locate their parents
- Other severe circumstances in which the student has no parental contact or involvement.

We cannot consider a dependency override based solely on the following:

- The parents' refusal to contribute to the student's education.
- The parents' unwillingness to provide information for the FAFSA or for FAFSA verification.
- The student not being claimed as a dependent for income tax purposes.
- The student demonstrating total self-sufficiency.

To request a dependency override, contact the Financial Aid Office for the campus you are attending and speak with a financial aid administrator, who can help you with this process. Your request must be submitted with the [Dependency Override Request Form](#) and include adequate supporting documentation.

Once the Financial Aid Office at your campus has received the *Dependency Override Request Form* and all requested supporting documentation, a financial aid administrator will advise you of the decision and any changes that will occur on your account within ten business days.