

Governor Phil Murphy

# ICYMI: New Jersey to Bolster Mental Health Workforce with Launch of New Round of Student Loan Redemption for Behavioral Healthcare Professionals

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*Eligible Professionals Serving their Communities Can Apply in October for up to \$180,000 in Student Loan Redemption and Incentive Grants*

**TRENTON** – As part of Governor Phil Murphy's commitment to increase access to mental health supports in our state, the New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA) today announced that the application period is open for behavioral healthcare professionals to apply for up to \$180,000 in student loan redemption and incentive grants. This program aims to incentivize eligible professionals to provide mental health services to residents throughout New Jersey.

"Bolstering mental health supports, especially on behalf of young people, remains one of my Administration's highest priorities," **said Governor Phil Murphy**. "This student loan redemption program represents one of the many steps our state is taking to comprehensively incentivize and support professionals in providing behavioral health services. I remain committed to building upon our ongoing efforts to ensure every resident is able to access the mental health care that they need."

"By alleviating the student loan debt of eligible behavioral healthcare providers, we encourage more professionals to continue providing behavioral and mental healthcare in our communities," **said HESAA Executive Director Margo Chaly, Esq.** "HESAA is proud to play a role in helping to expand access to these crucial services through one of the several student loan redemption programs that we offer dedicated professionals serving New Jersey residents. I thank Governor Murphy and the Legislature for their ongoing support, including an additional \$2 million to fund this crucial program."

"This new round of funding is an amazing resource designed to support specialized healthcare providers throughout the Garden State," **said Chairwoman of HESAA Board Christy Van Horn**. "I commend the HESAA team for the successful launch and continued administration of this program, which positively impacts the lives of our behavioral health practitioners – who are, in turn, providing life-changing support to their clients."

Eligible behavioral healthcare providers working full-time at approved sites in New Jersey operated by nonprofits, educational institutions, or government entities can apply for student loan redemption in exchange for up to six years of service. For every two years of direct clinical practice with patients or clients at an approved site, HESAA will redeem up to \$50,000 of a program participant's student loans associated with their behavioral health-related degree(s).

On top of the maximum total loan redemption of \$150,000 for all program participants, behavioral healthcare professionals working primarily with children and adolescents can also receive a supplemental grant of up to \$5,000 per year, for a maximum total of \$180,000 in student loan redemption and incentive grants.

In its third round of funding, a total of \$7 million from the Fiscal Year 2025 budget is available to be awarded. Since the initial launch of this career-based student loan redemption program in January 2023, 94 behavioral healthcare professionals are participating in this career-based student loan redemption program. Anyone who applied during either of the previous rounds of funding and was not accepted into the program must reapply to be considered for student loan redemption under this new round of funding.

To be eligible for student loan redemption, providers must live in New Jersey and work full-time at an approved site throughout the duration of their participation in the program, for a minimum of two years. Providers must maintain one or more applicable licenses to provide mental or behavioral healthcare in New Jersey and must serve as one of the following eligible provider professions:

- board certified behavior analyst
- licensed associate counselor
- licensed clinical alcohol and drug counselor
- licensed clinical social worker
- licensed professional counselor
- licensed psychologist
- licensed social worker
- psychiatric nurse mental health clinical specialist
- psychiatrist

To address the areas of the State with the most severe shortages of behavioral healthcare providers, HESAA uses a scoring system to select participants. Using data from the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, applications are scored based on the demand for the occupation, the demand in each county, the applicant's salary, and whether the applicant works primarily with children or adolescents.

For more information on eligibility and application requirements, and to access the application visit [www.hesaa.org/Pages/BHLRP.aspx](http://www.hesaa.org/Pages/BHLRP.aspx) (<https://www.hesaa.org/Pages/BHLRP.aspx>).

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