

2026-2027 UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES FORM

What is an “Unusual Circumstance”?

A Unusual Circumstance occurs when a Financial Aid administrator overrides the requirement for parent information due to extreme circumstances, such as documented abuse or abandonment by the parent. A Unusual Circumstance at GTCC is determined on a case-by-case basis depending on the situation, the supporting documentation provided, and whether the situation is reason enough for a student to be considered independent rather than dependent. Unusual Circumstance applications must be approved each academic year.

Who is a parent for financial aid purposes?

Your biological/adoptive parents are considered your parents. Grandparents, foster parents, and legal guardians are not considered parents unless they have legally adopted you. If a person has adopted you, they are your legal parent. Questions about parents then refer to the adoptive parent(s).

What conditions **DO NOT** merit a Unusual Circumstance?

None of the conditions below, separately or in combination, qualify as unusual circumstances or merit a Unusual Circumstance:

- Parents refuse to provide information on the FAFSA or during the Verification process.
- Parents do not claim the student as a dependent for income tax purposes.
- Parents refuse to contribute to a student’s education (i.e. pay tuition/fees, room/board, or books and supplies).
- A dependent student who demonstrates self-sufficiency (i.e. has a job, does not live at home, etc.).
- A student who does not wish to communicate with parents.
- A student previously considered independent for financial aid purposes, but who is not meeting the 2026-2027 FAFSA definition.

What happens next?

- Once we receive all the documentation required, your application will be reviewed.
- If additional documentation is required you will be notified via GTCC email. Documents must be sent within 20 business days from the date of notification.
- If your **appeal is approved**, your FAFSA will be processed as an independent student. If your **appeal is denied**, you will be required to correct your FAFSA with parental information and a parent’s signature.

What can you do if your parents refuse to help?

The federal government considers it the family’s responsibility to pay for higher education but may provide financial assistance if the family is unable to pay the full cost of education. But if a parent simply chooses not to pay or participate in the application process, the responsibility cannot fall on the taxpayer. It is an unfortunate reality that parent refusal may prevent students from paying for their education until they meet the independent student definition. Here is some advice on how to help educate your parents better:

- First, try to encourage your biological/adoptive parents to complete the FAFSA. Remind your parents that submitting their information on the FAFSA does not obligate them to pay your bill or provide you support, but their refusal will prevent you from receiving financial aid.
- If your parents are concerned about privacy, remind them that the confidentiality of student records, including financial aid information, is protected by the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The GTCC Financial Aid Office does not share parent information with the student without the parent’s consent.

2026-2027 REFERENCE WORKSHEET FOR UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCE

This form should be completed by a family member, family friend, or a third-party professional (counselor, minister, teacher, etc.) who has first-hand knowledge of the student's situation and who can corroborate and verify the circumstances that necessitate the student's application for an Unusual Circumstance. *(Make additional copies of this form as necessary. Attach an additional sheet if necessary.)*

Student's Name: _____

Name of the person completing this form: _____

If necessary, the following information can be typed on a separate sheet but must address each of the questions below and have an ink signature:

1. How long have you known the student: _____

2. What is your relationship to the student: _____

If you know the student as a third-party professional (counselor, minister teacher, etc.), please indicate where you work:

3. Explain what you know of the student's current relationship/contact with his/her biological/adoptive parents and any relevant background information you have regarding the history that has led to the current circumstances:

4. To your knowledge, when is the last time the student had contact with his/her biological/adoptive mother: ___ ___ / ___ ___ ___
Month Year

To your knowledge, when is the last time the student had contact with his/her biological/adoptive Father: ___ ___ / ___ ___ ___
Month Year

Explain the nature of the contact:

5. Explain why you think the student is unable to provide information from a biological/adoptive parent:

By signing this statement, I certify under penalty of perjury that the information I have reported on this form is complete and accurate. I understand that purposely giving false or misleading information to qualify for federal student aid is a federal offense that can result in fines and/or incarceration.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

**Sign in Ink or with a Stylus*

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1. How long have you known the student: _____

2. What is your relationship to the student: _____

If you know the student as a third-party professional (counselor, minister teacher, etc.), please indicate where you work:

3. Explain what you know of the student's current relationship/contact with his/her biological/adoptive parents and any relevant background information you have regarding the history that has led to the current circumstances:

4. To your knowledge, when is the last time the student had contact with his/her biological/adoptive mother: ___ ___ / ___ ___ ___
Month Year

To your knowledge, when is the last time the student had contact with his/her biological/adoptive Father: ___ ___ / ___ ___ ___
Month Year

Explain the nature of the contact:

5. Explain why you think the student is unable to provide information from a biological/adoptive parent:

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