

Special Circumstances

Professional Judgment (PJ)



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GENERAL INFORMATION

When students apply for financial aid, the government uses standard formulas, treating all students equally, in order to determine financial aid eligibility and dependency status. Since not all students and family situations are similar, the government provides schools with the authority to make individual adjustments to a student's financial aid file on a case-by-case basis.

This adjustment process is called Professional Judgment (PJ). Students may request re-evaluation of their "need level" based on special circumstances. In some cases, the Financial Aid Office may be able to make adjustments for a loss of income/benefits, death, divorce or separation of a parent or spouse, unusually high medical bills or problems with obtaining parental data.

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CHANGES IN FINANCIAL SITUATION

If a student or a dependent student's parent(s) experience a change of income and/or financial situation after the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the Financial Aid Office may be able to make an adjustment to the student's financial aid eligibility.

To request an adjustment of this type, the student may submit a complete Professional Judgment form - available online at www.ccd.edu or in the Financial Aid Office. Students must provide all documentation available to support their request (i.e. copies of layoff paperwork, proof of unemployment benefits, death certificate, divorce decree, medical bills, as indicated on the PJ form). If the requested documentation is not provided, the Professional Judgment may not be considered.

Income related PJ requests will not be accepted prior to June 1 for the upcoming fall term. Requests for a PJ received after January 1 will require a signed copy of the student's (or parental) federal tax return transcript or W-2s from the previous year.

Please note: A judgment made in favor of the student is not a guarantee that additional financial aid can or will be granted.

DEPENDENCY CHANGE

Students may request a change from dependent to independent status if they can document extreme, unique or unusual family circumstances that prevent them from obtaining parental information.

Examples of extreme, unique or unusual family circumstances include family abuse or neglect, parental desertion, and other situations in which contact between the parent and student is strained or non-existent.

Please note: Independency cannot be considered for cases in which a parent refuses to provide information on the FAFSA. In addition, financial self-sufficiency is not a basis for approval.

To request independent status based on family circumstances, a student must complete a Petition for Independence Form. This form is available online at www.ccd.edu or in the Financial Aid Office.

To request a change in dependency status, a student must also submit the following documentation:

1. A signed written statement providing detailed information about why the student is independent of both of their biological or adoptive parent(s). Fully understanding the situation will help the Financial Aid Office determine the correct dependency status.
2. Written documentation from an unbiased third party supporting the petition, listing the reasons the student is unable to obtain parental information. Examples can include: written statements from case managers, social workers, clergy members, school counselors or other sources that are aware of the situation. Written statements must be on letterhead and include a signature and third party contact information. Police reports and court documentation may also be submitted.
3. If employed and the student filed taxes: Signed copy of the most recent federal tax return transcript.
If employed but the student did not file: Copies of W-2s.
If the student was not employed: A written statement explaining any earnings made and how the student was able to cover living expenses.
4. Fill out a Verification Worksheet for Dependent Student Form 1 - available at www.ccd.edu or in the Financial Aid Office, with all requests for parental information left blank.

Requests received after January 1 require a signed copy of federal income tax return transcripts or W-2s for the previous year (if employed). Once the form and all supporting documents are received, the petition will be reviewed and the student will be notified of the decision in writing.

For more information, contact:

FINANCIAL AID

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PHONE: 303-556-5503

FAX: 303-556-5458

EMAIL: financialaid@ccd.edu

OR STOP BY: Auraria Campus
Confluence Building, Room 120

OFFICE HOURS: Monday – Thursday, 8am – 5pm
Friday, 10am – 5pm

