

Title 10: Education Institutions and Agencies

Part 655: Family Protection Specialist Social Worker Forgivable Loan Program (SWOR)

Part 655 Chapter 1: Family Protection Specialist Social Worker Forgivable Loan Program (SWOR) Rules and Regulations

Rule 1.1 Family Protection Specialist Social Worker Forgivable Loan Program (SWOR) Rules and Regulations. These Rules and Regulations are subject to change by the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board (hereinafter referred to as the "Board"). The number of awards and recipients are dependent upon availability of funds and selection shall be based on a first-come, first-served basis of all eligible applicants; however, priority consideration shall be given to persons previously receiving awards under the Family Protection Specialist Social Worker Forgivable Loan program (SWOR).

I. GENERAL ELIGIBILITY

- A. Must be currently employed full-time as a family protection worker for the Mississippi Department of Human Services and must remain employed full-time while participating in the forgivable loan program. Employment verification will be required by the Department of Human Services.
- B. Must be fully admitted as a regular student and enrolled at least part-time at a four-year public institution of higher learning in the state of Mississippi in a program of study accredited by the Council on Social Work Education and leading to a bachelor's or master's degree in social work, necessary to become a licensed social worker or licensed master social worker. Undergraduate students must be classified as a junior or senior.
- C. Upon degree completion and the appropriate licensure, recipient must become employed as a Family Protection Specialist or higher for the Mississippi Department of Human Services for a period of no less than three (3) consecutive years.
- D. New applicants must have a 2.0 or higher cumulative college grade point average, measured on a 4.0 scale. Recipients must maintain a 2.0 or higher cumulative college grade point average each semester, measure on a 4.0 scale, to continue to receive funds. The grade point average may be reported electronically from the institution attended; however, the applicant/recipient may still be required to provide paper transcript(s).
- E. Must maintain satisfactory academic progress toward completion of the program of study leading to a degree necessary to become a licensed social worker or licensed master social worker within the period allowed.
- F. Must not presently have defaulted on an educational loan.

II. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR FORGIVABLE LOAN APPLICANT

A. First time applicants must:

1. Complete an application online at www.mississippi.edu/financialaid by the deadline date of March 31.
2. Submit to the Board by the document deadline of April 30 a document verifying employment as a full-time Family Protection Worker with the Mississippi Department of Human Services.
3. Submit to the Board by the document deadline of April 30 a letter of recommendation from the applicant's supervisor at the Mississippi Department of Human Services.
4. Have a cumulative college GPA of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale and be making satisfactory academic progress in accordance with the attending institution's policy. Evidence of academic eligibility will be automatically provided to the Board by the attending institution, unless specifically requested from the applicant.
5. Signify understanding of the SWOR Rules and Regulations, enter into a Contract and Note with the Board pursuant to the applicable Rules and Regulations and all applicable State laws, and complete, sign and return the Self Certification of a Private Loan form prior to the disbursement of funds. *Note: The Contract and Note will be issued once the applicant has been awarded. Funds will not be disbursed until the Contract and Note has been signed.*

B. Renewal applicants must:

1. Complete an application online at www.mississippi.edu/financialaid by the deadline date of March 31.
2. Submit to the Board by the document deadline of April 30 a document verifying continued full-time employment as a Family Protection Worker with the Mississippi Department of Human Services.
3. Maintain a cumulative college GPA of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale and be making satisfactory academic progress in accordance with the attending institution's policy. Evidence of academic eligibility will be automatically provided to the Board by the attending institution, unless specifically requested from the applicant.
4. Complete, sign and return the Self Certification of a Private Loan form.

III. AMOUNT AND LENGTH OF FORGIVABLE LOAN

- A. The annual amount of the award for full-time students at a public university shall equal the total cost for tuition and required fees at the university in which the student is enrolled. The annual amount of the award for part-time students shall be pro-rated based upon enrollment status.
- B. Students enrolling on a full-time basis may receive a maximum of two (2) annual awards, or four (4) semesters. Students enrolling on a part-time basis may receive no more than the maximum of two (2) annual awards of a full-time student, but pro-rated over the number of semesters required for degree completion.
- C. Awards shall be disbursed directly to the school of attendance, to be applied first toward tuition.

IV. RECIPIENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. A SWOR recipient must maintain good standing at the attending institution at all times.
- B. A SWOR recipient must continue to work full-time as a Family Protection Worker with the Mississippi Department of Human Services.
- C. A SWOR recipient who fails, temporarily withdraws, or is required to repeat any year, will be suspended from participation in the program and his/her awards will be stopped until such time as the proper official at the attending institution informs the Board that he/she is ready to advance.
- D. A SWOR recipient must remain in school at least part-time and complete the approved program of study. A SWOR recipient who withdraws from school or fails to complete the approved program of study shall immediately become liable to the Board for the sum of all outstanding SWOR awards, plus a penalty of 5% of the outstanding principal, and interest on the combined outstanding principal and penalty.
- E. While receiving funds, the SWOR recipient must at all times keep the Board informed of the recipient's current, correct, and complete contact information. This information may be updated via the SWOR recipient's student account online at www.mississippi.edu/financialaid. Once in repayment, the SWOR recipient must at all times keep the Board or its loan servicer informed of the recipient's current, correct, and complete contact information until the debt is completely satisfied.
- F. A SWOR recipient should address in writing to the Board or its loan servicer any special circumstances regarding enrollment status, withdrawal from school, or failure to complete the approved program of study.

V. REPAYMENT

- A. A SWOR forgivable loan recipient enters repayment when the recipient completes the approved program of study, ceases to work full-time as a Family Protection Worker with the Mississippi Department of Human Services, withdraws from school, or fails to complete the approved program of study. The recipient may satisfy his/her forgivable loan debt either by cancellation through service or by loan repayment.
- B. Cancellation through Service
 - 1. A SWOR forgivable loan recipient must meet all of the following criteria to qualify for debt cancellation through service:
 - a) Work full-time as a Family Protection Worker with the Mississippi Department of Human Services while receiving funds. “Full-time” is understood to mean that the recipient shall maintain the normal full-time work schedule where the recipient is employed.
 - b) Obtain the appropriate license to work as Social Worker or Master Social Worker in Mississippi.
 - c) Work full-time as a Family Protection Specialist or higher with the Mississippi Department of Human Services for a minimum of three (3) consecutive calendar years following degree completion. “Full-time” is understood to mean that the recipient shall maintain the normal full-time work schedule where the recipient is employed. *NOTE: It is fully understood that it is the responsibility of the forgivable loan recipient to seek and secure appropriate employment. The Board assumes no obligation to perform that function.*
 - 2. The SWOR forgivable loan service obligation shall be discharged on the basis of three (3) consecutive calendar years of employment for the forgivable loan received. Service shall never be less than three (3) years, regardless of the amount received or the length of study provided under this scholarship/loan.
 - 3. At the time of separation from the approved program of study, unless granted a grace period or other type of deferment, the SWOR forgivable loan recipient must request in writing a deferment of the accrual of interest and repayment of principal and penalty for purposes of completing the service option. The service deferment request must be accompanied by evidence of appropriate employment as defined in Section V.B.1.

4. The service deferment must be requested in writing and approved each year for three years until the debt is fully satisfied.
5. At the end of the three-year service deferment period, the SWOR forgivable loan recipient must request in writing a cancellation of the debt.

C. Loan Repayment

1. Unless granted a grace period or other deferment, a SWOR forgivable loan recipient shall become liable to the Board for the sum of all SWOR forgivable loan awards made to that person, plus a penalty of 5% of the outstanding principal, and interest on the combined outstanding principal and penalty, immediately at the time of occurrence of one of the following events:
 - a) The recipient ceases to work full-time as a Family Protection Worker with the Mississippi Department of Human Services while receiving funds.
 - b) The recipient withdraws from school;
 - c) The recipient fails to complete the approved program of study;
 - d) The recipient fails to obtain the appropriate license; or
 - e) The recipient fails to complete the service option defined in Section V.B.
2. At the time of the occurrence of one of the events outlined in Section V.C.I. or upon termination of a grace period or other deferment, a 5% penalty will be applied to the sum of all forgivable loan awards made to the recipient less any amount previously cancelled through service.
3. The rate of interest charged a SWOR forgivable loan recipient on the unsatisfied balance shall be the current unsubsidized Federal Stafford Loan rate at the time of occurrence of one of the events outlined in Section V.C.1. or upon termination of a grace period or other deferment.
4. Interest begins accruing at the time of occurrence of one of the events outlined in Section V.C.1. or upon termination of a grace period or other deferment, and repayment commences one (1) month after the occurrence of the event.
5. Forgivable loan recipients must repay the loan (principal, penalty, and interest thereon) in sixty (60) or less equal consecutive monthly installments. If the recipient fails to repay his/her loan (principal, penalty,

and interest thereon) in sixty (60) or less equal consecutive monthly installments, all principal, penalty, and interest outstanding, together with costs of collection, shall become immediately due and payable and, demand shall be made by mailing the same to the obligor at the last address furnished by said obligor. Should payment of the sum due not be made in full within thirty (30) days, from the date demand was made, the Contract and Note executed by the obligor shall be placed with a collection agency or an attorney for collection, at which point the obligor shall become liable for reasonable collection or attorneys' fees, which may be based on a percentage of the amount of the debt, and court costs, in addition to the other sums due and owing.

- D. The obligations made by the recipient of this forgivable loan shall not be voidable by reason of the age of the student at the time of receiving the forgivable loan.
- E. Special circumstances regarding a recipient's failure to complete the service option and/or fulfill the loan obligation should be addressed in writing to the Board or its loan servicer.

VI. GRACE PERIOD AND OTHER DEFERMENTS

A. Grace Period

- 1. Upon completion of the approved program of study, the SWOR forgivable loan recipient will be granted a 4-month grace period, during which the recipient should obtain the appropriate license and/or secure appropriate employment as defined in Section V.B.1.
- 2. A SWOR forgivable loan recipient who does not complete the approved program of study will not be granted a 4-month grace period and will enter repayment immediately upon separation from the approved program of study. Such a recipient may be eligible for an in-school deferment as defined in Section VI.B.

B. In-School Deferment

- 1. An undergraduate SWOR forgivable loan recipient who does not complete the approved program of study, but remains enrolled at least part-time in a baccalaureate degree program may request deferment of the accrual of interest and the repayment of principal and penalty for purposes of remaining in school. A graduate SWOR forgivable loan recipient who does not complete the approved program of study, but remains enrolled at least part-time in a master's degree program may request deferment of the accrual of interest and the repayment of principal and penalty for purposes of remaining in school.

2. The in-school deferment must be requested in writing to the Board or its loan servicer and must be accompanied by verification of at least part-time enrollment from the attending institution.
3. The in-school deferment must be requested by the recipient and approved every term (except Summer) throughout the duration of the deferment.

C. Temporary Disability Deferment

1. A SWOR forgivable loan recipient in repayment who is unable to secure or continue employment because of temporary total disability may request deferment of the accrual of interest and the repayment of principal and penalty. To qualify, a recipient must be unable to work and earn money due to the disability for at least sixty (60) days, or be providing continuous care for a dependent or spouse during a period of at least (90) consecutive days.
2. The temporary disability deferment must be requested in writing to the Board or its loan servicer and must be accompanied by certification from a doctor of medicine or osteopathy who is legally authorized to practice medicine.
3. The temporary disability deferment must be requested by the recipient and approved every six (6) months throughout the duration of the deferment and condition for a total period of time not to exceed three (3) years.

D. Military Service Deferment

1. In terms of military service the following definitions shall apply:
 - a) REQUIRED military service is that service which is required of an individual in the service of the Armed Forces of the United States; it does not include a military service obligation incurred to repay a grant, stipend or scholarship granted the individual prior to, during, or after the award under the Family Protection Specialist Social Worker Forgivable Loan program.
 - b) OBLIGATED or VOLUNTARY military service is that service which is performed by the individual in repayment of a debt owed the United States government as a result of military scholarships, ROTC scholarships, etc. received by the individual. Service is VOLUNTARY if the individual is not obligated to incur a period of military service, but chooses to incur the service obligation.

2. A SWOR forgivable loan recipient shall be eligible for deferment of the accrual of interest and the repayment of principal and penalty during the time of required military service.
3. The military deferment must be requested in writing to the Board or its loan servicer, stating beginning and ending dates of such required military service, and must be accompanied by a copy of the military orders.
4. The military deferment must be requested by the recipient and approved on a year-to-year basis (annually).
5. If a recipient continues military service for any reason beyond the REQUIRED time, then that person shall be declared ineligible for military deferment and the remaining unsatisfied principal, penalty, and interest shall become due and payable to the Board according to the terms outlined in Section V.C.
6. If a recipient obligates himself/herself to VOLUNTARY military service prior to, during, or after the SWOR award, then that person shall be declared ineligible for military deferment and the remaining unsatisfied principal, penalty, and interest shall become due and payable to the Board according to the terms outlined in Section V.C.

VII. CANCELLATION OF DEBT

A. Death

1. If an individual recipient dies, then the recipient's obligation to repay the loan or render service is canceled.
2. The Board shall require a copy of the death certificate or other proof of death that is acceptable under applicable State Law. If a death certificate or other acceptable proof of death is not available, the recipient's obligation for service or repayment on the loan is canceled only upon a determination by the Board on the basis of other evidence that the Board finds conclusive.
3. The Board may not attempt to collect on the loan from the deceased recipient's estate.

B. Total and Permanent Disability

1. If the Board determines that an individual recipient is totally and permanently disabled, the recipient's obligation to make any further payments of principal, penalty, and interest on the loan is canceled. A recipient is not considered totally and permanently disabled on the basis of

a condition that existed before he/she applied for the forgivable loan, unless the recipient's condition has substantially deteriorated since he/she submitted the forgivable loan application, so as to render the recipient totally and permanently disabled.

2. After being notified by the recipient or the recipient's representative that the recipient claims to be totally and permanently disabled, the Board shall promptly request that the recipient or the recipient's representative obtain a certification from a physician, who is a doctor of medicine or osteopathy and legally authorized to practice, on a form provided or approved by the Board and other necessary documents as requested, that the recipient is totally and permanently disabled. The Board shall continue collection until it receives the certification or receives a letter from a physician stating that the certification has been requested and that additional time is needed to determine if the recipient is totally and permanently disabled. After receiving the physician's certification or letter and other necessary documents as requested and the student is found to be totally and permanently disabled, the Board may not attempt to collect from the recipient.
3. If the Board determines that a loan owed by a recipient, who claims to be totally and permanently disabled, is not eligible for cancellation for that reason, or if the Board has not received the physician's certification and other requested documents, as described in Section VII.B.2., within 60 days of the receipt of the documents as described in Section VII.B.2., the Board shall resume collection and shall be deemed to have exercised forbearance of payment of principal, penalty, and interest from the date the Board received the documents described in Section VII.B.2. until such a determination of ineligibility is made by the Board.

C. Bankruptcy

SWOR forgivable loans are nondischargeable in bankruptcy.

VIII. WARRANTY

The acceptance of the SWOR forgivable loan shall serve to appoint the Secretary of State of the State of Mississippi by each recipient as his/her designated agent for service of process, upon whom may be served all lawful processes and summons in any action or proceeding against him/her in the event he/she removes himself/herself from this State and the processes of its courts, growing out of any breach of Contract and Note by the recipient for failure to fulfill his/her Contract and Note with the Board or, to repay the SWOR forgivable loan, including penalty and interest pursuant to the law and Contract and Note, and, said acceptance of the loan rights and privileges shall be a signification of the applicant's agreement that any such process or summons against him/her, which is so served upon the Secretary of State, shall be of the same legal force and validity as if

served on him/her personally. The venue of all causes of action against such nonresidents shall be Hinds County, Mississippi.

IX. AUTHORIZATION

The acceptance of the SWOR forgivable loan shall serve to authorize the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid, the Board, and their respective agents and contractors to contact the recipient regarding the recipient's loan request or loan(s), including repayment of loan(s), at the current or any future number the recipient provides for the recipient's cellular phone or other wireless device using automated telephone dialing equipment or artificial or pre-recorded voice or text messages.

Source: *Miss. Code Ann.* § 37-106-69.