

STATE OF ARKANSAS



Mike Beebe
Governor

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

Bill Walker
Director

July 24, 2009

Senator Henry Wilkins, IV, Co-Chair
Representative Allen Maxwell, Co-Chair
Arkansas Legislative Council
State Capitol
Room 315
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

Dear Messrs. Wilkins and Maxwell:

The following information provides an update by Arkansas Rehabilitation Services in fulfillment of Act 1497 Section 10 and the Legislative Council's desire to receive periodic status reports on the progress of the Student Loan Forgiveness Program. ARS has implemented certain marketing initiatives to both agency field counselors and Arkansas state university programs that offer vocational rehabilitation courses and degrees. This effort is formulated to stimulate recruitment efforts directed toward prospective vocational rehabilitation counselors and to further enhance the agency's ability to retain qualified staff once they meet eligibility requirements set out in the legislation.

The agency utilizes both traditional marketing approaches including posters and brochure information, and internet based formats commonly accessed by contemporary student populations. Specifically, the agency initiative includes marketing presentations to Arkansas institutions which offer master's degree programs in rehabilitation counseling as well as those institutions which offer bachelor's degree programs. Plans are currently underway to offer incoming classes in these institutions additional material and guidance toward obtaining employment with ARS. Additionally, the agency is negotiating advertising with related university newspapers and brochure/poster presentations at applicable university placement and admissions offices. Further, the agency will conduct program presentations at job fairs scheduled at universities throughout the remainder of the year.

Senator Henry Wilkins, IV
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July 24, 2009
Page 2

As mentioned above, marketing efforts within the agency also provide an important opportunity. The agency has communicated the employee benefit to every counselor employed with the agency and has conducted presentations throughout the various field offices located in the state. While we have received a number of inquiries, many vocational rehabilitation counselors were hired before the January eligibility date specified in the legislation and thus do not appear to meet eligibility: *A counselor must complete the ARS six-month new employee probationary period on or after July 31, 2007 in order to be eligible to participate in the Program.*

The agency continues to develop additional strategies geared toward recruitment and retention of qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors. If you need additional information or clarification, please contact me. I appreciate the opportunity to provide this update and I look forward to providing supplemental updates at the pleasure of the Council.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert P. Treviño". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" and last name "Treviño" clearly distinguishable.

Robert P. Treviño



Student Loan Payback Program

is administered by the
Arkansas Department of Workforce Education's
Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Division
1616 Brookwood Drive
P.O. Box 3781
Little Rock, Arkansas 72203
(501) 296-1600/TDD (501) 296-1669
1-800-330-0632

<http://dwe.arkansas.gov>
www.arsinfo.org

Student Loan Payback Program

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

WE ARKANSAS
Department of
WORKFORCE
EDUCATION



**Benefits and
Incentives**

Student Loan Payback Program

The Arkansas Department of Workforce 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 complete the ARS six-month new-employee probationary period on or after July 31, 2007 in order to be eligible to participate in the Program.
- 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' Alternative Financing Program/Student Loan Payback Program at 501-296-1600 for questions or further information, or by logging on to www.arsinfo.org.

Student Loan Payback Program

If you are
graduating with a degree
in **Rehabilitation Counseling**
or you are a
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
employed by the **Arkansas Department**
of Workforce Education's
Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Division,
check us out.



Toll Free 800-330-0632
www.arsinfo.org

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