

Student's Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Mercyhurst Student ID \_\_\_\_\_

Review the information on the other side of this form to learn about the Unusual Circumstance Appeal process. Then, complete the information below and gather all required documents. Student Financial Services (SFS) will review this information to determine if a change in the student's dependency status is valid. Submitting this form does not guarantee a change to the student's status. If conflicting information is found during this review, SFS is obligated by federal regulations to make any required adjustments. Appeal decisions are final and cannot be further appealed. For questions, contact SFS at 814-824-2288 or [sfsverif@mercyhurst.edu](mailto:sfsverif@mercyhurst.edu).

<b>Options to submit forms and documents:</b>	Mail: Mercyhurst University Student Financial Services 501 East 38th Street Erie, PA 16546	Email: <a href="mailto:sfsverif@mercyhurst.edu">sfsverif@mercyhurst.edu</a>  Fax: 814-824-2072	<b>Allow 3-4 weeks processing time after ALL forms and documents are received.</b>
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### REQUIRED DOCUMENTS TO SUBMIT

- Submit the 2024-25 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at [studentaid.gov](http://studentaid.gov).
- Signed and dated statement written by you (the student) explaining your unusual circumstance.
- Signed and dated statement written by an objective third party supporting your statement.

### SELECT CIRCUMSTANCE(S) & SUBMIT ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

Foster Care /  Ward of the Court /  Orphan

At any time since you turned 13, you were in foster care, designated as a ward of the court, or experienced the passing of both legal parents. A legal parent includes a biological parent, an adoptive parent, or a person the state has determined to be your parent.

**REQUIRED DOCUMENTS:** Provide court documents showing your foster care or ward of the court status. For an orphaned status, please provide each parent's death certificate.

Emancipated Minor /  Legal Guardianship

If you are/were granted an emancipated minor status or placed in a legal guardianship by a court in your state of legal residence.

**REQUIRED DOCUMENTS:** Provide court documents showing your emancipated minor or legal guardianship status.

Unaccompanied Youth either Currently Experiencing or at Risk of Homelessness

At any time on or after July 1, 2023, you were unaccompanied and either homeless or self-supporting and at risk of being homeless. Please see the other side of this form for further information on this circumstance and definitions of "unaccompanied" and "homeless."

**REQUIRED DOCUMENTS:** Provide the homeless youth determination letter that was provided to you by one of the entities listed on the other side of this form. If you do not have such a document, please answer the following questions so the financial aid administrator can review you for this status and make a determination.

- 1 In which of the following situations do you reside, or would you reside if not staying in on-campus housing?
  - My apartment/house.     Shelter or temporary housing program.
  - Car/motel/campsite.     Temporarily staying with others.
  - Substandard housing (Insufficient to meet the physical/psychological needs typically met in a home environment).
- 2 Are you self-supporting? Self-supporting means you are responsible for your own living expenses, including fixed, regular, and adequate housing.     Yes     No
- 3 Will your housing situation no longer be fixed, regular, adequate? Are you at risk of homelessness due to eviction or other loss of housing?     Yes     No

Other Unusual Circumstance

Select this option if you are experiencing unusual circumstance(s) that are not listed above.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The unusual circumstances need to result in no parental contact. Please refer to the information on the other side of this form for more information on what does and does not count as an unusual circumstance.

**REQUIRED DOCUMENTS:** Provide documents applicable to your unusual circumstance. For guidance, contact SFS.

#### Student Certification and Affirmation:

By signing this document, I certify that all information reported is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that purposely providing false or misleading information may result in denial, reduction, and/or repayment of financial aid, legal action, imprisonment and/or fines. I understand that the decision of Student Financial Services is final and cannot be overturned. The authority to perform dependency overrides is specifically restricted to financial aid administrators.



**Acceptable signatures include blue or black ink, an electronic signature using a stylus or finger, or an image of the individual's signature affixed to the form. Typed signatures using font text will NOT be accepted.**

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Dependency Override

A dependency override is an appeal in which the student is requesting to be considered as an independent student on the FAFSA which does not require the student to report parental information. A dependent student may qualify for this appeal if:

1. The student does not live in the physical custody of their legal parent(s)\*, AND
2. Unusual circumstances prevent the student from contacting their parent(s), OR
3. If contacting their parent(s) pose a risk to the student.

\*A legal parent includes a biological parent, an adoptive parent, or a person the state has determined to be your parent.

### What circumstances qualify for a Dependency Override?

The US Department of Education has provided financial aid offices with guidance regarding situations that do and do not qualify as an unusual circumstance that would potentially merit a dependency override. If your circumstance does not merit a dependency override, you may still complete this form to be considered for an Unaccompanied Youth Determination.

The following circumstances DO NOT merit a dependency override:

- Parents refuse to contribute to the student's education.
- Parents will not provide information for the FAFSA or verification.
- Parents do not claim the student as a dependent for income tax purposes.
- Student demonstrates total self-sufficiency.

However, the following circumstances may merit a dependency override:

- Student left home due to an abusive or threatening environment.
- Student was abandoned by, or estranged from, their parents.
- Death of a custodial parent and abandonment by the other parent.
- Have refugee or asylee status and are separated from their parents, or their parents are displaced in a foreign country.
- Student is a victim of human trafficking.
- Parents are incarcerated/institutionalized and contact with the parents would pose a risk to the student.
- Student is unable to contact or locate their parents.

### Unaccompanied Youth Determination

If you answer "Yes" to the general unaccompanied and homeless question on the 2024–25 FAFSA but have not received a homeless youth determination from one of the individuals at an eligible agency (listed further below), you can still submit the FAFSA as a provisionally independent student. This means you can submit your FAFSA without parent information, but you'll need to complete additional steps with the financial aid office at your college before your financial aid eligibility can be finalized.

After submitting the FAFSA, a financial aid administrator must document and determine if you are an unaccompanied homeless youth. If you previously received an unaccompanied homeless youth determination from one of the entities listed below, you can submit that documentation to the financial aid office.

- Local school district personnel
- State homeless education coordinators
- The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)
- Third parties such as private or publicly funded homeless shelters and service providers
- College or high school counselors
- Mental health professionals, social workers, mentors, doctors, or clergy

If you don't have any written documentation of your unaccompanied homeless status, the financial aid administrator must still review your request for a homeless youth determination and decide whether you qualify.

### Unaccompanied Youth Determination Definitions\*

- Unaccompanied means you're not living in the physical custody of your parent or guardian.
- Homeless means lacking fixed, regular, and adequate housing. You may be homeless if you're living in shelters, parks, motels, hotels, public spaces, camping grounds, cars, or abandoned buildings, or if you're temporarily living with other people because you have nowhere else to go. Also, if you're 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.

\*As published by Federal Student Aid at <https://studentaid.gov/apply-for-aid/fafsa/filling-out/homeless>.