

State Mental Health Loan Assumption Program (MHLAP)

Frequently Asked Questions for January 24, 2010 Application

Prepared by the Health Professions Education Foundation and CMHDA

1. Do I have to be a permanent California resident and U.S. citizen to apply for the MHLAP?

Yes. You must be a California resident and a citizen or permanent resident of the U.S. to apply.

2. What is a “service obligation?”

“Service obligation” means the contractual obligation agreed to by the recipient of a loan assumption or stipend. The MHLAP shall assume educational loan liability of up to \$10,000 after the participant has completed twelve (12) consecutive months of employment in a hard to fill or retain position in the Public Mental Health System, unless granted an exemption from this requirement due to pregnancy, serious illness or other cause deemed appropriate by the County and the Foundation.

3. Can I still apply for the MHLAP if I currently owe an existing service obligation?

No. If you have an existing service obligation to another entity, you are ineligible to apply for the MHLAP until you have completed your existing obligation. This includes, but is not limited to, CalSWEC or other MHSA stipend programs.

4. Do all applicants of MHLAP receive a loan repayment award?

No. Awards for the MHLAP are made on a competitive basis, where eligible applicants within a given county compete against each other. Additionally, successful applicants are not guaranteed to receive the maximum loan repayment award of \$10,000 per twelve months of service. The sum of grant awards for any one County cannot exceed the funds allocated to that County for Fiscal Year 2009/10.

5. How is MHLAP funded?

MHLAP is funded by the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), also known as Proposition 63, approved by California voters in November 2004. It provides funding to expand and strengthen the Public Mental Health System. To be eligible to participate in the MHLAP program, mental health providers must work in hard-to-fill and hard-to-retain positions within the Public Mental Health System.

6. How many applicants are awarded under the MHLAP?

The number of applicants awarded will depend on the number of complete applications received and the availability of funding.

7. How do I know if my mental health profession will qualify for the MHLAP?

Qualified professions for the MHLAP include the following: licensed psychologists, registered psychologists, postdoctoral psychological trainees, postdoctoral psychological assistants, licensed clinical social workers, associate clinical social workers, licensed marriage and family therapists, marriage and family therapist intern, licensed psychiatrist, registered psychiatrist, licensed or certified psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner, and registered psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner.

8. Do I have to be licensed in order to apply for the MHLAP?

You do not have to be a licensed mental health professional in order to apply for this program. Please refer to FAQ #7 in order to obtain a complete list of qualified professions.

9. How do I know if my facility will qualify for the MHLAP?

To qualify for MHLAP you must work in the "Public Mental Health System," which means publicly-funded mental health programs/services that are administered, in whole or in part, by the Department of Mental Health or County. This does not include publicly-funded programs and/or services administered, in whole or in part, by correctional entities or services provided in correctional facilities.

Publicly-funded Juvenile Hall facilities, programs and/or services which are administered, in whole or in part, by the Department of Mental Health or County are considered eligible for the program.

10. When is the postmark deadline for the MHLAP?

The postmark deadline for the MHLAP is January 24, 2010. Please note that the County Employment or Volunteer Verification Form must be submitted directly to the County Mental Health Director by December 10, 2009. This form will then be forwarded to the Foundation.

11. Can I submit my application prior to the postmark deadlines?

You are encouraged to submit your application prior to the postmark deadline in order for the Foundation to verify that your packet is complete. Applicants are urged to telephone the Foundation at 916.326.3640 prior to the final filing date to verify if their application was received complete. Any documents submitted after the postmark deadline will not be accepted.

12. When will I be notified whether or not I have been selected to receive a loan repayment award?

The Health Profession Education Foundation will notify all applicants of their MHLAP results within 120 days of the final filing date.

13. Which documents must be submitted in order to make my MHLAP application complete?

The following must be postmarked to the County Mental Health Director or designee by December 10, 2009:

- County Employment or Volunteer Verification Form

The following must be postmarked to the Health Professions Education Foundation by January 24, 2010:

- Completed application
- Educational Debt Reporting Form
- Lender Statement(s)
- Personal Statement
- Two Professional Letters of Recommendation
- Proof of licensure, registration or waiver

14. Can my letters of recommendation be sent directly to the Health Professions Education Foundation or do I need to include them with my application?

You can either have your letters of recommendation sent directly to: the Health Professions and Education Foundation, Mental Health Loan Assumption Program, 400 R Street, Room 460, Sacramento, CA 95811 or you can submit them along with your application packet. However, it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all documents are postmarked by January 24, 2010 and to ensure that the application packet is complete.

15. Do I have to be bilingual in order to apply for the MHLAP?

No. You do not have to be bilingual in order to apply.

16. What do I do if my loans are consolidated?

If your educational loans are consolidated, you may list only the consolidated loans on the Educational Debt Reporting Form and also include the corresponding lender statements.

17. What if my loans are in forbearance or deferment?

You are considered eligible for a loan repayment award if your loans are in forbearance or deferment so long as those loans remain commercial or governmental educational loans.

18. If I have been working in a qualified facility for several years already, can I backdate my contract to include time that I have already served?

No. You cannot use prior employment in order to complete the terms of your service obligation for the MHLAP. The start date of your twelve-month service obligation will

begin after you are awarded and will be identified in your contract with the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD).

19. What happens if I am unable to fulfill the terms of my contractual obligation and complete my service obligation?

If you are unable to complete your 12-month service commitment in the Public Mental Health System, no payment will be made toward your loans. Thus, there will be no penalty. You will have the opportunity to re-apply for the MHLAP program.

20. What criteria are used to select award recipients for the MHLAP?

Selection of awards is based solely on the information and documents contained in the application packet. Selection for awards is based in the following criteria: work experience, cultural and linguistic competence, career goals, community service, community background, and fluency. Only individuals who are currently employed in the Public Mental Health System and in a "hard-to-fill" or "hard-to-retain" positions are eligible for the MHLAP.

21. Will my employer need to fill anything out for MHLAP?

Yes. After you fill out County Employment or Volunteer Verification Form (Form), your direct supervisor verifies the information in Part 1 and forwards the Form to your County Mental Health Director by December 10, 2009.

22. If I am selected to be a loan repayment recipient for the MHLAP, does the money come directly to me or will it be sent to my lender?

A single payment shall be made on the award recipient's behalf after each consecutive 12 consecutive months of employment. Funds will be sent directly to the lender on the award recipient's behalf.

23. If I am selected to be a loan repayment recipient for the MHLAP, do I still have to make payments to my lender?

Yes. Award recipients are responsible for making continued loan payments to their lender throughout their participation in the MHLAP.

24. If I am selected to be a loan repayment recipient for the MHLAP, do I still get paid my salary?

Yes. You will still get paid your salary if selected to receive a loan repayment award. Participation in the MHLAP does not affect your salary.

25. If I am NOT selected to be a loan repayment recipient of the MHLAP and I apply again, do I need to resubmit my entire application or can you reuse the materials I have already submitted?

MHLAP applicants must resubmit a complete application packet each time they apply. The Health Professions Education Foundation will not reuse or return any documentation previously submitted.

26. Do certain professions receive preference and/or a larger award amount?

No, but only individuals working in a County mental health system in positions identified by the County Mental Health Director as “hard-to-fill” or “hard-to-retain” are eligible to receive the award. Loan assumption awards are capped at a maximum of \$10,000 for 12 consecutive months of employment.

27. What role does the County play in implementing MHLAP?

County representatives play an important role in the MHLAP. County representatives will participate on the MHLAP Selection Committee to assist the Foundation in reviewing applications. Also, the County must verify that the applicant works for the County Department of Mental Health or for an organization that contracts or subcontracts with the County Department of Mental Health. This does not include programs and/or services administered, in whole or part, by federal, state, county or private correctional entities or programs and/or services provided in correctional facilities. County Mental Health Director or his/her designee must also verify that the applicant is employed in a “hard-to-fill or hard to retain” position.

28. Is MHLAP funding available for individuals currently studying to become a qualified licensed or registered mental health professional?

No. MHLAP funding is only available for those mental health professionals listed in FAQ#7 and who are currently employed in the County Department of Mental Health or for a community-based organization that contracts or subcontracts with the County Department of Mental Health. This does not include programs and/or services administered, in whole or part, by federal, state, county or private correctional entities or programs and/or services provided in correctional facilities.

29. Does MHLAP require a County signature, and if so, from whom?

Yes. For an applicant to be eligible for the MHLAP, the County Mental Health Director must verify on the County Employment or Volunteer Verification Form that the applicant is in “hard-to-fill/ retain” position and that the applicant works in the County Department of Mental Health or for a community-based organization that contracts or subcontracts with the County Department of Mental Health. This does not include programs and/or services administered, in whole or part, by federal, state, county or private correctional entities or programs and/or services provided in correctional facilities.

30. How is Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding for MHLAP distributed?

MHSA Funding is allocated to each county as determined by the Department of Mental Health. MHLAP awards will vary by County, in accordance with funds allotted to each County for Fiscal Year 2009-10.