

2017-2018 APPLICATION AND VERIFICATION GUIDE SUMMARY NOVEMBER 2016

BACKGROUND

On November 22, 2016, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid issued the *Application and Verification Guide (AVG)* portion of the *2017-2018 Federal Student Aid Handbook*. The AVG can be downloaded in its entirety or by chapter at <https://ifap.ed.gov/fsahandbook/1718FSAHandbookAVG.html>. The AVG provides information to college financial aid administrators and counselors who help students with the process of seeking federal student aid for post-secondary education, including filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®), verifying information, and making corrections and other changes to the information reported on the FAFSA.

ACCESS TO FEDERAL STUDENT AID FOR UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS STUDENTS

Unaccompanied homeless youth (UHY) are considered independent students for purposes of applying for federal student aid. This means that UHY do not need to include a parent signature or information on parental income and assets on the FAFSA; rather UHY report only their own income and assets, which are used to determine the student's federal financial aid package. The AVG outlines the process for determining independent student status for UHY. Details follow.

AVG HIGHLIGHTS RELATED TO UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH

The following AVG highlights discuss independent student status for unaccompanied homeless youth and are highlighted in light blue in the AVG for easy location.

- **Dependency Status (p AVG-28):** Establishes that a student who was determined at any time since July 1, 2016 (irrespective of whether the student is currently homeless or at-risk thereof), to be an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or self-supporting and at-risk of being homeless qualifies as an independent student.
- **Determiners of Independent Student Status (p AVG-28):** Establishes that the following authorities may make determinations of independent student status for UHY:
 - a school district homeless liaison
 - the director (or designee) of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
 - the director (or designee) of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living programFinancial aid administrators also may make determinations of independent student status for UHY. See page AVG-115 for details.
- **Determinations by Financial Aid Administrators (p AVG-115):** Establishes that financial aid administrators must determine if a student is an unaccompanied youth who is homeless or is self-supporting and at-risk of being homeless if the student cannot get a determination from a local liaison or shelter director (or designee), as detailed above.
- **The Determination Process (p AVG-115-116):** Provides guidelines for the process financial aid administrators should follow when determining independent student status for UHY.

- **Subsequent Year Determinations (p AVG-116):** Establishes that local liaisons may write subsequent year letters of determination (after a student has graduated high school) for UHY through age 23 for whom they have the necessary information to write such letters.
- **Students Ages 22-23 (p AVG-116):** Clarifies that students who don't meet the definition of youth because they are older than 21 (and not yet 24 and, as such, automatically independent) and who are unaccompanied and homeless or self-supporting and at-risk of being homeless qualify for a homeless youth determination. This reinforces the message of the U.S. Department of Education's July 2015 Dear Colleague Letter at <https://ifap.ed.gov/dpcletters/GEN1516.html>.