

STATE OF ARKANSAS



Mike Beebe
Governor

Department of Career Education
Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
Robert P. Treviño, *Commissioner*

Bill Walker
Director

Date: June 15, 2012

To: Senator Mary Anne Salmon, and Co-Chair
Representative Tommy Lee Baker, Co-Chair
Arkansas Legislative Council
State Capitol, Room 315
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

This Letter is in fulfillment of Section 10 of Act 955 of 2011 requiring Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to report to the Arkansas Legislative Council, regarding vocational rehabilitation counselors employed by ARS, who are eligible for and have enrolled in the division's Forgiveness of Student Loan program incentive. The program has been very successful in enhancing the division's ability to recruit and retain vocational rehabilitation counselors. You may recall that eligible ARS vocational rehabilitation counselors may elect to enroll each calendar year in the student loan forgiveness benefit for a total of 5 years and \$10,000 in loan payback assistance. As part of the benefit's program obligation, every two years a VR counselor is employed at ARS the division will retire 1 year of the eligible student loan.

On May 21, 2012, notification of the program benefit was sent out to every ARS counselor and district manager throughout the state. Notification was included in the agency newsletter and brochures were placed in all 3 graduate vocational rehabilitation programs located within the state. Additionally, as program administrator, I have conducted eligibility awareness presentations in each of the division's 19 field offices located throughout the state and ARS field office special topic training meetings.

Currently there are 11 counselors taking advantage of the employee benefit. For the period July 1, 2011-December 31, 2011 4 vocational rehabilitation counselors enrolled in the program. For the period January 1, 2012- June 30, 2012, 7 vocational rehabilitation counselors enrolled in the program.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this status report to the Legislative Council for your generous support of this program. If you have any questions, please let me know and I will gladly provide additional information for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Vickers', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Michael Vickers
Program Administrator

STUDENT LOAN PAYBACK PROGRAM FY 2012

Employee Name	Vendor Name	Date	Amount
Baker-Smith, Cynthia	US Dept. of Education	1/11/2012	\$ 2,000.00
Brown, Kola Lanette	NELNET	2/14/2012	\$ 2,000.00
Hardiman-Williams	Affiliated Computer Services	4/18/2012	\$ 2,000.00
Harrison, Aseelah	US Dept. of Education	1/30/2012	\$ 2,000.00
Jones, Amy	Educational Financial Services	7/11/2011	\$ 2,000.00
Koehler, Pam	Sallie Mae	8/9/2011	\$ 2,000.00
Paterak, Amanda	Educational Financial Services	1/30/2012	\$ 2,000.00
Rose, Maria	American Educational Services	7/31/2011	\$ 2,000.00
Rotkowski, Teresa	Great Lakes Educational Loan	10/24/2011	\$ 2,000.00
Taylor, Terrell	Arkansas State University	1/26/2012	\$ 2,000.00
Yarbrough, Kimberly	Educational Financial Services	2/2/2012	\$ 2,000.00

**Rules for Administration of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
Forgiveness of Student Loan Program
Act 1275 of 2007**

INTRODUCTION

Act 1275 of 2007, effective July 31, 2007, established the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) Forgiveness of Student Loan Program (Program) to assist qualified current employees and newly-hired rehabilitation counselors employed by ARS with the repayment of student loans incurred while pursuing credentials that are required for employment.

The act provides that ARS shall administer the Program and promulgate rules for its administration.

PROVISIONS OF ACT 1275 OF 2007

Eligibility

An ARS rehabilitation counselor shall be eligible for the Program who

1. Satisfactorily completes the probationary employment period, as certified by the Commissioner of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services.
2. Provides proof of an unpaid student loan, including the name and address of the creditor; and
3. Agrees contractually to
 - a. Work for ARS for a term that equals two (2) years for each year that the Program makes a payment on the counselor's student loan; and
 - b. Reimburse the Program the full amount of any loan payment(s) made under the Program in the event that the counselor resigns his position with ARS or is terminated by ARS for cause before the term of the contract expires.

Payments Under the Program

All payments made under the Program shall be made directly to the counselor's student loan creditor.

Loan payments may not exceed two thousand dollars (\$2,000.00) per fiscal year.

Loan payments made for any counselor may not exceed ten thousand dollars (\$10,000).

**Rules for Administration of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
Forgiveness of Student Loan Program
Act 1275 of 2007**

RULES

1. A counselor must complete the ARS six-month new-employee probationary period.
2. An eligible counselor who wishes to apply to participate in the Program shall submit to the Program Director
 - a. A completed Student Loan Program Request form (Appendix A)
 - b. An original statement and/or correspondence from the student loan creditor, dated within 30 days of the request. The proof of loan document must indicate the original loan disbursement dates.
 - c. A completed Student Loan Program Contract (Appendix B), signed by the requesting counselor and his immediate supervisor. In the contract, the counselor will agree to
 - i. Remain in the employ of ARS for a term that equals two (2) years for each year that the Program makes a payment on the counselor's student loan; and
 - ii. Reimburse the Program the full amount of any loan payment(s) made under the Program in the event that the counselor resigns his position with ARS or is terminated by ARS for cause before the term of the contract expires.
3. A loan eligible for the Program must have been incurred in the pursuit of a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling or a comparable degree as recognized by RSA and required for employment with ARS.
4. The amount of payment(s) made directly to the counselor's student loan creditor may not exceed two thousand dollars (\$2,000.00) per year.
5. Cumulative loan payments made for any counselor may not exceed the lesser of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00) or the amount of the balance due on the loan.

**Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
Forgiveness of Student Loan Program
Request Form**

Name _____ Date _____

Current ARS position _____ Location _____

Student loan incurred to obtain _____
Name of degree attained

Degree obtained from _____
Name of college or university

Name of creditor owed for student loan _____

Address of creditor _____

Balance owed to creditor \$ _____ Proof of loan attached Yes ___ No ___

Proof of student loan must include an original statement and/or correspondence from the student loan creditor, dated within 30 days of this request. The proof of loan document must indicate the original loan disbursement dates.

Employee signature _____ Date _____

Supervisor's signature _____ Date _____

For ARS Use

Employee hire date _____ New hire probation completed _____

Verified loan balance with creditor _____

Request reviewed and approved by:

Program Director Date _____

Commissioner Date _____

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Forgiveness of Student Loan Program Request Form

I, _____, do hereby accept the terms of the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Forgiveness of Student Loan Program (Program), as indicated in this contract.

I understand that Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) has agreed to assist me with the repayment of a student loan I incurred in pursuit of

A balance of \$ _____ is owed to _____
located at _____

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services agrees to make payments directly to the
aforementioned creditor in amounts not to exceed two thousand dollars
(\$2,000.00) per fiscal year. Loan payments made on my behalf may not exceed
ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) in the aggregate.

In exchange for the student loan payment(s) ARS will make on my behalf, I agree to (a) work for ARS for at least a term that equals two (2) years for each year that the Program makes a payment on my student loan; and (b) reimburse the Program the full amount of any loan payment(s) made under the Program in the event that I resign my position with ARS or am terminated by ARS for cause before the term of the contract expires.

Employee _____ Date _____
Date _____

Supervisor _____ Date _____
Date _____

Commissioner _____ Date _____
Date _____



Student Loan Payback Program

is administered by the
Arkansas Department of Career Education's
Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Division
525 Capitol Avenue
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201
(501) 296-1600/TDD (501) 296-1669
1-800-330-0632

<http://ace.arkansas.gov>

Student Loan Payback Program

**For students
graduating with a degree
in Rehabilitation Counseling
or for Vocational Rehabilitation
Counselors employed by the
Arkansas Department of Career Education's
Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Division**

Arkansas Department
ACE
of Career Education



Benefits and Incentives

Student Loan Payback Program

The Arkansas Department of Career Education's Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Division's **Student Loan Payback Program** was established during the 2007 session of the Arkansas General Assembly. Its purpose is to provide an incentive to qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors who are considering employment with the State of Arkansas.

In accordance with guidelines issued by the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration, **ARS vocational counselors are required to have an approved master's degree in counseling or a related field, qualification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, or be eligible to sit for the CRC exam.** In order to assist individuals in achieving these requirements, the student loan program offers assistance with repayment of loans incurred in pursuit of a master's in rehabilitation counseling, sociology, psychology, or a related field.

The Student Loan Payback Program is available to Arkansas Rehabilitation Services' vocational counselors who have been determined eligible under the following rules.

1. A counselor must satisfactorily complete the six-month probationary employment period, as certified by the Commissioner of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services.
2. An eligible counselor who wishes to apply to participate in the Program shall submit to Human Resources:
 - a. A completed Student Loan Program Request form
 - b. An original statement and/or correspondence from the student loan creditor, dated within 30 days of the request. The proof of loan document must indicate the original loan disbursement dates.

Student Loan Payback Program

- c. A completed Student Loan Program Contract signed by the requesting counselor and his immediate supervisor. In the contract, the counselor will agree to:
 - i. *Remain in the employ of ARS for a term that equals two (2) years for each year that the Program makes a payment on the counselor's student loan; and*
 - ii. *Reimburse the Program the full amount of any loan payment(s) made under the Program in the event that the counselor resigns his position with ARS or is terminated by ARS for cause before the term of the contract expires.*
3. A loan eligible for the Program must have been incurred in the pursuit of a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling, psychology, sociology, or social work required for employment with ARS.
4. The amount of payment(s) made directly to the counselor's student loan creditor may not exceed two thousand dollars (\$2,000.00) per year.
5. Cumulative loan payments made for any counselor may not exceed the lesser of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00) or the amount of the balance due on the loan.

Program rules, applications, contracts, and other information are available by contacting the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services' Program Director for Alternative Financing Program/Student Loan Payback Program at 501-296-1600 for questions or further information, or by logging on to www.arsinfo.org.