

The 2025-2026 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) stipulates that a student may be considered independent for financial aid purposes if they received a determination at any time on or after July 1, 2024 that they were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or at risk of being homeless.

According to the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA), the definition of independent student includes youth who are 1) unaccompanied and homeless, or 2) unaccompanied, self-supporting, and at-risk of homelessness. The HEA uses the McKinney-Vento Act's definitions of homeless, which includes youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and unaccompanied, which includes youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. The HEA also uses at-risk of homelessness to refer to students whose housing may cease to be fixed, regular, and adequate.

### **THIRD-PARTY DOCUMENTATION**

A school district homeless liaison or the director or designee of an emergency shelter, basic center, or transitional living program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) or the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) is authorized to determine that a student is eligible for independent student status as an unaccompanied homeless youth. In that instance, no further action is required to confirm a student's status as independent.

**Does the youth have documentation from any of the following authorized entities that attests that the youth has experienced homelessness as an unaccompanied youth, or was unaccompanied, self-supporting, and at risk of homelessness, any time since July 1, 2024?**

- School district homeless liaisons or their designee;
- The director or a designee of a director of an emergency or transitional shelter, street outreach program, homeless youth drop-in center, or other program serving individuals who are experiencing homelessness
- The director or a designee of a director of a program funded under a TRIO or Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for an Undergraduate program ("GEAR UP") grant;
- A financial aid administrator at another institution who previously made a determination.

If yes, please provide a copy of the supporting documentation within **15 days** of receipt to the *Office of Student Financial Aid*. ***Failure to return the requested documentation to the Financial Aid Office before you end your term of enrollment will result in cancellation of your aid.***

If no, please contact the Office of Student Financial Aid for more discussion.