

Students and parents should contact the financial aid office to discuss an appeal when there is a situation impacting the family's ability to pay for school that was not taken into account on the FAFSA. In some cases, the situation has occurred before the FAFSA was filed (i.e. decrease in income but prior, prior year information is always required when initially filing the FAFSA), while other times the change occurred after the FAFSA was filed. Appeals can be considered in both cases. The financial aid appeal process might be called a professional judgment or a special circumstances review.

### Types of Appeals

- Parent or student appeals based on change in income, divorce/separation, high parental medical or nondiscretionary expenses:
  - The goal of these appeals is to reduce the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and create more need or make students eligible for aid that is based on EFC (Pell Grant and Maine State Grant).
  - If the EFC is already zero, more aid can be requested (assuming there is unmet need) but providing documentation of changes typically does not result in the student becoming eligible for more federal or state aid or having more need as the EFC can't be below zero. However, schools may have funds set aside to fill unmet need that has not been covered, so it is still worth contacting the school if there are concerns about getting the bill paid.
- Student Cost of Attendance appeals based on tuition, fees, room, board, books, supplies, computer, travel (but not car payment), medical or other nondiscretionary expenses that are higher than what the school budgeted:
  - The other way to create more need is to increase the cost of attendance.
  - These appeals often don't result in more aid being awarded (except loan eligibility) but can be done to offset outside scholarships or resolve overawards.

### Timing of Appeals

Appeals can be submitted at any time, but schools may have a policy regarding when they process appeals. For example, many schools base the initial award on the original FAFSA information and do not consider appeals until after the student has been awarded. It is important to discuss timing with each school if the student is applying to multiple schools.

If simply requesting more money to fill unmet need, follow up in June (after schools know who has matriculated), late September (after withdrawals), and January (after fall graduation and spring withdrawals).

### Process to Appeal

Many schools will have a specific form they want students or parents to complete depending on the circumstances (i.e. changes in income or marital status). Other times, schools will ask the family to write a letter explaining the situation. Follow the instructions from the school and be sure to provide documentation that supports the situation.