

# Dependent to Independent Status 2023-2024 Appeal



## General Information:

Students who do not meet the standard requirements for independent status (see reverse) may complete this appeal to be considered independent for financial aid purposes. Appeals for independent status are reviewed on a *case-by-case* basis and are only granted for **unusual**, documented circumstances. The following conditions are **not** considered unusual, and **do not qualify** for a “Dependent to Independent Status Appeal”:

- Parents refuse to contribute to the 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 that he or she is totally self-sufficient
- Student’s marital status changed since filing the FAFSA (Note: students in this category should view the “Change in Student’s Marital Status Appeal” at [bethel.edu/offices/financial-aid/appeal](http://bethel.edu/offices/financial-aid/appeal) )

## Instructions:

**If you believe that you should be considered an independent student for financial aid purposes, please complete the following steps:**

1. Complete your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (**FAFSA.gov**) without parent information. If your appeal is denied you will need to make a correction to your FAFSA to add parent information and signature.
2. Submit a personal letter of appeal to the financial aid office, indicating why you should be considered an independent student for financial aid purposes.
3. Submit documentation from a third-party supporting the extenuating circumstances you described. Examples include (but are not limited to): court documents or a letter on letterhead from a high school counselor, case worker, social worker, clergy, or other professional who confirms that your situation warrants independent status.
4. Remember to include your name and Bethel ID # on the documents that you submit, and to indicate that these documents are for a “Dependent to Independent Appeal.” Documents may be submitted by fax or secure upload.
5. You may want to give a copy of this appeal form to anyone writing a letter of support for you, so that he or she can see what constitutes as grounds for an appeal, and focus his or her letter on the most appropriate points of support.

Note: According to Webster’s dictionary, “**unusual**” means *rare, extraordinary, uncommon, unexpected, distinctive.*

Examples that constitute unusual circumstances *may* include:

- Student’s voluntary or involuntary removal from parents’ home due to an abusive situation that threatened the student’s safety and/or health
- Incapacity of parents (such as incarceration, disability, or mental or physical illness)
- Inability of the student to locate parents after making reasonable efforts
- Other extenuating circumstances sufficiently documented by third parties

**Continuing Bethel students** who were granted independent status in a previous year due to an appeal are generally not required to go through this appeal process again. Rather, they may submit a letter to the Office of Financial Aid to provide an update on the current status of their circumstances (i.e. “My relationship with my parents has not changed in the past year...” or “My circumstances from the prior year have changed in the following ways...,” etc.).

## Standard Requirements for Independent Status:

Dependency is originally determined by your responses to the following questions on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

- Yes  No Were you born before January 1, 2000?
- Yes  No As of today, are you married? (Also answer “Yes” if you are separated but not divorced.)
- Yes  No At the beginning of the 2023–2024 school year, will you be working on a master’s or doctorate program (such as an MA, MBA, MD, JD, PhD, EdD, graduate certificate, etc.)?
- Yes  No Are you currently serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for purposes other than training?
- Yes  No Are you a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces?  
*Documentation Required: Copy of Form DD-214*
- Yes  No Do you now have or will you have children who will receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024?  
*Documentation Required: 2022 Proof of Dependent Support, if student is living with parents*
- Yes  No Do you have dependents (other than your children or spouse) who live with you and who receive more than half of their support from you, now and through June 30, 2024?  
*Documentation Required: 2022 Proof of Dependent Support, if student is living with parents*
- Yes  No At any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care or were you a dependent or ward of the court?  
*Documentation Required: Copy of court documents*
- Yes  No As determined by a court in your state of legal residence, are you or were you an emancipated minor?  
*Documentation Required: Copy of court documents*
- Yes  No Does someone other than your parent or stepparent have legal guardianship of you, as determined by a court in your state of legal residence?  
*Documentation Required: Copy of court documents*
- Yes  No At any time on or after July 1, 2022, did your high school or school district homeless liaison determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?  
*Documentation Required: Written confirmation from liaison*
- Yes  No At any time on or after July 1, 2022, did the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?  
*Documentation Required: Written confirmation from director of approved program*
- Yes  No At any time on or after July 1, 2022, did the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?  
*Documentation Required: Written confirmation from director of approved program*

Answering “yes” to any of the above questions at the time of completing the FAFSA designates students as “independent” for financial aid purposes.

If you answer “no” to all of the questions above, but still feel that you should be considered independent, you may complete an appeal for independent status (see reverse). These appeals are reviewed on a *case-by-case* basis and are only granted for **unusual**, documented circumstances.

Please allow a minimum of 2-3 weeks for the financial aid committee to review your appeal.

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