

This brochure is designed to inform students about the federally established guidelines determining Independent and Dependent Financial Aid filing status. In addition, there is a brief discussion of students' rights to appeal their status in cases of extenuating circumstances.

This brochure is produced by Student Financial Aid (SFA), a division of Academic Services at Bowling Green State University. Student Financial Aid is located in room 231 of the Administration Building. The office can be reached by phone at (419) 372-2651 or via e-mail: <https://sfa.bgsu.edu/asksfa>

Independent or Dependent Status?

Student Financial Aid

Just what is the definition of independence? Leaving home? Responsibility? Freedom? Proving to yourself that you can make it on your own? As you prepared to leave for college, establishing your independence was probably one of the aspects of college life you looked forward to the most. You would finally be responsible for budgeting your own time and money, and you would no longer have to answer directly to your parents. Independence is a word most often associated with the college experience.

Many students assume that because they are not living with their parents, are responsible for their own expenses, and are not claimed on their parents' tax returns they should qualify for financial aid programs as an independent student. However, Congress' definition of independence is not that simple. The Federal Government has established the guidelines below that determine which students are considered independent for financial aid purposes and which are not. This brochure explains these guidelines and will help you determine if you will be considered independent when applying for federal financial aid.

Independent Student Definition

To be considered an independent student in the 2008-2009 academic year, you must meet ONE of the following SIX conditions:

1. **You were born before January 1, 1985**
2. **You are a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces (members of the National Guard are not considered veterans unless they served active duty)**
3. **You are a ward of the court or both of your parents are deceased**
4. **You have legal dependents other than a spouse**
5. **You are married**
6. **You will be a graduate student in 2008-2009**

Proof of Eligibility

Even if you meet one of these six conditions, you may be asked to provide supporting documentation, such as your birth certificate or a copy of your armed forces discharge (DD214).

Inability to Document Independent Status

If you apply for financial aid as an independent student but do not meet all of the federal guidelines, you will be considered a **dependent applicant** and SFA will correct your application data. You will be required to provide your parents' information in order to determine your eligibility for financial aid as a dependent student. Correcting your dependency status may result in a change in your financial package.

Appeal of Dependency Status

Student Financial Aid is required to follow federal government guidelines in determining a student's dependency status. SFA acknowledges however, that parental estrangement is a reality for some students. If you have experienced abandonment, abuse or neglect, you may petition for independent status. You will be asked to explain your extenuating circumstances and provide evidence of your claim. SFA can review your dependency status and determine whether you can be considered independent based on a professional judgment exception.

***Please note:** Appealing for independent status is a procedure that takes time and may delay the timely packaging of your financial aid. It is a process that should be considered only in the case of extenuating circumstances.*

If you would like your dependency status to be reviewed, you must submit a Dependency Appeal Application to SFA which explains the reason(s) why you should be considered independent. You must include at least two third-party sources of documentation (e.g., letters from a teacher, counselor, doctor, lawyer or clergy) to support the reason(s) listed in your letter. All information regarding your letter and supporting documentation will remain confidential. Once the necessary information has been received, your appeal will be reviewed and you will be notified in writing of the decision.

Situations Not Usually Approved

Unless extenuating circumstances are present, the following conditions are not typically approved:

- You do not reside with your parents
- Your parents refuse to pay for your college education
- Your parents are not financially able to pay for your education
- You were married after you applied for financial aid
- You do not want your parent's assistance and have decided to pay for your own college education.

If you have any questions regarding your status, please contact SFA to speak with a counselor.

Bowling Green State University is an affirmative action and equal opportunity educational institution.