

## Completing the FAFSA: Special Guidance Related to Dependency Status & Providing Parental Information on the FAFSA

Minnesota Office of Higher Education – November 2015

Certain questions on the 2016-2017 FAFSA may be difficult to answer for students in foster care, legal guardianship, wards of the court, orphans, homeless youth or those with parents who are unmarried, separated, divorced or widowed. Instructions for the most frequently asked questions are provided.

Question	Answer
How do I answer the question about my parents' level of schooling?	Answer these questions about your biological or adoptive parents, even if you are not required to provide parental information on the FAFSA or even if your biological or adoptive parents are not married.
How do I answer the question about having a child who will receive more than half of their support from me if the only form of financial assistance I provide to my child is from public assistance?	You can answer 'Yes' to having your own child if you are providing more than half of the financial support to your child, whether the source of your income is from employment or government benefits you receive, such as MFIP/TANF, Social Security, unemployment benefits, etc. If your own parents are providing more than half of the financial support to your child, you should answer 'No' to this question.
Both my parents died when I was eight years old and I have been raised by my grandparents, who are my legal guardians. Do I report their income on the FAFSA?	You can answer 'Yes' to the question about being an orphan any time after age 13. You can also answer 'Yes' to the question about having a legal guardian if your grandparents are still your legal guardians. If you answer yes to any of the questions in the dependency section of the FAFSA, you will be able to apply as an independent applicant and will not have to provide parental data on the FAFSA.
I was adopted at birth, but both my adoptive parents died when I was 12. I was then legally adopted by another family when I was 14. Should I report income from my current adoptive parents on the FAFSA?	If you had no living parent (biological or adoptive) at any time after you were age 13, you can answer 'Yes' to that question on the FAFSA, even if you were later adopted. Answering 'Yes' to this question will allow you to apply as an independent student and leave the parents' section blank on the FAFSA.
What's the difference between being in foster care and being a ward of the court?	Being a ward of the court means a court has placed you under the guardianship of the court and terminated parental rights. Being placed in foster care does not necessarily mean you are a ward of the court or had parental rights terminated. In either case, you can still answer 'Yes' to the question asking if you were either a ward of the court OR receiving foster care at age 13 or thereafter. Answering 'Yes' to either of these questions will allow you to apply as an independent student and leave the parents' section blank on the FAFSA.
I chose to live on my own after I turned 16. Does that make me an emancipated minor?	No, not unless you can provide a copy of a court's decision that you are an emancipated minor. The court must have been located in your state of legal residence at the time of the legal decision. If you are not an emancipated minor but left your parents' home due to an unusual situation, contact the college financial aid office about a dependency override.

Question	Answer
I moved out of my parents' house at age 14 due to abuse and have been living with my aunt and uncle. Should I provide their income on the FAFSA?	No. If your aunt and uncle are your legal guardians, you can answer 'Yes' to that question and apply as an independent student. If your aunt and uncle are not your legal guardians, you should submit your FAFSA without parental information and then contact the financial aid office at the college you plan to attend about doing a dependency override, which will allow you to apply for financial aid as an independent student.
I ran away from home when I was 16 and have been living in shelters, on the street or with friends' families. Do I still need to provide my parents' information on the FAFSA?	You may be able to answer 'Yes' to the homeless questions on the FAFSA, depending on your circumstances. These provisions allow unaccompanied homeless youth to apply for financial aid as independent students. You'll need to provide documentation to the financial aid office about your official designation as an unaccompanied homeless youth.
How do I answer all the parental questions if my biological/adoptive parents are divorced or separated?	Answer parental questions about the parent you lived with the most during the past 12 months. If you lived with both parents an equal amount of time, report information about the parent who provided the most financial support for you in the past 12 months or the most recent year financial support was provided. If the selected biological/adoptive parent is remarried, you must also include information for your stepparent and report parents' marital status as 'married' on the FAFSA.
My parents filed joint taxes last year but my father just died. Do I need to report both incomes on the FAFSA?	No. You will only need to report your mother's share of income and taxes paid for the previous year. Your college financial aid office should be able to help you figure out the figures to report by using your parents' tax returns and W2 forms.
What if my biological/adoptive parents live together but were never married?	You should now provide information for both parents on the FAFSA and select 'Unmarried and both parents living together' for parents' marital status.
What if my parents are gay or lesbian?	If both parents are your legal (biological or adoptive) parents, you should provide information about both parents on the FAFSA. If your parents were married in a state that allows same-sex marriages, they should report a marital status of 'married.' If they are not married but are living together, they should report a marital status of 'unmarried and both parents living together.'
How should I report my own marital status?	If you are currently married, you should report your marital status as 'married.' This includes a same-sex marriage that took place in a state where same-sex marriage is legal, regardless of where you now live. If you are living together but not married, you should not apply as 'married.'
Can I include siblings in my parents' household size if they don't reside in the household? What if they live in another country?	You can include siblings in your parents' household size if your parents will provide more than half of their support during the school year (July 1 through June 30) or the siblings would answer 'No' to all questions in the dependency section of the FAFSA. This includes siblings who reside in another country.
I live with my foster parents and their children. Should they be reported in parents' household size?	No. Since you were in foster care at or after age 13, you can answer 'Yes' to that question on the FAFSA and apply as an independent student, which means you can skip the parents' section on the FAFSA.