

## Professional Judgment/Special Circumstances

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Students/Parents complete the FAFSA which uses the prior year's income as a "snap shot" of their financial strength. The "snap shot" of the prior year is assumed to be a good estimate of the financial strength for the current year but sometimes the current year is more accurate due to exceptional circumstances.

In those cases the financial aid office can recalculate financial aid eligibility based on a current year estimate. Examples of exceptional circumstances include death or unemployment of a parent/spouse, divorce/separation, and exceptional medical costs beyond your control.

The financial aid office will review each case individually with appropriate documentation. A Professional Judgment/Special Circumstances Request Form should be completed in these events. Sometimes an exceptional circumstance occurs and the parent/students estimated current year income exceeds their prior year income - sometimes you have received the maximum award already and an adjustment will not result in additional assistance - if your Expected Family Contribution is 0 you would have been awarded the maximum already - so be careful what you are requesting.

### Special Circumstance

If you are unable to provide parental documentation, we will need to verify that you have a special circumstance enabling you from providing their federal tax return. Under federal law, to the extent your family is able, they are primarily responsible for paying for your college expenses. To determine how much your family can afford to pay towards your college expenses, we must collect your financial information and your parent's financial information. However federal law allows for some exceptions, if you have a special circumstance. The following are examples of some special circumstances where you may submit your FAFSA without providing parental information:

- Your parents are incarcerated
- You have left home due to an abusive family environment

However not all situations are considered a special circumstance. The following are situations that would **not** be considered special circumstances:

- Your parents do not want to provide their information on your FAFSA
- Your parents refuse to contribute to your college expenses
- Your parents do not claim you as a dependent on their income taxes
- You do not live with your parents

Please provide documentation to determine that you have a special circumstance and are not allowed to provide parental information. If you are unable to provide special circumstances

documentation then you will have to provide your parental income on your FAFSA. If we can be of further assistance, please contact our call center at 205-929-6380 or 205-929-3423.