Dependency Status & Policies

Penn endorses the principle that education is first and foremost the responsibility of you and your family. Therefore, financial aid funding is used to supplement, not replace your ability to pay. In general, Penn requires your parents to submit financial information. However, this requirement may be waived based on the following guidelines:

- If you will reach age 26 by 12/31/15, you do not need to provide your parents’ financial information.
- If you will not reach age 26 by 12/31/15, you must:
  - meet both policies on independent status as outlined below
  - attach a letter of explanation to the Penn Financial Aid Supplement. Detail how you have been supporting yourself and why you think you should be independent.

The University Policy on Independent Status

You will be considered independent by Penn, and will not be required to submit parental information, if you are 26 years old by 12/31/15, are pursuing your first undergraduate degree, and are applying for University-administered funds for the first time. However, if you meet the federal policy for independent status, but are not 26 years old by 12/31/15, the decision to waive parental data is made by our office on a case-by-case basis. Students who are not required to submit parental information have typically:

- not been claimed as dependents on their parents’ taxes for at least two years, and
- demonstrated self-sufficiency for at least two years.

Note: The School of Nursing requires all incoming students in the Accelerated Nursing Program who are under 30 years of age by December 31, 2015, to submit both parent and student financial information, including tax returns. Read more about this program here.

Federal Policy on Independent Status for Academic Year 2015-2016

You will be considered an independent student for the federal financial aid programs only if you meet at least one of the following criteria for the 2015-2016 academic year:

- you were born before January 1, 1992
- you will be enrolled in a master’s or doctorate program (beyond a bachelor’s degree) at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year
- you are married as of the day you apply (or you’re separated but not divorced)
- you have children who receive more than half their support from you
- you have dependents (other than your children or spouse) who live with you and who receive more than half of their support from you at the time you apply and through June 30, 2016.
- you are a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces. (A veteran includes a student who attended a U.S. service academy and who was released under a condition other than dishonorable. For more details on veteran status, see the explanatory notes on the FAFSA)
- at any time since you turned age 13, both your parents were deceased, or you were in foster care, or were a dependent/ward of the court
- you are, or were, an emancipated minor as determined by a court in your state of legal residence
- you are, or were, in legal guardianship as determined by a court in your state of legal residence
- at any time after July 1, 2015, your high school or school district homeless liaison determined that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless
- at any time after July 1, 2015, the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development determined that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless
- at any time after July 1, 2015 the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program determined that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless.