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You’ve received your financial aid award letter from the school and realize that the funds you have been awarded are not enough to cover all of your expenses. Don’t panic!

There is a process in place for students to appeal for more financial aid. The process for appealing is usually referred to as a professional judgement review, or special circumstances review.

It basically means that you can formally ask the financial aid administrators at your school to reconsider your aid package based on additional information.

College financial aid administrators have the authority to make adjustments to the data elements on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or to the Cost of Attendance (COA) on a case-by-case basis when supported by documentation of special circumstances.

Financial aid administrators may also override a student’s dependency status from dependent to independent when the student is affected by unusual circumstances. If the student’s dependency status is changed to independent, no parent information will be required on the FAFSA.

**How does the appeal process work?**

The appeal process varies from school to school but, generally, all schools will require that you appeal in writing, either by traditional mail (aka “snail mail”) or email. Appeals may not be done by phone.

You should never appeal your financial aid award just to seek more money. There should be a specific set of reasons for your request. The first thing that must be determined is whether your situation warrants special or unusual circumstances.

1. **Special Circumstances**

   Special circumstances can include any financial circumstances that have changed from last year to this year, and anything that distinguishes the student’s family from the “typical family.”

2. **Unusual Circumstances**

   Unusual circumstances include unusual family situations or an abusive family environment that threatens the student’s health or safety.
The student and family should take action immediately, regardless of whether the special circumstances are due to an ongoing need or a crisis. Although the students may request special consideration at any time during the year, submitting a request as early as possible with appropriate documentation will help the student be considered for the best range of available financial aid funds.

Applications must be resubmitted annually to confirm that the special or unusual circumstances are still in effect.