



Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Student ID

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Financial aid regulations assume that the family has primary responsibility for meeting the educational costs of students, therefore most students are considered dependent for financial aid purposes. Some students can be considered independent if they meet certain criteria. **Please read the information below, check the appropriate box, and sign and return this form with the additional documentation indicated.**

**Special note for returning students** who have been approved for independent status at SUNY New Paltz in prior years: You can submit a written letter confirming that your circumstances have not changed. You will not need to provide other documentation again unless specifically requested by a Financial Aid Advisor.

You are automatically considered an independent student for 2025-2026 if you meet at least one of the following criteria:

- You were born before January 1, 2002.
- You are married or remarried (not separated) as of the date the 2025-2026 FAFSA is filed.
- You are a graduate student (enrolled in a master's or graduate certificate program).
- You are currently serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for purposes other than training.
- You are a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces.

You may also be considered independent for 2025-2026 if you meet one of the following criteria, however you must provide appropriate documentation before a final determination of independence can be made. Most situations that qualify for independent status involve the involuntary dissolution of the family unit and can be documented. A cover letter explaining the situation is recommended. Please check the condition below that best describes your situation and provide the documentation indicated.

Both parents are deceased, or you were an orphan (no living biological or adoptive parent), in foster care, or a dependent/ward of the court at any time since you turned age 13. Provide death certificates or court documentation of status.

Are or were a legally emancipated minor as determined by a court in your state of legal residence. Provide court documents from your state of legal residence. Please note that New York State does not grant emancipation status to minors.

Are or were in legal guardianship (by someone other than your parent or stepparent) as determined by a court in your state of residence.

Now have or will have children who will receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026. You must provide a 2023 signed IRS 1040 or tax return transcript (from the Internal Revenue Service Web site at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) and request a "Return Transcript" for 2023), and/or a letter explaining living arrangements, earnings and support information, and the name of person(s) claiming child(ren) if other than self.

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, 2026. You must provide a 2023 signed IRS 1040 or tax return transcript (from the Internal Revenue Service Web site at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) and request a "Return Transcript" for 2023, and a letter explaining living arrangements, earnings and support information.

Were determined to be an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless by a director of an emergency shelter or transitional shelter, street outreach program, homeless youth drop-in center, or other program serving those experiencing homelessness at any time on or after July 1, 2024. Provide written, signed documentation from shelter or agency on organizational letterhead.

Were determined to be an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting or at risk of being homeless by your high school or school district homeless liaison at any time on or after July 1, 2024. Provide written, signed documentation from school liaison on district letterhead.

Were determined to be an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless by a director or designee of a project supported by a federal TRIO or GEAR UP program grant at any time on or after July 1, 2024. Provide written, signed documentation from agency on organization letterhead.

(continued)

**None of the following situations qualify as sufficient to merit a change to independent status:**

- Parents refuse to contribute to a student's education.
  - Parents are unwilling to provide information for the application or verification.
  - Parents do not claim the student as a dependent for income tax purposes.
  - Student demonstrates total self-sufficiency and does not live with parents.
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- In rare unusual cases such as a documented abusive or threatening family environment, complete parental abandonment, being estranged from their parents, both parents currently being incarcerated or institutionalized, or if neither parent can be located (and have not been adopted), a Dependency Override may be granted by a Financial Aid Administrator. Special unusual circumstances also include being a victim of human trafficking, having refugee or asylee status and are separated from their parents or their parents are displaced in a foreign country or unusual circumstances that prevent the student from contacting their parents or would contacting both of their parents pose a risk to the student. In order for a Dependency Override to be considered documentation must be submitted which substantiates the special or unusual circumstances of an individual student and may include, but is not limited to:
    - Court Documents.
    - Police Reports.
    - Death Certificates.
    - Submission of a court order or official federal or state documentation that the student or the student's parents or legal guardians are incarcerated in any federal or state penal institution.
    - Supplementary information, as necessary, about the financial status or personal circumstances of eligible applicants as it relates to the special circumstances or unusual circumstances based on which the applicant is requesting an adjustment.
    - Signed letters from professionals who are aware of the student's situation (high school counselors, therapists, case workers, clergy member, or another impartial source familiar with your situation in a professional capacity). These letters should be on professional letterhead and must be signed.

If you believe that you should be considered for a Dependency Override and are able to provide the required documentation, please submit this form with the accompanying necessary documentation to the Office of Student Financial Services.

If you have concluded that your situation does not meet the stated criteria and would like to withdraw your request for Independent status, you will need to update your 2025-2026 FAFSA record to include your parent's information and FSA ID. You will also need to change your answers to the Independence questions to No. If you are having difficulty with this process please contact the Office of Student Financial Services and ask to speak with a Financial Aid Advisor. The decision to change a student's dependency status is based on the administrator's judgment and is final and cannot be appealed to the U.S. Department of Education. Transfer students who have been approved as Independent previously at another institution are not automatically independent at SUNY New Paltz and must provide documentation of their situation.

Student signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Return form to Student Financial Services, SUNY New Paltz.**

**\*\*\* Signed and completed forms should be emailed to: faodocuments@newpaltz.edu \*\*\***