

Completing the FAFSA: Special Guidance Related to Dependency Status & Providing Parental Information on the FAFSA Minnesota Office of Higher Education – November 2008

Certain questions on the 2009-2010 FAFSA may be difficult to answer for students in foster care, legal guardianship, wards of the court, orphans, homeless youth or those with parents who are unmarried, separated, divorced or widowed. Instructions for the most frequently asked questions are provided.

FAFSA Question #	Question	Answer
24 & 25	How do I answer the question about my parents' level of schooling?	Answer these questions about your biological parents, even if you are not required to provide parental information on the FAFSA or even if your biological parents are not married.
53	How do I answer this question if I have a child of my own but the only form of financial assistance I provide to my child is from the MFIP/TANF program?	You can answer 'Yes' to having your own child if you are providing more than half of the financial support to your child, whether the source of your income is from employment or government benefits you receive, such as MFIP/TANF.
55, 57 and Step Four	Both my parents died when I was eight years old and I have been raised by my grandparents, who are my legal guardians. Do I report their income on the FAFSA?	You can answer 'Yes' to question 55 since you were an orphan after age 13. You can answer 'Yes' to question 57 if, as of today, your grandparents are still your legal guardians. If you can answer 'Yes' to any of the questions 48 through 60, you should apply as an independent student and leave the parent Section Four blank on the FAFSA.
55	I was adopted at birth, but both my adoptive parents died when I was 12. I was then legally adopted by another family when I was 14. Should I report income from my current adoptive parents on the FAFSA?	If you had no living parent (biological or adoptive) at any time after you were age 13, you can answer 'Yes' to question 55, even if you were later adopted. Answering 'Yes' to this question will allow you to apply as an independent student and leave the parent Section Four blank on the FAFSA.
55	What's the difference between being in foster care and being a ward of the court?	Being a ward of the court means a court has placed you under the guardianship of the court and terminated parental rights. Being placed in foster care does not necessarily mean you are a ward of the court or had parental rights terminated. In either case, you can still answer 'Yes' to question 55 if you were either a ward of the court OR receiving foster care at age 13 or thereafter. Answering 'Yes' to either of these questions will allow you to apply as an independent student and leave the parent Section Four blank on the FAFSA.
56	I chose to live on my own after I turned 16. Does that make me an emancipated minor?	No, not unless you can provide a copy of a court's decision that you are an emancipated minor. The court must have been located in your state of legal residence at the time of the legal decision. If you are not an emancipated minor, but left your parents' home due to an unusual situation, contact the college financial aid office about a dependency override.

FAFSA Question #	Question	Answer
57	I moved out of my parents' house at age 14 due to abuse and have been living with my aunt and uncle. Should I provide their income on the FAFSA?	No. If your aunt and uncle are your legal guardians, you can answer 'Yes' to question 57 and apply as an independent student. If your aunt and uncle are not your legal guardians, contact the financial aid office at the college you plan to attend about doing a dependency override, which will allow you to apply for financial aid as an independent student.
58,59,60	I ran away from home when I was 16 and have been living in shelters, on the street or with friends' families. Do I still need to provide my parents' information on the FAFSA?	You may be able to answer 'Yes' to question 58, 59 or 60, depending on your circumstances. These provisions allow unaccompanied homeless youth to apply for financial aid as independent students. You'll need to provide documentation to the financial aid office about your official designation as an unaccompanied homeless youth.
Step Four	How do I answer all the parental questions if my parents are divorced or separated?	Answer questions in Step Four about the parent who you lived with the most during the past 12 months. (If that parent is remarried, you must also include information for your stepparent, even if your stepparent has not adopted you.) If you lived with both parents an equal amount of time, then report information about the parent who provided the most financial support for you in the past 12 months or the most recent year financial support was provided.
Step Four	My parents filed joint taxes last year, but my father just died. Do I need to report both incomes on the FAFSA?	No. You will only need to report your mother's share of income and taxes paid for the previous year. Your college financial aid office should be able to help you figure out the figures to report by using your parents' tax returns and W2 forms.
Step Four	What if my parents live together but were never married?	You will only need to provide information about the parent you lived with the most in the past 12 months. If you lived with both parents an equal amount of time, then report information about the parent who provided the most financial support for you in the past 12 months or the most recent year financial support was provided.
Step Four	What if my parents are gay or lesbian?	Since same-gender marriage is not legally recognized in Minnesota, you would provide information about the parent who adopted you. If both parents adopted you, you would provide information about the parent who provided the most financial support to you in the past 12 months.
75	Can I include siblings in my parents' household size if they reside in another country?	You can only include those siblings in your parents' household size if your parents will provide more than half of their support during from July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010.
75	I live with my foster parents and their children. Should they be reported in parents' household size?	No. Since you were in foster care at or after age 13, you can answer 'Yes' to question 55 and apply as an independent student, which means you can skip the entire Section Four on the FAFSA.