



## Making Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Determinations: A Tool for Financial Aid Administrators

This form may be completed by a financial aid administrator (FAA) who is evaluating a student's eligibility for independent student status. There is no official federal form that FAAs are required to use for unaccompanied homeless youth determinations; this form is provided as an optional tool to assist with this task. For official guidance related to unaccompanied homeless youth and federal financial aid, see the Application and Verification Guide (AVG) portion of the most current [Federal Student Aid Handbook](#).

The following information provides guidance to assist FAAs in making a determination if a student seeking independent student status as an unaccompanied homeless youth comes to the attention of a FAA. It is important to note that, while comprehensive, this tool may not adequately represent every homeless situation experienced by youth. As a result, it is important that FAAs make case-by-case determinations to ensure that students are able to receive the maximum amount of aid for which they are eligible.

According to the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA), the definition of independent student includes youth who are 1) unaccompanied and homeless, or 2) unaccompanied, self-supporting, and at-risk of homelessness. The HEA uses the [McKinney-Vento Act's definitions of homeless](#), which includes youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and *unaccompanied*, which includes youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. The HEA also uses *at-risk of homelessness* to refer to students whose housing may cease to be fixed, regular, and adequate.

Student Name:

Identification Number:

### FAA Acceptance of Determinations by Other Parties

A school district homeless liaison or the director or designee of an emergency shelter, basic center, or transitional living program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) or the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) is authorized to determine that a student is eligible for independent student status as an unaccompanied homeless youth. In that instance, no further action is required to confirm a student's status as independent.<sup>1</sup>

### FAA Determination Based on Third-Party Documentation

As mandated by the HEA, if a determination by any of the parties listed in the previous section cannot be made, the FAA must make the determination of unaccompanied and homeless status, or unaccompanied, self-supporting, and at risk of homelessness status.

1. Does the student have documentation that attests that he/she has experienced homelessness at any time since July 1, 2021 from a homeless shelter or service provider, FAA from another college, college access program such as TRIO or GEAR UP, college or high school counselor, mental health professional, social worker, employer, mentor, doctor, clergy, or other relevant third party?      Yes      No

If yes, list the contact and relationship to the student:

Summary of information provided by the third party:

If the FAA feels that additional supporting documentation is needed, he/she may request contact information for the third party listed above to follow-up by phone or email.

### FAA Determination Based on a Documented Interview

If third party documentation is not available, a documented interview conducted by the FAA is sufficient to confirm that a student qualifies as independent as an unaccompanied homeless youth.<sup>2</sup> The FAA may make the determination based on the following information:

1. In which of the following situations does the student currently reside or in which would the student reside if not staying in on-campus housing<sup>3</sup> (you may choose more than one):

<sup>1</sup> According to the AVG, if the FAA disagrees with an authority's determination, the FAA must accept the determination, but may contact the authority's oversight agency to evaluate the authority's determination.

<sup>2</sup> According to the AVG, the determination may be based on a documented interview with the student if there is no written documentation available.

<sup>3</sup> According to the AVG, the definition of *homeless* includes students living in the school dormitory if they would otherwise be homeless.

Motel	Shelter or other temporary housing program
Car	Substandard housing <sup>4</sup> (housing that is insufficient to meet the physical and psychological needs typically met in a home environment)
Campsite	Temporarily staying with others because the student has nowhere else to go

2. If the student is living with another household, check all of the following reasons that apply:

Loss of housing

Economic hardship resulting in inability to secure and maintain fixed, regular, and adequate housing

Other (including, for example, when it is not safe for a youth to live with a parent or guardian, when a parent or guardian has forced a youth to leave home, and other situations of abuse or conflict):

It may be helpful to ask students who are staying with others where they would live if they could not stay at their current location. If the student replies that he/she would be living in one of the situations listed above (motel, car, etc.), or is not sure where he or she would stay, the student does not have fixed, regular, and adequate housing, and therefore meets the definition of *homeless*.

If the student is living in any of these situations, and is not under the care of a parent or guardian, he or she meets the definitions of *homeless* and *unaccompanied*, and qualifies as an independent student. According to the AVG, youth fleeing abuse and living in one of these situations may be considered homeless, even if the parent would provide support and a place to live.

**FAA Determination: Considerations for Students Who Are Self-Supporting and At Risk of Homelessness**

1. Is the student self-supporting? (Self-supporting means the student is responsible for his or her own living expenses, including fixed, regular, and adequate housing.)      Yes      No
2. Is the student's housing likely to cease to be fixed, regular, and adequate? Is the student at-risk of homelessness due to eviction or other loss of housing?      Yes      No

If the student answers "yes" to both of these questions, and is not under the care of a parent or guardian, he or she meets the definition of an *unaccompanied youth who is self-supporting and at risk of homelessness*, and qualifies as an independent student.

**Action Taken**

Independent student status confirmed

Independent student status not confirmed; please explain:

Print Name

Signature (required)

Title

Date

**Strengthening Student Retention through Referrals to Supportive Services:**

Students experiencing homelessness may benefit from connections to other campus and community supports. Please note below any referrals you made to assist this student with academic, student life, medical, mental health, and/or basic needs.

<sup>4</sup> For more information on substandard housing, see NCHC's *Determining Eligibility for Rights and Services Under the McKinney-Vento Act* brief, available at <https://nche.ed.gov/resources/>.

