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**Unusual FAFSA Filing Situations**

When completing the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), your students may find themselves in a situation that requires some additional direction:

**Divorced or Separated Parents**
The parent with whom the student lived with the most during the past 12 months should complete the FAFSA. If the student did not live with one parent more than the other, the parent who provided the most support in the past 12 months (or in the most recent year that parental support was received) should complete the FAFSA. Support includes food, shelter, clothing, insurance, etc., in addition to cash payments.

If parents who are separated file a joint tax return, only the parent with whom the student lived (as defined above) must report on the FAFSA their income, assets, taxes paid, and household size. It does not matter if this parent is not the one who claimed the student on their tax return.

For financial aid purposes, a couple is considered separated only if there is physical separation. This means that a married couple who claims to be separated but is still living together is considered married, and both parents must provide information on the FAFSA.

**Stepparents**
If a parent has remarried, both the parent and the stepparent must report information on the FAFSA. A prenuptial agreement does NOT exempt a stepparent from providing his or her information.

If the biological parent dies and the stepparent survives, the student becomes independent unless:

* The student is dependent on the surviving biological parent.
* OR
* The stepparent legally adopted the student.

**Adoptive Parents**
For financial aid purposes, adoptive parents are the same as biological parents.

**Foster Parents**
For financial aid purposes, foster parents are NOT the same as biological parents. A student living with foster parents is a ward of the court and is considered to be an independent student.