

FINANCIAL AID & UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH (UHY)

If you are unaccompanied, at risk of homelessness, and self-supporting, you are also considered an independent student on your financial aid application. If you answer “yes” to the general homelessness question on the FAFSA or WASFA, you will be asked whether you have received a homeless youth determination.

IF YOU INDICATE THAT YES, YOU HAVE RECEIVED A HOMELESS YOUTH DETERMINATION,

THEN, the financial aid administrator at the college you plan to attend may request the determination to prove that you are “unaccompanied” and homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

ACTION STEP: Contact one of the following individuals to request a determination of homelessness for a youth: your high school or school district's homeless liaison, the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, or the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program.

If a student's institution approves their unusual circumstances, their independent status will carry over when they renew their FAFSA form in future award years. They will be considered independent for as long as they remain at the same institution and their circumstances remain unchanged.

IF YOU HAVE NOT RECEIVED A HOMELESS YOUTH DETERMINATION,

THEN you can still submit your application.

ACTION STEP: Once you apply, you must request a homeless youth determination from the college you plan to attend from the financial aid administrator. While it is not required, to help the financial aid administrator make a homeless youth determination, you may want to submit documentation from any of the following:

- Local school district personnel.
- State homeless education coordinators.
- National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE).
- Third parties, such as private or publicly funded homeless shelters and service providers.
- Financial aid administrators from colleges other than the school where you are presenting the documentation.
- Staff from college access programs such as TRiO (e.g., Talent Search or Upward Bound) or GEAR UP.
- College or high school counselors.
- Mental health professionals, social workers, mentors, doctors, or clergy.

If you do not have written documentation of your status, the financial aid office must still review the request for a homeless youth determination and determine whether you qualify as a homeless youth. Their determination may be based on other available information, such as resources from state or local governments, community organizations, or the college.

In Washington State, the FAFSA–Independent Student Verification form can be used for homeless youth determination. Your school's homeless liaison can complete this form, which is found at: ospi.k12.wa.us/student-success/access-opportunity-education/students-experiencing-homelessness. Then, confirm that Financial Aid Office received the form and inquire if other paperwork or a subsequent determination by your financial aid administrator is needed.

WHO IS CONSIDERED INDEPENDENT AS AN UHY?

At risk of homelessness and *self-supporting* are defined as follows:

- **At risk of homelessness:** When a student's housing may cease to be fixed, regular, and adequate, for example, a student who is being evicted and has been unable to find fixed, regular, and adequate housing.
- **Self-supporting:** When a student pays for his own living expenses, including fixed, regular, and adequate housing.

RESOURCES

SchoolHouse Connections:
schoolhouseconnection.org
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth:
naehcy.org/higher-education



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Rev. May 2025