

Unusual Circumstances Appeal

Dependent to Independent Status

2026-2027



General Information:

The deadline for submitting this form is the end of the 2026-2027 term in which you were last enrolled. Students who do not meet the standard requirements for independent status may complete this appeal to be considered independent for financial aid purposes. Submission of this appeal form does not guarantee approval.

Standard Requirements for Independent Status (Personal Circumstances):

- You were born before January 1, 2003.
- As of today, you are married.
- At the beginning of the 2026–2027 school year, you will be working on a master’s or doctorate program (such as an MA, MBA, MD, JD, PhD, EdD, graduate certificate, etc.).
- 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 have or will have children who will receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2026 and June 30, 2027.
- You 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, 2027.
- At any time since you turned age 13, you were an orphan, in foster care or a dependent or ward of the court.
- As determined by a court in your state of legal residence, you are an emancipated minor.
- Someone other than your parent or stepparent have legal guardianship of you, as determined by a court in your state of legal residence.
- At any time on or after July 1, 2025, you were unaccompanied and either (1) homeless or (2) self-supporting and at risk of being homeless.

If you do not meet any of the conditions above, but you still feel that you should be considered independent, you may complete an appeal for independent status. These appeals are reviewed on a *case-by-case* basis and are only granted for ***unusual***, documented circumstances. Note: According to Webster’s dictionary, “***unusual***” means *rare, extraordinary, uncommon, unexpected, distinctive*.

Examples that constitute unusual circumstances *may* include:

- Student’s voluntary or involuntary removal from parents’ home due to an abusive situation that threatened the student’s safety and/or health
- Incapacity of parents (such as incarceration, disability, or mental or physical illness)
- Inability of the student to locate parents after making reasonable efforts
- Other extenuating circumstances sufficiently documented by third parties

The following conditions are ***not*** considered unusual, and ***do not qualify*** for this appeal:

- Parents refuse to contribute to the student’s education
- Parents are unwilling to provide information on the FAFSA or for verification
- Parents do not claim the student as a dependent for income tax purposes
- Student demonstrates that he or she is totally self-sufficient
- Student’s marital status changed since filing the FAFSA (Note: students in this category should view the “Change in Student’s Marital Status Appeal” at bethel.edu/offices/financial-aid/appeal)

Instructions:

If you believe that you should be considered an independent student for financial aid purposes, please complete the following steps:

1. Complete your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (studentaid.gov) without parent information. If your appeal is denied you will need to make a correction to your FAFSA to add parent information and signature.
2. Submit a personal letter of appeal to the financial aid office, indicating why you should be considered an independent student for financial aid purposes.
3. Submit documentation from a third-party supporting the extenuating circumstances you described. Examples include (but are not limited to): court documents or a letter on letterhead from a high school counselor, case worker, social worker, clergy, or other professional who confirms that your situation warrants independent status.
4. Remember to include your name and Bethel ID # on the documents that you submit. Documents may be submitted by fax or secure upload.
5. You may want to give a copy of this appeal form to anyone writing a letter of support for you, so that he or she can see what constitutes as grounds for an appeal, and focus his or her letter on the most appropriate points of support.

Continuing Bethel students who were granted independent status in a previous year due to an appeal are generally not required to go through this appeal process again. Rather, they may submit a letter to the Office of Financial Aid to provide an update on the current status of their circumstances (i.e. "My relationship with my parents has not changed in the past year..." or "My circumstances from the prior year have changed in the following ways...", etc.).

Please provide any additional supporting information below. Include any support that you have received from your parents within the last 12 months:

Certification

I affirm that all data elements contained on this form and any accompanying documentation are true and complete to the best of my knowledge. All information provided as a part of this request is considered confidential. Upon request I will provide additional documentation to substantiate the information provided.

Office Use Only:

Signature _____ Date _____

Please allow a minimum of 2-3 weeks for the financial aid committee to review your appeal.