




State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott
Governor

Mike Carroll
Secretary

DATE: April 14, 2015

TO: Regional Managing Directors
Community-Based Care Lead Agency CEOs

FROM:  Dr. David Fairbanks, Deputy Secretary
Vicki Abrams, Assistant Secretary for Operations
Janice Thomas, Assistant Secretary for Child Welfare

SUBJECT: Open Enrollment Announcement for the Child Protection and Child Welfare Personnel Loan Forgiveness Program

INFORMATIONAL MEMO

PURPOSE: This memorandum serves to announce the third open enrollment period for the Child Protection and Child Welfare Personnel Loan Forgiveness Program this fiscal year. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis through May 29, 2015. In an effort to award approved applicants in a timely manner prior to the end of fiscal year 2014-2015, interested applicants should submit a signed completed application packet as soon as possible.

BACKGROUND: During the 2014 legislative session, the Florida Legislature created s. 402.403, F.S. to establish the Child Protection and Child Welfare Personnel Loan Forgiveness Program for the purposes of recruiting and retaining high-performing individuals who have either a bachelor's degree or a master's degree in social work and are employed as child protection or child welfare personnel who carry an active client caseload.

For this program:

Child protection personnel include:

- Child Protective Investigators (CPI);
- Senior CPIs; and
- CPI Supervisors.

Child welfare personnel include:

- Dependency Case Managers;
- Adoptions Case Managers;
- Independent Living Case Managers; and
- Case Manager Supervisors.

Note: Higher level positions such as directors and administrators do not meet the specified position eligibility criteria for participation in this program.

Requirements of the Program:

1317 Winewood Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700

- The applicant must have either a Bachelor's Degree or Master's Degree in Social Work. A degree in a related field such as Sociology, Psychology, etc., does not meet this criteria (see s. 402.404(2)(c), F.S.)
- Child protection personnel must be employed with the Department of Children and Families
- Child welfare personnel must be employed by a Community-Based Care Lead Agency or a subcontracted case management organization of a Community-Based Care Lead Agency
- The applicant must be a high performing employee, completing job duties and responsibilities at an achievement rate established by his or her employer and reflected on his or her most recent performance evaluation

Throughout the state, "high performing employee" is defined as achieving a minimum score of *at least* 70% of an employer's overall performance evaluation total. However, individual employers may set standards that exceed the 70% minimum requirement based on the agency's definition of "exceeds minimal expectation". For individuals employed by the state, a minimum overall score of 3.5 must have been achieved on the employee's last performance evaluation to be eligible to participate in the Child Protection and Child Welfare Personnel Loan Forgiveness Program. Community-Based Care Lead Agencies and their subcontracted case management organizations, may be asked by the Department to clarify what constitutes high performance on the agency's performance evaluation when it is not clear by reviewing the supporting documentation.

Requirements for the Loan Forgiveness Payment:

- Loan payments are up to \$3,000 a year based on application approval and the availability of funds appropriated by the legislature
- Payments will be awarded on a first come, first serve basis
- All payments will be made directly to the servicer of the loan
- Only loans associated with the completed social work degree to pay the costs of tuition, books, fees, and living expenses are eligible for reimbursement

For those individuals who participate in the loan forgiveness program, the individual must remain employed by the Department, a state agency, or a contracted provider for 5 years after July 1, 2014, or 5 years following the completion of the graduate level social work degree, whichever is later. If employment ends before the 5-year period is fulfilled, the benefit shall be repaid to the Department of Children and Families according to a pro rata calculation based on the number of years of service.

The application for the Child Protection and Child Welfare Loan Forgiveness program is available on the Florida's Center for Child Welfare's website at:

<http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/LegislativeChanges/SB1666.shtml> under the heading of "Student Loan Forgiveness". Also available at this link is the informational handout, *Child Protection and Child Welfare Personnel Loan Forgiveness Program Criteria*.

Loan Forgiveness Program for Child Protection and Child Welfare Personnel

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Applications will be accepted from 8:00 am, Eastern Standard Time (ET) on April 15, 2015 through May 29, 2015 at 5:00 pm ET. Completed applications and all supporting documentation should be emailed to loan.forgiveness@myffamilies.com.

ACTION REQUIRED: Please disseminate this informational memo broadly to all child protective investigators and child protective investigator supervisors employed by the Department of Children and Families, and all case managers and case manager supervisors employed by a Community-Based Care Lead Agency or a community-based care subcontracted case management organization.

CONTACT INFORMATION: Questions or requests for additional information may be directed to Arlisha Roberts at (850) 717-4396 or via email at: loan.forgiveness@myffamilies.com.

cc: Traci Leavine, Director of Child Welfare Practice
JoShonda Guerrier, Director of Child Welfare Strategic Projects
Regional Family and Community Services Directors
Office of General Counsel
Dennise Parker, Director of Human Resources
Kimberly McMurray, Interim Chief Financial Officer
Center for Child Welfare, University of South Florida
Kurt Kelley, Executive Director, Florida Coalition for Children