

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES 2025-2026

Contact

Professional Judgment/
Special Circumstances Coordinator

Ms. Pena
718-260-5714

specialcircumstances@citytech.cuny.edu

If you are a dependent student on the FAFSA, but are experiencing unusual circumstances, the FAFSA will consider you to be provisionally independent, and will allow you to fill out the form as an independent student without using any parental information. However, you need to follow up with your college's financial aid office before your eligibility for federal student aid can be determined.



STEP #1 Determine Your Circumstance

- Left home due to an abusive or threatening environment
- Abandoned by or estranged from parents and have not been adopted
- Have refugee or asylum status, and are separated from parents, or parents are displaced in a foreign country
- Are a victim of human trafficking
- Are incarcerated, or parents are incarcerated and contact with parents would pose a risk to the student
- Are otherwise unable to contact or locate parents and have not been adopted

STEP #3

Contact the Financial Aid Office Professional Judgment / Special Circumstance Coordinator

In the email, please include...

- Your CUNY EMPLID, full name, contact number, and days/times that work best to contact you.
- A detailed explanation of your unusual circumstances
- Mention the 2025-2026 Academic Year
- The Financial Aid Office will review the supporting documents you have gathered, and may ask you additional questions about your circumstances to determine if you are eligible to be considered independent. If so, they will make any necessary updates to your FAFSA application.
- **Make sure to follow up, and check your emails, to ensure everything is resolved and processed as soon as possible!**

STEP #2 Gather Supporting Documents

Acceptable documentation (determined by FSA) includes...

- A documented interview between you and the Financial Aid Officer
- A court order, or official Federal/State documentation stating that your parents or legal guardian(s) are incarcerated
- A written statement from an attorney, guardian ad litem, court-appointed special advocate (or similar), or representative of a TRIO or GEAR UP program, confirming the circumstances and the person's relationship to you
- A documented determination of independence made by a Financial Aid Officer at another institution in the same or a prior award year
- Self-Supporting documentation, such as Federal Benefits Budget Letters, utility bills, health insurance, or other documents that reflect your separation from parents or legal guardians
- A written statement from a State/County/Tribal welfare agency, OR an independent living case worker who supports current and former foster youth with the transition to adulthood, OR a public or private agency, facility, or program servicing the victims of abuse, neglect, assault, or violence
- Etc.,