



Financial Information, Resources,  
Services, and Tools

# Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)



FIRST is a program of the  
Association of American Medical Colleges

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# FIRST

Medical Students and Residents,

If you borrowed money for undergraduate, graduate, or medical school through the federal student loan program and are considering a career in public service, you may be eligible for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program. Successful completion of this program can lead to the forgiveness of a portion of your eligible federal student loans. This booklet explains the PSLF program, eligibility requirements, and steps you will need to take to support your eligibility for the PSLF program.

The booklet is a service of the AAMC Financial Information, Resources, Services, and Tools ([FIRST](#)) program. FIRST helps students and former students make smart and informed financial decisions.

Be sure to check out these additional resources from FIRST:

- [MedLoans® Organizer and Calculator \(MLOC\)](#). Currently enrolled medical students, graduates, and medical school administrators at LCME-accredited U.S. medical schools have FREE premium access to MLOC, a calculator designed specifically to help securely organize and track student loans and calculate potential repayment scenarios.
- [Financial Aid Fact Sheets](#). FREE, easy-to-read downloadable articles designed to answer a variety of questions about paying for medical school, the financial aid process, and types of available loans, as well as potential loan forgiveness and repayment assistance programs.

At FIRST, we believe that the more financial knowledge you have today, the better equipped you will be to make financial decisions tomorrow and beyond. Please visit the FIRST website at [aamc.org/FIRST](http://aamc.org/FIRST).

Questions and feedback are welcome. Please contact us at [FIRST@aamc.org](mailto:FIRST@aamc.org).

*The information provided in this booklet is accurate as of January 2021 and is subject to change. Please consult with your servicer to confirm the current details of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program. The AAMC is providing this information as a public service and cannot guarantee your eligibility for this or any program.*

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## WHAT IS PUBLIC SERVICE LOAN FORGIVENESS (PSLF)?

The Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program is a federal program intended to encourage individuals to enter and continue to work in full-time public service jobs after graduation. If you are thinking about working in a public service position (which includes federal, state, or local government or not-for-profit organizations), the PSLF program is a great opportunity to provide service and, in return, qualify for loan forgiveness.

The program provides forgiveness for the remaining balance (principal and interest) on your **eligible Direct Loans** after you have worked for a qualifying public service employer while making 120 on-time qualifying monthly payments.

Find out more in this booklet about the eligibility requirements, how you can maximize forgiveness under PSLF, and the steps you should take to participate in PSLF.





## WHAT ARE THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS?

A borrower must meet three requirements in order to be eligible for PSLF.

### 1. HAVE ELIGIBLE LOANS

- Direct Loans.
  - Subsidized and Unsubsidized.
  - PLUS Loans.
  - Consolidation Loans.
- Other federal loans may be eligible if they are consolidated into a Direct Consolidation Loan (for example, Perkins Loans and FFEL Loans).

### 2. MAKE QUALIFYING PAYMENTS

- Only payments made after Oct. 1, 2007, qualify for PSLF.
- Must make payments equivalent to 120 months of payments.
- Payments cannot be received more than 15 days after the due date.
- Payments qualify as long as they are made when your loans are in good standing and you are working full time for a qualifying employer.



- Must be enrolled in an eligible repayment plan:
  - Standard Repayment (or a plan in which the payment is not less than the monthly amount required under the 10-year Standard Repayment Plan).
  - Pay As You Earn (PAYE).
  - Revised Pay As You Earn (REPAYE).
  - Income-Based Repayment (IBR).
  - Income-Contingent Repayment (ICR).

### 3. MEET EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS

- Must be employed full time (at least 30 hours per week).
- Part-time employment with multiple employers may qualify if you work a combined average of 30 hours per week.
- Work for an employer that is tax exempt by the IRS and qualifies as a 501(c)(3) (may include federal, state, or local government agencies or organizations).
  - Certain private not-for-profit employers may qualify if they provide a specified public service.

**For more information about eligibility, visit [studentaid.ed.gov/publicservice](https://studentaid.ed.gov/publicservice) or use the Department of Education's PSLF Help Tool, at [aamc.org/pslfhelptool](https://aamc.org/pslfhelptool), to receive personalized guidance in your pursuit of PSLF.**

**TIP:** To maximize forgiveness under the PSLF program, you should repay your loans under one of the [income-driven repayment plans](#), which include Pay As You Earn (PAYE), Revised Pay As You Earn (REPAYE), Income-Based Repayment (IBR), or Income-Contingent Repayment (ICR). These repayment plans often require smaller monthly payments based on your income, which means you'll likely have a balance that can be forgiven after you've made your 120th qualifying payment.

## DOES MY RESIDENCY PROGRAM QUALIFY AS A PUBLIC SERVICE POSITION?

“Qualifying public service positions” include work in 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, which may include some medical schools and teaching hospitals. Sample fields include:

- Emergency management.
- Government.
- Military service (active duty).
- Public safety.
- Public health.

To verify employer eligibility, use the [PSLF Help Tool](#). You can also verify employer eligibility by completing and submitting the [PSLF form](#) after you start employment.

Additionally, you can find more information on the [Federal Student Aid](#) website.

## WHAT STEPS SHOULD I TAKE TO HELP ENSURE ELIGIBILITY FOR PSLF?

### STEP ONE

**Request** an income-driven repayment plan (PAYE/REPAYE/IBR/ICR) from your [servicer\(s\)](#) or on the [Federal Student Aid](#) website.

- These [income-driven repayment plans](#) qualify for the PSLF program and offer the lowest monthly payment compared with traditional repayment plans:
  - Pay As You Earn (PAYE).
  - Revised Pay As You Earn (REPAYE).
  - Income-Based Repayment (IBR).
  - Income-Contingent Repayment (ICR).



## STEP TWO

### Apply

to consolidate your FFEL/Perkins Loans when you separate from school (skip this step if you only have Direct Loans).

- Apply to consolidate the FFEL/Perkins Loans by logging into your account at [studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov).
- Select [FedLoan Servicing](#) as your servicer.
- Indicate your interest in PSLF by completing the [PSLF form](#) after employment begins.
- Establish an online account with FedLoan Servicing to track your application and payments (highly recommended).

**TIP:** To maximize PSLF, you may want to consolidate ALL of your federal loans immediately after separating from medical school — causing you to forfeit the grace period — so that you can begin making qualifying payments earlier.

## STEP THREE

**Keep track** of your eligibility by using the [PSLF form](#), starting with your first full-time residency position.

- Submitting a PSLF form to FedLoan Servicing allows you to receive a confirmation of qualifying employment and Direct Loan payment eligibility.
- When you submit the PSLF form, all your existing Direct Loans will be transferred to FedLoan Servicing. You may view your progress toward forgiveness through your online FedLoan Servicing account or in your Federal Student Aid account at [studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov).
- It is recommended that you submit the PSLF form annually and immediately before and after a change in employers.
- At least 10 years of employment with an approved qualifying public service employer, while you are making qualifying payments, is required. Employment time does not need to be consecutive or with the same employer for all 10 years.

## STEP FOUR

**Make** your on-time, required PAYE/REPAYE/IBR/ICR payments.

- Most Direct Loans will have a six-month grace period that begins when you graduate, leave school, or drop below half-time status. You must start making payments after your grace period ends.
- If you make a payment that is less than what you are required to pay for that month, it will not count as one of the 120 qualifying payments.
- On-time payments are those received by the servicer no later than 15 days after the scheduled payment due date.
- Only qualifying payments made after Oct. 1, 2007, count toward PSLF.
- Only payments made toward your eligible Direct Loans while employed by a qualifying public service organization will count toward the required 120 monthly payments.



## STEP FIVE

**Apply** for PSLF after you make your 120th qualifying payment.

- You must be working for a qualified public service organization **at the time you submit the application** for forgiveness and **at the time the remaining balance on your loan is forgiven**.
- If you ultimately do not meet the eligibility requirements for PSLF, you will be responsible for repaying the balance of your loans.
- Student loan amounts forgiven under PSLF are not considered income for tax purposes and, therefore, are nontaxable.

**FIRST**

**Good luck as you pursue  
public service employment!**

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