



2025-2026

Unusual Circumstance Request

Unusual Circumstance overrides are rare and occur in certain special situations. Unusual Circumstance overrides often involve an involuntary dissolution of the family or situations in which it would be harmful for the student to have contact with their parents. Examples include incarceration or institutionalization of both parents, abuse and abandonment.

The HCC Financial Aid Office has the authority, through [Section 480\(d\)\(7\) of the Higher Education Act](#), to change a student's status from dependent to independent in cases involving unusual circumstances. Dependent students with unusual circumstances may appeal to the Financial Aid Office for an Unusual Circumstance override. A Unusual Circumstance override would allow the student to be considered an independent student (for financial aid purposes only) and exempt the student from providing parental data on his/her FAFSA.

Unusual Circumstance Override Policy

Annually, and on a case-by-case basis, the HCC Financial Aid Office may permit an unusual circumstance override for otherwise dependent students with unusual circumstances.

*Conditions which **qualify*** for a unusual circumstance override include students, under the age of 24, who cannot rely on parental support from either parent because each parent meets one of the following criteria:

- Parent is deceased.
- Parent is incarcerated.
- Unusual parental circumstances (e.g., parent's whereabouts are unknown, abusive family environment, abandonment by parent, etc.).

*Conditions, singly or in combination, that **do not qualify*** for an unusual circumstance override include:

- Parent(s) refuse to contribute to the student's education.
- Parent(s) are unwilling to provide information on the FAFSA or for FAFSA verification.
- Parent(s) do not claim the student as a dependent for income tax purposes.
- Student does not live with their parent(s).

Student demonstrates total self-sufficiency.

Unusual Circumstance Override Process

To apply for an initial unusual circumstance override, students **must complete and return** the unusual circumstance override request forms and supporting documentation to the HCC Financial Aid Office. You must submit a personal statement along with three letters consisting of one from a personal source and two letters from professional third parties, and any supporting documentation. Requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and all information will be kept confidential. The submission of a request does not guarantee request approval.

Upon receipt of a Unusual Circumstance Request Form and supporting documentation, the HCC Financial Aid office will review the student's circumstance and documentation. Students with special situations that qualify for an unusual circumstance override will be deemed an independent student for the current aid year.

The HCC Financial Aid Office will notify students via their myHeartland e-mail account when the result of their unusual circumstance override request has been determined.



Unusual Circumstance Request

Supporting Documentation

Students are required to submit supporting documentation with their request. The supporting documentation will vary depending on the student's unusual circumstances. Students must provide documentation for each parent. For the conditions which qualify for an unusual circumstance override, the following items are requested:

Circumstance	Requested Documentation
Parent is deceased	A copy of the parent's death certificate
Parent is incarcerated	Documentation that verifies the parent is incarcerated and lists the parent's anticipated release
Unusual parental	Signed statement from a personal source and at least two third-party professionals that know the student's current unusual parental circumstances.

Use the unusual circumstance override request forms to collect signed statements from a personal source and two third-party professionals that document the student's special situation as they relate to the parent in question. If a written statement is required for both parents, one written statement from a third-party professional that documents the student's special situation as they relate to both parents is acceptable. This person should know and understand the student's current circumstances. Examples of third-party professionals are:

- Current/former teacher
- Counselor (school or wellness)
- Social worker
- Members of clergy
- Employer
- Law Enforcement Authority or Agency

Third-Party Professional Letters should document the following:

- A signed statement from a third-party professional should be on the letterhead of the business or organization that they represent. If letterhead is not obtainable, the person's name, title, phone number, business/organization, and address should be included.
- The student's name as it appears in our records
- The relationship between the professional and the student should be stated

The HCC Financial Aid Office may contact third-party professionals who provide supporting documentation. If you are struggling obtaining third-party documentation, please contact our office.



2025-2026

Unusual Circumstance Request

Section A: Student Information

Student Name _____ Student ID Number _____

Address _____ Phone Number _____

Section B: Instructions

Please follow the steps below to be considered for a Unusual Circumstance Override. Your application will not be reviewed unless all requirements are met.

1. Completed FAFSA if not already submitted.
2. Complete the certification on this form.
3. Attach a typed personal statement indicating relationship with both biological mother and father.
4. Attach at least one personal statement by a personal source. Personal source can include another family member friend, or acquaintance who knows first-hand of your personal situation.
5. Attach at least two personal statements by professional third parties. Professional third parties can include clergy, counselor, teacher, lawyer, etc.
6. Return documents, completed, to our office.

Section C: Certification

I am requesting consideration for an unusual circumstance override at Heartland Community College.

I certify that I qualify for consideration due to a breakdown in my family structure caused by abuse, abandonment, or neglect. I request to be considered as an independent student for financial aid purposes and have attached required documentation to this form. **Electronic signatures are not accepted.**

Signature

Date



2025-2026

Unusual Circumstance: Statement by a Professional Third Party

Section A: Student Information

Student Name _____ Student ID Number _____

Address _____ Phone Number _____

Section B: Personal Statement by a Professional Third Party

Third Party Name: _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____

How long have you known the student? _____

What is your relationship to the student? _____

With whom does the student reside? _____

Please provide a typed statement explaining the student's relationship with their biological/adoptive parent(s) and submit with this document.

Section C: Certification

I certify that all information contained on this form is true and accurate. I understand that I may be contacted if further information is needed. **Electronic signatures are not accepted.**

Signature

Date



2025-2026

Unusual Circumstance: Statement by a Professional Third Party

Section A: Student Information

Student Name _____ Student ID Number _____

Address _____ Phone Number _____

Section B: Personal Statement by a Professional Third Party

Third Party Name: _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____

How long have you known the student? _____

What is your relationship to the student? _____

With whom does the student reside? _____

Please provide a typed statement explaining the student's relationship with their biological/adoptive parent(s) and submit with this document.

Section C: Certification

I certify that all information contained on this form is true and accurate. I understand that I may be contacted if further information is needed. **Electronic signatures are not accepted.**

Signature

Date



2025-2026

Unusual Circumstance: Statement by a Personal Source

Section A: Student Information

Student Name _____ Student ID Number _____

Address _____ Phone Number _____

Section B: Personal Statement by a Professional Third Party

Third Party Name: _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____

How long have you known the student? _____

What is your relationship to the student? _____

With whom does the student reside? _____

Please provide a typed statement explaining the student's relationship with their biological/adoptive parent(s) and submit with this document.

Section C: Certification

I certify that all information contained on this form is true and accurate. I understand that I may be contacted if further information is needed. **Electronic signatures are not accepted.**

Signature

Date