



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

July 3, 2013

Dear Colleague,

According to the service obligation regulations in 34 CFR §304.23, institutions of higher education (IHEs) are required to provide scholars with Pre-Scholarship Agreements and Exit Certifications, which include all of the terms and conditions of the Personnel Development Program funding that the scholars must meet, especially the service obligation. Some IHEs, however, have failed to provide complete and accurate documentation to all of their scholars or do not have a record of having done so.

OSEP has received complaints from scholars who have received debt collection letters claiming that they have not performed or are unqualified to perform the necessary service obligation. These scholars have alleged that they should not be bound by the service obligation requirements for the following reasons:

- The IHE did not provide Pre-Scholarship Agreements or Exit Certifications;
- The IHE provided vague or inaccurate Pre-Scholarship Agreements or Exit Certifications; and
- The IHE provided Pre-Scholarship Agreements or Exit Certifications that included erroneous requirements.

To eliminate these problems and to ensure accuracy, OSEP now requires IHEs to use the U.S. Department of Education's OMB approved (OMB Control Number: 1820-0686; Expiration: 08/31/2014) templates for Pre-Scholarship Agreements and Exit Certifications. Currently, IHEs and scholars must complete and sign the documents in hard copy. IHEs must also disseminate copies of the current regulations, 34 CFR part 304, and the frequently asked questions (FAQs) to scholars.

OSEP has awarded a contract to Educational Policy Institute and Westat (EPI/Westat) to establish a Personnel Development Program Data Collection Center (DCC). The DCC will merge the Scholar Data Report and the Service Obligation Tracking System, which will become the Data Collection System (DCS). When the DCS becomes operational later this year, IHEs and scholars will enter Pre-Scholarship Agreement and Exit Certification data online.

Until the DCS is operational, IHEs are responsible for maintaining the Pre-Scholarship Agreements and Exit Certifications, including for three years after the grant has ended (Appendix W, EDGAR). **Note that IHEs may be responsible for repayment of grant funds in cases where they do not have a signed Pre-Scholarship Agreement or Exit Certification for each scholar.**

Templates for Pre-Scholarship Agreements and Exit Certifications, corresponding program regulations and FAQs can be obtained at <https://serviceobligations.ed.gov/agreements.cfm>.

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www.ed.gov

The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

Information about service obligations can be found at <https://www.serviceobligations.ed.gov>. If you have additional questions, please contact EPI/Westat's Customer Service Helpdesk.

Toll Free Hotline: 8 a.m.-8 p.m., ET, M-F

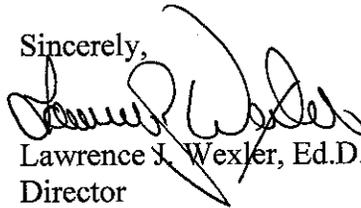
1-800-285-NCSO (6276)

For TTY dial 711 for your state's Relay Service Provider

serviceobligation@ed.gov

Fax: 1-888-252-6960

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lawrence J. Wexler". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name.

Lawrence J. Wexler, Ed.D.

Director

Research to Practice Division

Office of Special Education Programs