

## Unusual Circumstances Form for Dependency Override Petition

Financial aid eligibility for Federal Student Aid and Columbia Grant is based on the assumption that parents will contribute towards the cost of a student's education. However, we recognize that every family situation is unique. If you have no contact with your parents or feel it would be extremely difficult to obtain financial information due to extenuating circumstances, you may petition to waive your parent requirements with a Dependency Override. Please review Columbia's policies and instructions below before submitting a petition. Note that all information will be kept confidential. Petitions will be considered both for Federal Student Aid and Columbia Grant purposes.

### Section I: Types of Circumstances

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Circumstances that **do not** by itself qualify for a Dependency Override:

- Parent's refusal to pay or complete application requirements.
- Student's demonstration of self-sufficiency
- Parents do not claim the student as a dependent for income tax purposes.

Circumstances that **may** qualify for a Dependency Override:

- History of physical abuse or dangerous behavior by the parent
- Parent's Incarceration
- Homelessness
- Other circumstances not already listed in Section 1

### Section II: Instructions for Student

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- Complete and submit page 3 of this form.
- Submit copies of supporting documentation which can include the following items:
  - Official third-party letter of support from a high school representative, social worker, or clergy who can verify your circumstances (see Section III).
  - Legal, police or court paperwork that limits contact with your parents due to safety reasons.
  - Court order or official federal or state documentation that confirms your parents are incarcerated.
  - Utility bills, health insurance, or other documents that demonstrate a separation from parents or legal guardians.
  - A documented determination of independence made by a financial aid administrator at another institution in the same or a prior award year.
  - A documented phone call or written statement from a state, county or tribal welfare agency, foster youth case worker, attorney, guardian ad litem, a court-appointed special advocate (or similar), a program servicing victims of abuse, neglect, assault or violence, or a representative of a TRIO or GEAR UP program which confirms the circumstances and the person's relationship to the student.

Note: The financial aid office may request additional information as needed, which can include conducting and documenting an interview with the student. Please also be advised that while letters from family members, neighbors, friends or lawyers will be reviewed, they do not generally carry the same weight as an official third-party letter.

## Section III: Instructions for Third Party Representatives

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Third-party letters should meet the following criteria:

- Printed on official letterhead and with a physical signature.
- Include the third-party contact information.
- Note how long the third party has known the student and in what capacity.
- Provide observations or knowledge regarding the student and parent relationship, regularity of contact and/or nature of contact.
- Letters can be given to the student to submit or emailed directly to Columbia at [ugrad-finaid@columbia.edu](mailto:ugrad-finaid@columbia.edu). See Section IV for details.

## Section IV: How to Submit Materials and Next Steps

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Submit petition materials using one of the following methods:

- Box: Upload documents to Columbia's secure Box portal at <https://columbiauniversitynyc.app.box.com/f/c14928e439cb4fdbab536b8be971d4af>.
- Email: [ugrad-finaid@columbia.edu](mailto:ugrad-finaid@columbia.edu) (Use subject line "Unusual Circumstances for Dependency Override")

**NEW STUDENTS:** Dependency Override requests will be reviewed once students are admitted. Until then, your petition will show the status of 'Not Reviewed' or 'Received' on Columbia's Online Financial Aid System and your parent requirements will show as 'Not Received.' Students who are admitted will receive an update on whether their petition is incomplete, approved or denied at the time of admission or thereafter as petitions are received.

**CURRENT STUDENTS:** Please email [ugrad-finaid@columbia.edu](mailto:ugrad-finaid@columbia.edu) 3-5 business days after you have submitted your petition materials to confirm receipt. We will contact you directly if we need more information. Decisions are communicated regularly upon the completion of a petition.

## Dependency Override Petition for Unusual Circumstances

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Student Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Email**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Columbia ID or UNI**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone Number**

**Student Statement:** In the box below, provide a detailed statement to help us better understand the circumstances surrounding why you would not want, or would no longer want, your parent(s) information included when determining your financial aid eligibility. In your statement, note the level of contact you have with your parent(s); the frequency of visits or phone/ digital conversations; any financial support provided; etc.

**Student Certification:** I certify that I am requesting to be considered independent for financial aid purposes through a Dependency Override. I confirm that my statement is true and understand that I must submit documentation supporting my circumstances.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Student Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**