

STATE OF ARKANSAS



Asa Hutchinson
Governor

Department of Career Education
Arkansas Rehabilitation Services

Charisse Childers, Ph.D.
Director

Alan McClain, *Commissioner*

August 2, 2018

Arkansas Legislative Council
Honorable Senator Bill Sample, Chair
Honorable Representative Jim Dotson, Chair
State Capitol, Room 315
Little Rock, AR 72201

Re: Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
Forgiveness of Student Loan Program – 2018 Update

Dear Senator Sample and Representative Dotson,

This letter is in fulfillment of Section 11 of Act 153 of 2018 requiring Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) to report to the Arkansas Legislative Council regarding vocation rehabilitation counselors employed by ARS who are eligible for, and have enrolled in the agency's Forgiveness of Student Loan program incentive. The program has been very successful in enhancing the agency'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 five years and \$10,000 in loan payback assistance. As part of the benefit's program obligation, a VR counselor agrees to stay employed at ARS for two years for every year that a student loan payment is made on their behalf.

On July 16, 2018, notification of the program's benefit was sent out to every ARS counselor and district manager throughout the state.

Currently, there are two counselors participating in the program.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this status report to the Legislative Council and for your generous support of this program. If you have any questions, please contact my Deputy Commissioner, Joseph Baxter at joseph.baxter@arkansas.gov or at 501-296-1614.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alan McClain".

Alan McClain
Commissioner

Cc: Joseph Baxter, Deputy Commissioner
Lynn Franquemont, Director of Community Service Programs

Joseph Baxter

From: Joseph Baxter
Sent: Monday, July 16, 2018 12:54 PM
To: ARS District Managers; ARS Field Counselors
Cc: Alan McClain; Lynn Vigneault-Franquemont
Subject: Forgiveness of Student Loan Program
Attachments: StudentLoanProgramRulesFormseditableFINAL.pdf

Managers and Counselors,

Annually, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) is required to inform its employees working as Counselors that have outstanding student loans accrued in the pursuit of a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling of the availability of its Student Loan Forgiveness Program. To be eligible for the program a Counselor must:

1. Satisfactorily complete a work probationary period;
2. Provide proof of a student loan accrued in the pursuit of a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling that remains unpaid, including the name and address of the creditor;
3. Sign an employment contract in which the Rehabilitation Counselor agrees to the following:
 - a. Work for ARS for a term that equals two (2) years for each year that the program makes a payment on the Rehabilitation Counselor's loan and
 - b. Reimburse the program for the full amount of any loan payments made under this program in the event that the Rehabilitation Counselor resigns or is terminated for cause before the term of the contract terminates.

The amount of the payment to be made directly to the Rehabilitation Counselor's loan creditor may not exceed:

1. Two thousand dollars (\$2,000) per year; or
2. Ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) per employee

To sign up for the program or receive additional information regarding rules, application and eligibility, please see the attachments or feel free to contact me via email: Joseph.baxter@arkansas.gov or by phone at 501-296-1614.

Joseph Baxter

Deputy Commissioner
Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
Office: 501-296-1614
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