

## **CSPN Professional Judgment Policy**

Students and/or parents may begin the Professional Judgment (PJ) request process by making an appeal to the Office of Student Financial Aid with “special” or “unusual” circumstances that differ from the situation presented in the student’s completed FAFSA.

Students are required to contact the Financial Aid Office at (216) 901-4400 ext 103, [TVickroy@CspnOhio.edu](mailto:TVickroy@CspnOhio.edu) or by requesting an in-person meeting with a Financial Aid Administrator (FAA) to discuss their specific situation. If they wish to appeal, they will be guided to submit various forms of documentation/evidence as determined by the FAA to support their special and/or unusual circumstance(s).

The Director of Student Financial Aid will review this information to consider a professional judgment (PJ) decision according to the policy below, based on federal guidelines including the *FAFSA Simplification Act*. Based on Federal statute, nothing limits the authority of aid administrators, and the aid administrator’s decision is final. Documentation will be maintained in the student’s file for at least three years after the end of their enrollment, along with documentation of the PJ decision.

### **PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT CATEGORIES:**

- 1) **Special Circumstances** – Allows for changes/updates reflecting financial items affecting the student and/or parent.
  - a. These changes/updates can be made to data elements used in calculating the EFC (Expected Family Contribution) or beginning in 2024-25, the SAI (Student Aid Index).
  - b. Financial changes/updates might also be made to the components of the student’s COA (Cost of Attendance Budget for Financial Aid Purposes.)
  - c. Examples of Special Circumstances include but are not limited to the following:
    - i. Changes to Family Income, assets, etc.
    - ii. Updating a recent unemployment status
    - iii. Updating a Dislocated worker status
    - iv. Changes to the student’s Housing status due to homelessness
  
- 2) **Unusual Circumstances** – allows for a change made to the student’s dependency status for financial aid purposes based on a unique circumstance that differs from the situation presented in the student’s completed FAFSA as determined by the answers submitted to the standard FAFSA dependency questions.
  - a. A potential dependency status change can only be made from the dependent status to the independent status.
  - b. Examples of Unusual Circumstances include but are not limited to the following:
    - i. Human trafficking
    - ii. Refugee or asylee status.
    - iii. Parental abandonment, incarceration, etc.
    - iv. Unable to contact parents.
    - v. Contact with parents poses a risk to the student.
  - c. The following are **NOT** examples of Unusual Circumstances:
    - i. Parents that are unresponsive or refuse to offer financial support.
    - ii. Student demonstrates self-sufficiency.

## **TIMING AND NOTIFICATION OF THE PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT DETERMINATION:**

Professional judgements will be made by the school no later than 60 days from the student's enrollment start date. However, the school will consider all requests for Professional Judgment made by students on a case-by-case basis even if the decision for the request would or potentially would arrive after 60 days from the date of the student's enrollment start date.

Students should allow 10 business days for the school's decision from the time all requested documentation has been submitted by the student to the Financial Aid department. Students will be notified of the final PJ decision by an FAA in-person or via email or with a note on the student's invoice.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTAIN FORMS OF DOCUMENTATION/EVIDENCE:**

- 1) Documentation of Homelessness should be provided by an independent third-party institution such as
  - a. Homeless Liaison or local agency
  - b. Director or designee from an
    - i. Emergency /transitional shelter
    - ii. Street Outreach program
    - iii. Homeless youth drop-in center
    - iv. Other programs serving homeless individuals.
    - v. A program supported by Federal TRIO or GEAR-UP grant.
  - c. An FAA from a different school that has already documented the circumstance for the same or prior award year.
  - d. A written statement / documented interview confirming the student is either:
    - i. An Unaccompanied homeless youth
    - ii. Unaccompanied, at risk of homelessness, and self-supporting
  
- 2) Documentation for Foster Care Youth
  - a. A court order from a State or Federal agency.
  - b. Documented phone call from attorney, guardian court appointed special advocate.
  - c. An FAA from a different school that has already documented the circumstance for the same or prior award year or by
  - d. Verification of student's eligibility for education and training voucher
  
- 3) Unemployment Status
  - a. Unemployment paperwork must be submitted within 90 days of issuance or
  - b. The school FAA may consider accepting it if there is no new evidence that contradicts the document.

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:**

- 1) All PJs will be made after the school has completed the verification process. The school's policy is to verify 100% of enrolled students. Therefore, there are no exceptions to this rule.
- 2) When completing the 2024-25 FAFSA, students will be given the opportunity to indicate unusual circumstances. At that time, the student will be given a "provisional independent status" and a "provisional Student Aid Index" value. These provisional items are subject to a final determination made by the school.