Dependency Override Policy

Definition of independent student:

Currently, Princeton students must meet one of the criterion below to be considered financially independent by the University:

- Student is over age 25 and has lived as a self-supporting adult for at least two years.
- Student is an orphan or ward of the court.
- Student is a veteran of the United States armed forces.

Dependency override:

Students who do not meet the criteria above may appeal for a dependency override on the basis of persistent, ongoing, and irreconcilable family dysfunction. Dysfunction may be the result of abuse, parental abandonment, or a home environment which endangers student health or safety.

In order to request an override, the student must submit documentation and letters as outlined below. The appeal materials will be confidentially circulated to committee members within the University administration for review.

If the dependency override is approved, the student’s parent(s) will be waived from the aid application for the period of one academic year. Dependency status will be reviewed annually at the time of each subsequent aid application.

Documentation necessary for dependency override:

1) A written personal statement from the student describing the reasons for their appeal.

2) Evidence of circumstances, which may include the following:
   a. Police Reports.
   b. Primary source records (transcripts, letters, affidavits, medical records, etc.).
   c. Proof of independent living (bills and other expenses paid in student’s name).

3) At least two (preferably three) letters from professional third parties.
   a. The statements must be from persons familiar with the student’s situation in a professional capacity such as a physician, counselor, clergy, teacher, or lawyer. The letters should be written on professional letterhead and should specify the length of time the individual has known the student.
Additional considerations:

In addition to the above qualifications, the student should have demonstrated effort to cover their educational expenses in the form of student loans and/or employment.

Circumstances which are not justifiable reasons for a dependency override:

- Parental unwillingness to pay for college.
- Parental unwillingness to participate in the financial aid application.
- Student lives independently but does not demonstrate family dysfunction.

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