

## Definition of a Parent

The term “parent” is not restricted to biological parents. There are instances (such as a grandparent legally adopting an applicant) in which a person other than a biological parent is treated as a parent. If both parents are both living and married to each other, answer the FAFSA questions as they apply to both of them.

<b>Separation</b>	In cases of separation (not necessarily legal), divorce, or death,
<b>Divorce</b>	the student must answer the parental questions on the FAFSA
<b>Death</b>	as they apply to the surviving or responsible parent. If an applicant’s parents are divorced or separated, answer the questions about the parent the applicant lived with more during the 12 months preceding the date of filing the FAFSA. If the applicant did not live with one parent more than the other, give answers about the parent who provided more financial support during the 12 months preceding the date of filing the FAFSA, or during the most recent year that you actually received support from a parent.
<b>Adoptive Parent</b>	Treated in the same manner as a biological parent.
<b>Stepparent</b>	The stepparent's information is reported if the stepparent is married to the student's responsible biological parent and/or if the stepparent has legally adopted the student. If the "responsible parent" is married or remarried as of the date of filing the FAFSA, the stepparent information must be reported. There are no exceptions. Prenuptial agreements do not exempt the stepparent from providing required data on the FAFSA. Note that the stepparent’s income information for the entire base year must be reported even if the parent and stepparent were not married until after the start of the base year, but prior to the date the FAFSA was filed.
<b>Common-Law</b>	If the student’s parents have not been formally married, but meet the criteria in their state for a common-law marriage, they should report their status as married on the FAFSA. <b>Illinois does not recognize common-law marriage. However, Illinois will recognize a common-law marriage that took place out-of-state (follow the rules for separated or divorced parents in filing the FAFSA).</b>
<b>Legal Guardian, or Foster Parent, or Other Adult With Which the Student May Live</b>	Is <b>not</b> treated as the parent of the student unless that person has legally adopted the applicant.