

## **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

The Financial Aid Office may use professional judgement on a case-by-case basis to adjust the student's COA or the data used to calculate the EFC (i.e., need analysis) for unusual or extenuating circumstance of the student and/or parent. For students flagged for verification, all verification requirements must be met before applying professional judgment. However, using PJ does not require the FAO to verify the student's application if they were not chosen for verification, though it does require the FAO to resolve any conflicting information shown on the output document before making any adjustments.

Professional judgment cannot be used to waive general student eligibility requirements or to circumvent the intent of the law or regulations. All PJ decisions must be made on an individual, case-by-case basis in response to a student's unique situation and cannot be applied across the board.

All PJ's required the student to submit supporting documentation. Documentation can vary, but typically includes the Collin College Request for Special Circumstances Form plus any supplemental data and/or documentation to prove/support their particular circumstance. Suggested documentation is listed on the Request for Special Circumstances Form, however, the FAO will accept a variety of documentation provided it sufficiently proves/supports the student's claim.

Examples of unusual circumstances may include, but are not limited to:

- Loss of employment
- Unusual, uncovered (out-of-pocket) medical/dental expenses paid\*
- Elementary or secondary school tuition for student's siblings or dependents
- Extraordinary dependent care expenses
- Divorce
- Death of a dependent student's parent or independent student's spouse

\*Above the IPA of 11% built into the EFC formula.

## **DEPENDENCY OVERRIDE**

The Financial Aid Office may process a dependency override on a case-by-case basis for students with unusual circumstances.

The following do NOT qualify as unusual circumstances meriting a dependency override:

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

Unusual circumstances could include, but are not limited to:

- Abandonment by parents
- An abusive family environment that threatens the student's health or safety
- The student being unable to locate his or her parents

The presence of the above conditions would not disqualify a student from being an unaccompanied youth who is homeless or self-supporting and at risk of being homeless. Students who are too old to be considered a "youth" (i.e., 22 or 23 year old) would merit a dependency override.

All DO's require the student to submit supporting documentation. Documentation can vary, but typically includes the Collin College Request for Dependency Override Form, a typed letter thoroughly explaining their current situation, plus independent documentation from two separate third parties, which may be a signed statement, or an official document such as a police report, to prove/support their particular circumstance.

If approved, the FAO will only override a student from dependent to independent.

Collin College does not accept dependency overrides made by another school. All students requesting a dependency override must submit the required documentation to the FAO and be assessed at our institution. In addition, the student will be required to submit the form and documentation each year they wish the override to reaffirm that the unusual circumstance still exists and that the override is justified.

### **STUDENTS WITHOUT PARENT SUPPORT**

Students whose parents refuse to support them are not eligible for a dependency override, but they may be able to receive unsubsidized Stafford loans only.

Students in this category must submit a signed statement from their parents that they refuse to complete the FAFSA and that they do not and will not provide any financial support to the student. Parents should include the date their support ended.

If the parents refuse to provide the signed statement, the student can submit documentation from a third party such as a teacher, counselor or the court.

Students who fall into this category will be awarded unsubsidized Stafford loans up to the maximum the student would normally be eligible for depending on his grade level (but not the amount a student can get when his parent is unable to get a PLUS loan).

### **REFERRAL OF FRAUD CASES**

If the College suspects that a student, parent, employee or other individual has misreported information or altered documentation to fraudulently obtain federal funds, the College will report the suspicious activity and provide any evidence to the Office of Inspector General in Dallas, TX at (214) 661-9530 or via the Inspector General's Hotline at the Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202-1500, or at 1-800-MIS-USED (1-800-647-8733) or via the complaint website at <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oig/hotline.html>