

Stafford Loan Forgiveness Program for Teachers



Are you a teacher?

Do you have a Federal Stafford Student Loan?

Depending on your loan disbursement date, your years of teaching service, and subject area taught, you may qualify for the Stafford Loan Forgiveness Program for Teachers, which can forgive up to **\$17,500** in student loans for fully eligible teachers!



ON TRACK FOR STUDENT LOAN SUCCESS

Photo provided by Oklahoma City Community College

Teachers with Stafford loans from the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) Program and/or William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program (Direct Loan) may qualify for teacher loan forgiveness if certain eligibility requirements are met. Congress created the Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program in 1998 to encourage individuals to enter into and continue the teaching profession within designated elementary and secondary schools that serve low-income families.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS CHECKLIST

You must meet certain eligibility requirements to participate in the Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program. Use this checklist as a guide to determine your eligibility. If you can answer “yes” to all of the eligibility requirements listed below, you may qualify for teacher loan forgiveness.

- Yes No Your first loan was received after October 1, 1998, and you had no outstanding balance on a FFEL or Direct Loan on or before October 1, 1998.

[One of the eligibility requirements is that you must be considered a new borrower. You are considered a new borrower if you did not have an outstanding balance on a FFEL or Direct Loan on October 1, 1998, or on the date you obtained a FFEL or Direct Loan after October 1, 1998.]

- Yes No You have been employed for at least five consecutive, complete school years as a full-time teacher in a qualifying school or educational service agency designated as low-income. Teacher’s aides do not qualify for this forgiveness program. Employment can be at a combination of qualifying schools.

[Schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) are considered low-income schools for teacher loan forgiveness purposes.]

Special Note: The five years of qualifying service may be in different eligible low-income schools. If your five years of qualifying teaching service was not at the same school or agency, you must complete a separate application for each location. The specific name of the school or agency needs to be listed.

To view the list of low-income schools, visit the Annual Directory of Designated Low-Income Schools for Teacher Cancellation Benefits website at <https://www.tcli.ed.gov/CBSWebApp/tcli/TCLIPubSchoolSearch.jsp>.

- Yes No At least one of your five years of qualifying teaching service is after the 1997-1998 academic year.
- Yes No You received the Stafford loan for which you are requesting forgiveness before the end of your fifth year of qualifying teaching service.
- Yes No You are not in default on the loans for which you are requesting teacher loan forgiveness. If you are in default, you must have made satisfactory repayment arrangements with your loan holder.
[If you are in default, contact the OCAP Recoveries department at (405) 234.4375 or (800) 522.8022 for assistance.]
- Yes No You have not received a benefit for the same teaching service through Title I, Subtitle D of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (AmeriCorps).

MAXIMUM DOLLAR AMOUNT - ELIGIBILITY QUALIFICATIONS

If your teaching service is **prior to** October 30, 2004, you may qualify for up to **\$5,000** in teacher loan forgiveness benefits if you can answer “Yes” to *one* of the following statements:

- Yes No You are or were a full-time elementary school or educational agency teacher who demonstrated knowledge and teaching skills in reading, writing, mathematics and other areas of the school curriculum.
- Yes No You are or were a full-time secondary school or educational agency teacher teaching in a subject area that is relevant to your academic major.
- Yes No During your qualifying teaching service as a public school teacher at an eligible agency, elementary or secondary school, you met the definition of “highly qualified” as provided in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

If your teaching service is **prior to** October 30, 2004, you may qualify for up to **\$17,500** in teacher loan forgiveness benefits, if you can answer “Yes” to *both* of the following statements:

- Yes No During your qualifying teaching service as a public school teacher at an eligible agency, elementary or secondary school, you met the definition of “highly qualified” as provided in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.
- Yes No You must have either:
- 1) Been employed as a highly qualified full-time mathematics or science teacher in an eligible secondary school;
 - OR --
 - 2) Been employed as a highly qualified special education teacher whose primary responsibility was to provide special education to children with disabilities. In addition, you must have taught children with disabilities that corresponded to your area of special education training and demonstrated knowledge and teaching skills in the content areas of the curriculum that you were teaching.

If your teaching service is **on or after** October 30, 2004, you may qualify for up to **\$5,000** in teacher loan forgiveness benefits if you can answer “Yes” to the following statement:

- Yes No During your qualifying teaching service as a public school teacher at an eligible elementary or secondary school, you met the definition of “highly qualified” as provided in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

If your teaching service is **on or after** October 30, 2004, you may qualify for up to **\$17,500** in teacher loan forgiveness benefits if you can answer “Yes” to *both* of the following statements:

- Yes No During your qualifying teaching service as a public school teacher at an eligible elementary or secondary school, you met the definition of “highly qualified” as provided in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.
- Yes No You must have either:
- 1) Been employed as a highly qualified full-time mathematics or science teacher in an eligible secondary school;
 - OR --
 - 2) Been employed as a highly qualified special education teacher whose primary responsibility was to provide special education to children with disabilities. In addition, you must have taught children with disabilities that corresponded to your area of special education training and demonstrated knowledge and teaching skills in the content areas of the curriculum that you were teaching.

What if I received my loans prior to October 1, 1998?

You must be able to answer "Yes" to the following to be considered eligible for teacher loan forgiveness:

- Yes No Your first loan was received prior to October 1, 1998, and you repaid all loans before receiving new loans on or after October 1, 1998.

[Congress did not include provisions in the legislation for the Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program to include forgiveness for loans received prior to October 1, 1998.]

Special Note: A Consolidation loan is not considered a new loan and does not qualify you as a new borrower.



What if I experienced an interruption in the five complete, consecutive years of teaching service?

There are certain instances that are not considered an interruption in the requirement of five complete, consecutive years of teaching service. You must have taught at least one half of an academic term, the school district must have considered your contract fulfilled for the purposes of salary increases, tenure and retirement, **and** you must be able to answer "Yes" to one of the following exceptions:

- Yes No You returned to post-secondary education on at least a half-time basis in a program directly related to the performance of teaching service required for forgiveness.
- Yes No You experienced a condition covered under the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA).
- Yes No You had an order to active duty status for more than 30 days as a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces.



What if the school is no longer designated as a low-income school?

If the school was designated as a qualifying low-income school when you began employment, all subsequent years continue to qualify even if the school does not meet the criteria. If you are initially employed by a school that does not meet the criteria and the school later qualifies, your five years of qualifying service begins when the school meets the eligibility criteria.



What are the next steps if I'm eligible?

If you meet the eligibility requirements for teacher loan forgiveness, the next step is to complete the Teacher Loan Forgiveness Application. You and the chief administrative officer of the school where you performed your qualifying teaching service must complete the form. Once the form is complete, you will need to submit it to your loan holder. You can obtain a Teacher Loan Forgiveness Application form from our website at www.ReadySetRepay.org/repaying/tlf.html.



Who is the chief administrative officer?

The chief administrative officer is the official at your school (such as the principal, assistant principal or superintendent) who is responsible for supervising your employment as a teacher, and who has access to records relating to your experience and qualifications for teaching. The chief administrative officer must certify on the application that your teaching service met the requirements for loan forgiveness for all five years.



How do I know how much I may be eligible to receive?

The total amount of teacher loan forgiveness you may be eligible for depends on when your period of teaching service began, your qualifications, and the type of teaching service you performed. You may not receive more than the maximum amount allowed in loan forgiveness for the same teaching service under both the FFEL and Direct Loan programs.

There are different requirements for teachers who began their teaching service prior to October 30, 2004 and for teachers that began on or after October 30, 2004. The reason for two categories is that the Taxpayer-Teacher Protection Act was signed into law on October 30, 2004, providing increased teacher loan forgiveness benefits for certain highly qualified secondary mathematics and science teachers, as well as certain highly qualified elementary and secondary special education teachers.



How will the teacher loan forgiveness payment amount be applied?

Unless you instruct otherwise, your loan holder will first apply the teacher loan forgiveness payment received from the guarantor to any outstanding unsubsidized Federal Stafford loan balances, then to any outstanding subsidized Federal Stafford loan balances, and finally to any eligible outstanding Federal Consolidation loan balances. You are not eligible for refunds on payments you have already made to the loan holder.



If I do not qualify at this time but I expect to later, can I stop making payments on my loan?

You must make your regular monthly payments on your loan during the five years of teaching service. However, when the loan balance nears the benefit amount you qualify for, you may request your loan holder to grant forbearance in annual increments during each of the years in which you perform your qualifying teaching service. A Teacher Loan Forgiveness Forbearance form will need to be completed and submitted to your loan holder.

Your loan holder is required to grant this forbearance only if the lender believes that the maximum forgiveness amount you are seeking will pay your loan balance in full at the end of your qualifying teaching service. To obtain a Teacher Loan Forgiveness Forbearance form, visit our website at www.ReadySetRepay.org/repaying/tlf.html.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Where can I find additional information about the Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program?

Additional information regarding the Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program can be found on the U.S. Department of Education's website at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/tc.



Does Oklahoma have a loan forgiveness program?

The Teacher Shortage Employment Incentive Program (TSEIP) is a program that reimburses eligible student loan expenses or pays an equivalent cash benefit to individuals who:

- Graduate from an Oklahoma accredited teacher education program.
- Receive teaching certification in mathematics or science.
- Agree to teach in an Oklahoma public secondary school for at least five consecutive years.

Applications must complete the TSEIP participation agreement no later than their graduate date. For more information, visit www.okhighered.org/tseip or call (405) 225.9192, (800) 858.1840.

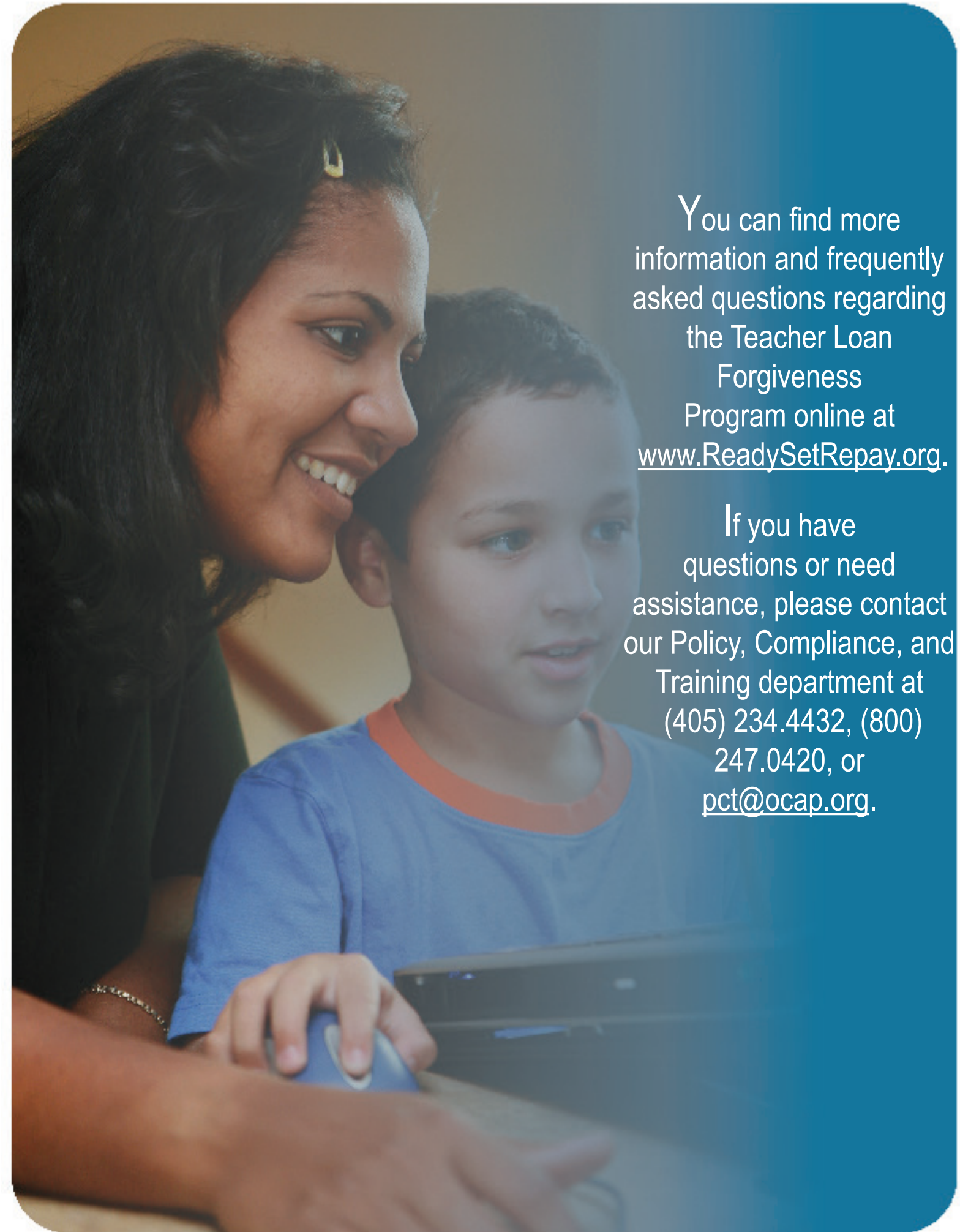
Other Forgiveness Programs:

The American Federation of Teachers maintains a list of other forgiveness programs for student loans at <http://www.aft.org/tools4teachers/loan-forgiveness.htm>.



What about my Federal Perkins loan?

Teachers who have a Federal Perkins loan may be eligible for 100% loan cancellation after teaching for five years in a designated low-income school or in a subject-matter shortage area. Note that cancellation benefits will be lost if you consolidate your Perkins loan into a Federal Consolidation loan. Contact your school or visit www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/tc for more information.



You can find more information and frequently asked questions regarding the Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program online at www.ReadySetRepay.org.

If you have questions or need assistance, please contact our Policy, Compliance, and Training department at (405) 234.4432, (800) 247.0420, or pct@ocap.org.



Oklahoma College Assistance Program
A division of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education