

San Diego Pay It Forward Loan Program

Access zero-interest loans to cover tuition, fees, and living expenses while you participate in an eligible behavioral health clinician program.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Pursuing a degree or certificate to start or advance your career in behavioral health can be an exciting opportunity and a challenge. You might be wondering, how can I afford the cost of going back to school?

Through the San Diego Pay It Forward Loan Program, you can apply for a 0% interest loan to help cover tuition, fees, and living expenses at a participating behavioral health educational program.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

1

Enroll in one of the participating educational programs.

2

Apply for and receive a loan from the San Diego Pay It Forward Loan Program (between \$10,000 and \$20,000 per academic year, up to a total maximum amount of \$40,000).

3

Graduate from your program!

4

Start or continue your career in public behavioral health.

5

Repay your loan through fixed monthly payments for up to 10 years.

6

Know that your loan payments go back into the San Diego Pay It Forward Loan Program to support future students and that you are **"paying it forward"** for others like you.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The 2025-26 academic year eligible educational programs include:

1. Master of Social Work at San Diego State University
2. Master of Science in Early Childhood and Family Clinical Counseling at San Diego State University
3. Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy at San Diego State University
4. Master of Social Work at California State University San Marcos



WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

You may be eligible for the San Diego Pay It Forward Loan Program if you meet ALL of the following criteria:

- Enrolled in an eligible program
- Authorized to work in the U.S
- At least 18 years of age
- Resident of California
- Family income* that is less than 125% of the median income in San Diego County based on your family size (see table)

**Based on the most recent U.S. Census Bureau data available. Thresholds may be updated from time to time. For graduate students, family income is defined as your individual gross income and your spouse's gross income, if you are married.*

Family Size	125% of Median Income
1-earner family	\$103,094
2-person family	\$134,861
3-person family	\$151,271
4+ person family	\$187,121

A STUDENT-FRIENDLY LOAN OPTION

The San Diego Pay It Forward Loan Program is funded by the County of San Diego through a Mental Health Services Act Innovation grant and is managed by Social Finance, a national non-profit and registered investment advisor.

Our priority is supporting students and unlocking pathways to economic mobility. We believe you have the right to finance your education in a way that's directly linked to your career success.



0% INTEREST

You never pay back more than the starting balance of your loan.



90 DAY GRACE PERIOD

Your repayment term begins 90 days after you graduate or exit school.



LOAN FORGIVENESS

If you work at an eligible employer for five years after graduating, you may be eligible for loan forgiveness.



INCOME-BASED DEFERMENT

If you earn less than \$50,000 per year, you can apply for an income-based deferment, during which your monthly payment obligation would be \$0.



INCUMBENT WORKER BENEFIT

If you worked at a qualifying public behavioral health employer prior to your program and return to the field after completion, you may be eligible for periodic credits to your outstanding loan balance.

EXAMPLE LOAN REPAYMENT SCENARIOS



Student A

Student A borrows \$40,000 at 0% interest to finance a Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy educational program.

They go on to work as a clinician in public behavioral health after completing their educational program, **earning \$70,000 per year.**

They make fixed monthly payments, and any remaining loan balance is forgiven after 5 years of service in public behavioral health at an eligible employer.



Student B

Student B borrows \$20,000 at 0% interest to finance a Master of Social Work educational program.

They work as a case manager, earning \$45,000 per year. They apply for income-based deferment, and their monthly loan repayment amount is \$0.

After one year, they begin working as a clinician in public behavioral health, **earning \$60,000 per year.**

They now start making fixed monthly payments, and any remaining loan balance is forgiven after 5 years of service in public behavioral health at an eligible employer.



Student C

Student C borrows \$30,000 at 0% interest to finance a Master of Social Work educational program.

They go into private practice, **earning \$100,000 per year.**

They make fixed monthly payments until the loan is repaid in full. They do not qualify for loan forgiveness.

QUESTIONS?

Is the San Diego Pay It Forward Loan Program right for you? We're here to help you make the right decision for your future. Visit socialfinance.org/sd-pay-it-forward to learn more or email us with questions at sdpayitforward@socialfinance.org. The San Diego Pay It Forward Loan Program is managed by Social Finance as a part of the ELEVATE Behavioral Health Workforce Fund.



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