

OSAP REVIEW: FAMILY BREAKDOWN

OSAP expects a student to provide parental information on the OSAP application form. Sometimes the information is not available because of circumstances within the family. A Family Breakdown review allows an assessment of funding without reference to one or both parent's financial information in situations where there is a serious rift in the family and the student is estranged from one or both parents due to documented mental, physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse or drug or alcohol addiction in the student's family. The following factors are taken into consideration (and should be expanded upon, if possible, in your letter):

- severity and degree of the breakdown
- length of time the rift has existed
- parental treatment of other siblings
- reasons for the family breakdown
- attempts at, or likelihood of, reconciliation
- if the problem/rift exists with only one parent, consideration of the other parent's position in the breakdown and his/her ability or willingness to assist the student

When you complete the online OSAP application, you would check the box to indicate you're not able to provide parental information when prompted to provide your parents' income. This will add a "supporting documentation" hold on your file which requires the following:

1. A signed and dated letter from you, detailing your family situation.

- Include details and historical background, including dates, and why the family breakdown occurred.
- Outline the date of the final rift with your parent(s) and the date you left home.
- Describe any attempts made by you and your parents to reconcile or correct the situation, and the possibility of a future reconciliation.
- Explain how you have supported yourself while not living with your parent(s). Also describe the extent of professional involvement in the situation (social service agency, psychologist, psychiatrist or counselor).
- Proof of your separate residence (eg. a copy of your lease or rental agreement) if the rift is with both parents

2. Documentation from one or more professional third parties* who were directly involved with the situation.

- Include all official documents (court orders, police reports, etc.), and a detailed letter from at least one third party individual, preferably a professional, familiar with the family (doctor, psychiatrist, social worker, member of clergy, counselor etc).
- All third parties should explain their relationship to your family and verify the family situation from first-hand knowledge. Full contact information, including telephone number and addresses, and a signature, should be provided in the letter.
- These documents are often the most important factors in a family breakdown review. We suggest that you choose your third parties carefully and have them provide detailed and comprehensive supporting letters.
- You may provide letters from as many third parties as you wish. If you have questions or concerns, or if you would like to book an appointment with a financial aid counselor, please contact Ken McLellan in the Student Awards and Financial Aid Office at 705-474-3450 ext 4297.

3. If you receive support under the Youth without Shelter, Stay in School Program, you must provide:

- a third-party letter from the program identifying that the student is living in the shelter provided by the program and receiving basic living supports while in school and the extent, if any, of professional involvement in the situation (for example, social agency, psychologist, psychiatrist, counsellor) The letter must contain the contact information for the third party, including telephone number and address, and the signature of the third party.

Arbitrary Reasons to withhold Support:

Family breakdown reviews which are submitted where the parents' rationale for not supporting the student is deemed to be arbitrary are not considered, such as the following examples (the list is not exhaustive):

- parents feel that it is the responsibility of the government to fund postsecondary education
- parents feel that once students reach the age of 18, the student is independent
- parents do not agree with the student's choice of program or institution
- parents do not approve of the student's living arrangements

*Note: If a professional third party was not involved, documentation from at least two other reliable third parties who were indirectly involved with the situation is acceptable (for example, siblings, grandparents, other relatives), including contact information and signature from the third party.

A letter from the student's parent(s) is not required. However, in situations where only one parent was involved in the problem/rift, the student may provide a letter from the parent who is not directly involved

Please note: Incomplete review requests or those received after the deadline cannot be processed.

- parents do not approve of the student's living arrangements

Required Documentation:

- Your summary of the situation and reviewer's decision

If the student receives support under the Youth without Shelter, Stay in School Program, the student must provide:

- a third-party letter from the program identifying that the student is living in the shelter provided by the program and receiving basic living supports while in school and the extent, if any, of professional involvement in the situation (for example, social agency, psychologist, psychiatrist, counsellor) The letter must contain the contact information for the third party, including telephone number and address, and the signature of the third party.

Otherwise, the student must provide:

- written documentation from at least one professional third party, who was directly involved with the situation (for example, court reports; letters from police, social workers, children's shelters or physicians) that includes contact information for the third party, including telephone number and address, and the signature from the third party

Note: If a professional third party was not involved, documentation from at least two other reliable third parties who were indirectly involved with the situation is acceptable (for example, siblings, grandparents, other relatives), including contact information and signature from the third party.

- a letter from the student providing the following information:
 - date of the final rift with parent(s)
 - if the rift is with both parents:
 - date the student left home
 - how the student has supported her/himself since leaving home
 - possibility of reconciliation
- proof of the student's separate residence (for example, a copy of the student's lease or rental agreement) if the rift is with both parents.

Note: A letter from the student's parent(s) is not required. However, in situations where only one parent was involved in the problem/rift, the student may provide a letter from the parent who is not directly involved

Processing Notes