

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 education 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 an eligible behavioral health educational program.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

1 **Enroll** in one of the eligible programs at a partner educational institution.

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 2026-27 partner educational institutions* includes:

1. California State University San Marcos
2. Point Loma Nazarene University
3. San Diego State University

**The eligible behavioral health programs at each partner institution can be found at the [SD PIF webpage](#). This list will be updated as the Loan Program partners with additional educational institutions.*



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 educational 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	\$106,983
2-person family	\$135,201
3-person family	\$157,756
4+ person family	\$184,939



In partnership with



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 adviser.

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?

Visit socialfinance.org/sd-pay-it-forward to learn more or email us at sdpayitforward@socialfinance.org. The San Diego Pay It Forward Loan Program is managed by Social Finance as part of the ELEVATE Behavioral Health Workforce Fund.



The information provided in this FAQ document is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or tax advice. Social Finance, Inc. and its affiliates make no representations or warranties regarding the completeness, accuracy, or reliability of the information contained herein. Program and loan terms, eligibility criteria, and related policies are subject to change without notice. Participation in the San Diego Pay It Forward Loan Program does not guarantee loan approval or employment outcomes.

Disability-related accommodations, language interpretation (including American Sign Language), and written materials in alternative languages and formats are available upon request. Please submit your request at least 72 hours in advance of the event to ELEVATE@thinkpic.org or by calling (619) 468-5228.