

WORKING FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS NY/NJ VETERANS HEALTHCARE NETWORK

Mission and Vision

Abraham Lincoln made that pledge to America's Civil War veterans during his Second Inaugural Address, in 1864. Nearly a century and a half later, the Department of Veterans Affairs is still honoring President Lincoln's promise.

- At VA we honor America's debt to the men and women whose patriotic service and sacrifice earned our freedom.
- We give vets assistance of the most meaningful kind. We provide medical and financial help when they need it most.
- When they pass on, we build and maintain the great national cemeteries that perpetuate their memory.
- Carrying out VA's challenging medical, financial, and memorial mission demands a diverse, dedicated, and highly skilled work force.

For information on Job Benefits, the Hiring Process and Job Openings, visit <http://www.va.gov/jobs>.

INFORMATION FOR POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES

Tuition Reimbursement Program

The Tuition Reimbursement Program is available to full-time VA employees who are enrolled in any accredited nursing degree program. This program also funds prerequisite courses required for acceptance into a degree program.

Employee Incentive Scholarship Program (EISP)

The EISP enables health care staff to continue their professional education in order to qualify for jobs that are in great demand within VA. Administrative/wage employee can also seek a degree as a licensed healthcare professional in hard-to-recruit occupations.

To be eligible for participation, each employee must:

- have been continuously employed with VA for no less than 1 year;
- be accepted to, or enrolled in, an authorized education or training program;
- agree to a contractual service obligation in a full-time position for a period up to 3 years (This service period begins when the student is appointed to the occupation for which the EISP award was given);
- NOT be obligated under any other Federal program to perform service;
- have a record of employment that demonstrates a high likelihood of success in completing the education and training, and in employment in such field.

National Nursing Education Initiative (NNEI)

The NNEI is a scholarship that encourages nurses with Associate degrees and diplomas to earn Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degrees. VA nurses who want to advance beyond Nurse Level 1 must earn a BSN degree. All NNEI participants, whether currently full- or part-time, are required to serve in a full-time VHA position for which the education was obtained for a maximum period of three years. This period begins after education is complete.

To be eligible for participation, each employee:

1. Must have been continuously employed with VA for no less than 1 year;
2. Must be accepted to, or enrolled in, an authorized education or training program;
3. Must NOT be obligated under any other Federal program to perform service;
4. Must have a record of employment that demonstrates a high likelihood of success in completing the education and training, and in employment in such field.

VA Nursing Education for Employees Program (VANEETP)

The VANEETP provides salary replacement dollars and funds to cover the cost of tuition, books, and certain fees for employees enrolled in full-time LPN, LVN, or RN programs for an associate or bachelor's degree. As a full-time student the employee works at the medical center during significant breaks in the academic calendar. The employee receives full salary and payment for education costs

WORKING FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS NY/NJ VETERANS HEALTHCARE NETWORK

up to authorized amounts while attending school.

To be eligible for participation, each employee:

- Must have been continuously employed with VA for no less than 1 year (as full- or part-time);
- Must be accepted to, or enrolled in, a school of nursing and be within 2 years of completing the degree (One year for the LPN/LVN programs);
- Must NOT be obligated under any other Federal program to perform service;
- Must agree to a contractual service obligation;
- Must remain at the facility for which the award was approved for the duration of their academic program.

Student Loan Repayment Program (SLRP)

The Federal student loan repayment program permits agencies to repay federally insured student loans as a recruitment or retention incentive for candidates or current employees of the agency. Under the VA Student Loan Repayment Program, you may be eligible to receive up to \$10,000 per year, with a lifetime maximum of \$60,000, to help you repay your student loans. Any employee is eligible, except those occupying a position excepted from the competitive civil service. An employee receiving this benefit must sign a service agreement to remain in the service of the paying agency for a period of at least 3 years.

STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Qualified:

Student loan repayments may be authorized for employees in full- and part-time positions who are:

- (a) Temporary employees serving on appointments leading to conversion to term or permanent appointments
- (b) Term employees with at least 3 years left on their appointment
- (c) Permanent employees
- (d) Employees serving on excepted appointments with conversion to term, career, or career conditional appointments

Exclusions: A student loan may not be paid for a position excepted from the competitive service. Title 38, hybrid, and General Schedule employees in health care positions are not eligible. However hybrid positions under 38 U.S.C. 7401 positions do qualify for student loan repayments. Employees may apply if outstanding PLUS loans remain for children but **not** for parents.

Service Agreement:

- Sign a written Employee Service Agreement (ESA) with all details of loan repayment and required 3-year employment service with VA
- Loan repayments only apply to loans taken prior to ESA
- Checks paid directly to loan company NOT to employee
- Employee must maintain an acceptable level of performance
- Employee must also agree to reimburse VA for any loan repayments if any conditions of the service agreement are not met.
- leaves for another Federal agency before completing service, not required to return payments to VA; new agency not required to make loan payments

Criteria for Authorization:

- When recommending candidates, all management officials must adhere to merit system principles.
- A written determination must state that with absence of repayment offer, VA would find difficulty in filling the position or retaining a highly qualified employee in that position. (see attached appendix)

Amount Limitations:

- Payment made on an annual or biweekly basis
- The maximum **annual** gross amount (before taxes) in a year is \$10,000
- Total **lifetime** gross amount: \$60,000.

WORKING FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS NY/NJ VETERANS HEALTHCARE NETWORK

- Repayment magnitude depends on employee's value to VA and current funds

Relationship to Other Payments:

- Student loan repayment may be paid in *addition* to another incentive.
- The 3-year agreement may begin and run concurrently with other service agreements.

Employee Responsibilities:

- Provide evidence of valid loan obligations
- Provide information about offers of employment and career plans
- Make timely loan payments on portion of the loan(s) that continue to be the employee's responsibility
- Tax obligations result from the student loan repayment

The agency must:

- Pay the employer's share of social security and Medicare taxes on the loan repayment
- Withhold and pay Federal income tax withholding (and appropriate State and local income tax withholding) on the loan repayment
- Withhold and pay the employee's share of social security and Medicare taxes on the loan repayment
- Report the loan repayment and taxes withheld and paid as required under Federal law and applicable State and local laws.

Taxes/Fees

- If for recruitment, repayment quantity must be determined before employee begins job
- Agency not responsible for late fees
- If agency repays student loan, repayment includible in employee's gross income and in wages for Federal employment tax purposes
- Tax withholdings deducted/applied at time payment made
- Student loan repayment benefits subject to employment taxes

For more detailed information visit the U.S. Office of Personal Management (OPM) at

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/studentloan/index.asp>

Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program: This program discharges any remaining debt after 10 years of full-time employment in public service. The borrower must have made 120 payments as part of the Direct Loan program in order to obtain this benefit. Only payments made on or after October 1, 2007 count toward the required 120 monthly payments. This program can be used in conjunction with the Education Debt Reduction Program (EDRP).

Education Debt Reduction Program (EDRP): Repays up to \$48,000 in education loans for newly appointed health care professionals in certain hard to fill occupations. Education loans must be used to pay for courses that directly lead to qualification for an appointed position. Employee must apply for program with Human Resources within 6 months of appointment. To apply, appointee must show proof that EDRP was offered either on the job vacancy or by employer. Payments are made at the conclusion of a 12-month service period.

APPENDIX N SAMPLE STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT RECOMMENDATION/APPROVAL

page 1

Date: _____

From: _____ (recommending official)

SUBJ: Repayment of Student Loan(s) _____ (employee's name)

To: _____ (approving official)

1. The following request is submitted for:

Name: _____ (employee's name)

Position: _____
(title, series, grade, step, position description number, appointment authority)

Facility: _____

Duty Station: _____ (name, city, state)

Duty Status: _____ (Full- or Part-Time: indicate # of hours per pay period)

Proposed annual student loan repayment amount: \$ _____

Proposed total student loan repayment: \$ _____

Proposed total number of years for payment: _____

Proposed effective date of service commitment: _____

Proposed ending date of service commitment: _____

Organization: _____ (Service, Division, Office)

The employee has selected the following payment action:

_____ A biweekly payment of \$ _____ .

_____ An initial or renewal lump-sum payment of \$ _____ for the first calendar year. Payments made in subsequent calendar years will be biweekly payments of \$ _____.

**APPENDIX N SAMPLE STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT
RECOMMENDATION/APPROVAL**

page 2

2. The following is submitted as justification for this request:

(Recommending Official's Signature) (Date)

Concur _____ Do Not Concur _____

Comments

(Human Resources Manager's Signature) (Date)

APPROVED _____ DISAPPROVED _____ OTHER _____

(Recommending Official's Signature & Title) (Date)

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

INTERNSHIPS

For more information, visit the [Department of Veterans Affairs Hiring and Incentive Programs](#) web site.

STUDENT EDUCATIONAL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SEEP)

The Student Educational Employment Program (SEEP) provides Federal employment opportunities to students who are enrolled or accepted for enrollment as degree seeking students taking at least a halftime academic, technical, or vocational course load in an accredited high school, technical, vocational, 2 or 4 year college or university, graduate or professional school. SEEP is made up of the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) and the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP).

STEP

- Not eligible for noncompetitive conversion into permanent fulltime positions.
- To qualify:
 1. You must be at least 16 years of age.
 2. You must have a minimum GPA of 2.0 or greater on a 4.0 scale.
 3. You must be in good academic standing.
- Generally not entitled to health and life insurance benefits.
 - Once continuously employed for a year without a break in service exceeding five days, may enroll in the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program, but would pay 100% of the premium.

SCEP

- May be noncompetitively converted to term, career, or career-conditional appointments following completion of their academic and work experience requirements.
- To qualify:
 1. You must be at least 16 years of age.
 2. You must have a minimum GPA of 2.5 or greater on a 4.0 scale.
 3. You must be in good academic standing.
- Eligible for both health and life insurance coverage if expected to be employed under this appointment for at least one year and are expected to be in a pay status for at least one-third of the time from initial appointment to completion of the program.
 - Cost of premiums is split between the employee and the agency.

Next Steps

Students may contact their school guidance office, career planning and placement office, teachers, or Federal agency employment office where they are interested in working. They may also visit the OPM website at <http://www.opm.gov/employ/students/index.htm>.

At the very minimum, each student will need the following for application:

1. Copies of your transcripts (unofficial copies are acceptable).
2. Current resume, including all information found on [Form OF-612](#).
3. Letter of recommendation from your academic advisor stating you are in good standing with your academic institution.

Additional Information

- [Benefits of STEP & SCEP](#)
- [SCEP Information Packet](#)

VA Learning Opportunities Residency (VALOR)

This is open to outstanding college nursing students who have completed their junior year. Through VALOR, they develop competency in clinical nursing by working at a VA health care facility. Students recruited must have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 based on nursing degree courses. Student must complete a minimum of 400 hours in a VA facility, be a United States citizen, and meet physical examination standards. Students may be appointed on a full- or part-time basis during the summer months and may continue their senior year on a part-time basis.

To apply for a student position, visit [Pathways for Students & Recent Graduates to Federal Careers](#).

INFORMATION FOR TRAINEES/COLLEGE GRADUATES

- [Information for Clinical Trainees, VA Staff, Education Affiliates](#)
- [Occupation Specific Information](#)

Outstanding Scholar Program

Generally, all applicants for GS-7 must have an additional 1 year of specialized experience. College graduates, who demonstrate one of the following, may qualify for the GS-7 level without the required 1 year of specialized experience.* These applicants do not have to compete; however, official transcripts are required and academic achievement must be demonstrated through one of the following:

1. Overall GPA of 3.00 on a 4.00 scale for all courses, or during the final 2 years;
2. Rank in the upper third of the graduating class, or major subdivision (i.e., School of Business Administration);
3. Overall GPA of 3.50 on a 4.00 scale for courses completed in the major field or for courses in the major field completed during the final 2 years.

* Contact your (potential) employer.

Superior Academic Achievement

The Superior Academic Achievement provision is used to determine eligibility for applicable GS-7 level positions of persons who have completed (or expect to complete within 9 months) all the requirements for a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.* Superior Academic Achievement is based on:

1. Class Standing - Applicants must be in the upper third of the graduating class in the college, university, or major subdivision, such as the College of Liberal Arts or the School of Business Administration, based on completed courses.
2. Grade-Point Average (GPA) - Applicants must have a grade-point average of 3.0 or higher out of a possible 4.0 ("B" or better) as recorded on their official transcript, or as computed based on 4 years of education, or as computed based on courses completed during the final 2 years of the curriculum; or 3.5 or higher out of a possible 4.0 ("B+" or better) based on the average of the required courses completed in the major field or the required courses in the major field completed during the final 2 years of the curriculum.
3. Election to Membership in a National Scholastic Honor Society - Applicants can be considered eligible based on membership in one of the national scholastic honor societies, such as those listed in the Association of College Honor Societies: Booklet of Information and/or Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities.

* Contact your (potential) employer.

SELECTED TO DAY 1

Once selected for an appointment, contact your local Human Resources Officer to complete the paperwork and procedures required before your first day on the job such as:

1. Physical Exam, Medical Clearance, PPD
2. Fingerprinting
3. ID Card
4. Personal Identification Verification (PIV)
5. New Employee Orientation
6. Computer Access
7. Mandatory Training (i.e. Compliance)
8. Original (and/or a copy) of application
9. Vacancy announcement (if applicable)

Bring the following documentation to Human Resources:

- Two forms of ID (e.g. drivers license, passport)
- Proof of citizenship
- Account information for paycheck deposits
- Contact information of references
- Information on previous working experience
- Related medical papers

VA NY/NJ Veterans Healthcare Network Human Resources Offices/Nurse Recruiters

- James J. Peters VAMC, Bronx, 718-584-9000 x6584
- Northport VA Medical Center, 631-261-4400 x2715
- VA Hudson Valley Health Care System Castle Point Campus, 845-831-2000 x5045
- VA Hudson Valley Health Care System Montrose Campus, 914-737-4400 x2550
- VA NJ Health Care System East Orange Campus, 973-676-1000 x1366
- VA NJ Health Care System Lyons Campus, 908-647-0180 x4022
- VA NY Harbor Healthcare System Brooklyn Campus, 718-630-3660
- VA NY Harbor Healthcare System Manhattan Campus, 212-686-7500 x7635