

“(c) VET CENTER DEFINED.—In this section, the term ‘Vet Center’ has the meaning given that term in section 1712A(h) of title 38, United States Code.”

TEMPORARY EXPANSION OF INDIVIDUALS ELIGIBLE FOR PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAM

Pub. L. 107–135, title I, §102(e), Jan. 23, 2002, 115 Stat. 2449, granted the Secretary of Veterans Affairs authority to treat certain individuals as recently appointed employees in the Veterans Health Administration under subsec. (a) of this section for purposes of eligibility in the Education Debt Reduction Program under this subchapter but prohibited exercise of this authority after June 30, 2002.

**§ 7683. Education debt reduction**

(a) IN GENERAL.—Education debt reduction payments under the Education Debt Reduction Program shall consist of—

(1) payments to individuals selected to participate in the program of principal and interest on loans described in section 7682(a)(2) of this title; or

(2) payments for the principal and interest on such loans of such individuals to the holders of such loans.

(b) FREQUENCY OF PAYMENT.—(1) The Secretary may make education debt reduction payments to or for any given participant in the Education Debt Reduction Program on a monthly or annual basis, as determined by the Secretary.

(2) The Secretary shall make such payments at the end of the period determined by the Secretary under paragraph (1).

(c) PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENT.—The Secretary may make education debt reduction payments to or for a participant in the Education Debt Reduction Program for a period only if the Secretary determines that the individual maintained an acceptable level of performance in the position or positions served by the participant during the period.

(d) MAXIMUM ANNUAL AMOUNT.—(1) The amount of education debt reduction payments made to or for a participant under the Education Debt Reduction Program may not exceed \$200,000 over a total of five years of participation in the Program, of which not more than \$40,000 of such payments may be made in each year of participation in the Program.

(2)(A) The Secretary may waive the limitations under paragraph (1) in the case of a participant described in subparagraph (B). In the case of such a waiver, the total amount of education debt repayments payable to or for that participant is the total amount of the principal and the interest on the participant's loans referred to in subsection (a).

(B) A participant described in this subparagraph is a participant in the Program who the Secretary determines serves in a position for which there is a shortage of qualified employees by reason of either the location or the requirements of the position.

(Added Pub. L. 105–368, title VIII, §803(a), Nov. 11, 1998, 112 Stat. 3357; amended Pub. L. 107–135, title I, §102(c), Jan. 23, 2002, 115 Stat. 2448; Pub. L. 111–163, title III, §301(c), (d), May 5, 2010, 124 Stat. 1146; Pub. L. 113–146, title III, §302(b), Aug. 7, 2014, 128 Stat. 1788; Pub. L. 113–175, title IV, §408, Sept. 26, 2014, 128 Stat. 1906; Pub. L. 114–58,

title VI, §601(24), Sept. 30, 2015, 129 Stat. 539; Pub. L. 115–182, title III, §302(a), June 6, 2018, 132 Stat. 1463.)

**Editorial Notes**

AMENDMENTS

2018—Subsec. (d)(1). Pub. L. 115–182 substituted “\$200,000” for “\$120,000” and “40,000” for “\$24,000”.

2015—Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 114–58 inserted period at end.

2014—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 113–175, §408(1), added subsec. (a) and struck out former subsec. (a). Prior to amendment, text read as follows: “Education debt reduction payments under the Education Debt Reduction Program shall consist of payments to individuals selected to participate in the program of amounts to reimburse such individuals for payments by such individuals of principal and interest on loans described in section 7682(a)(2) of this title.”

Subsecs. (b)(1), (c). Pub. L. 113–175, §408(2), substituted “payments to or for” for “payments to”.

Subsec. (d)(1). Pub. L. 113–175, §408(3)(A), substituted “made to or for” for “made to”.

Pub. L. 113–146, §302(b)(1), (2)(B), substituted “The amount” for “Subject to paragraph (2), the amount”, “\$120,000” for “\$60,000”, and “\$24,000 of such payments may be made in each year of participation in the Program” for “\$12,000 of such payments may be made in each of the fourth and fifth years of participation in the Program”.

Subsec. (d)(2). Pub. L. 113–146, §302(b)(2)(A)(i), (ii), redesignated par. (3) as (2) and struck out former par. (2) which read as follows: “The total amount payable to a participant in such Program for any year may not exceed the amount of the principal and interest on loans referred to in subsection (a) that is paid by the individual during such year.”

Subsec. (d)(2)(A). Pub. L. 113–175, §408(3)(B), substituted “payable to or for that” for “payable to that”.

Pub. L. 113–146, §302(b)(2)(A)(iii), substituted “paragraph (1)” for “paragraphs (1) and (2)”.

Subsec. (d)(3). Pub. L. 113–146, §302(b)(2)(A)(ii), redesignated par. (3) as (2).

2010—Subsec. (d)(1). Pub. L. 111–163, §301(c), substituted “\$60,000” for “\$44,000” and “\$12,000” for “\$10,000”.

Subsec. (d)(3). Pub. L. 111–163, §301(d), added par. (3).

2002—Subsec. (d)(1). Pub. L. 107–135 struck out “for a year” after “a participant” and substituted “exceed \$44,000 over a total of five years of participation in the Program, of which not more than \$10,000 of such payments may be made in each of the fourth and fifth years of participation in the Program” for “exceed—

“(A) \$6,000 for the first year of the participant's participation in the Program;

“(B) \$8,000 for the second year of the participant's participation in the Program; and

“(C) \$10,000 for the third year of the participant's participation in the Program”.

**[§ 7684. Repealed. Pub. L. 107–135, title I, § 102(a)(1), Jan. 23, 2002, 115 Stat. 2448]**

Section, added Pub. L. 105–368, title VIII, §803(a), Nov. 11, 1998, 112 Stat. 3358, provided that the Secretary could not make education debt reduction payments to individuals who had not commenced participation in the Education Debt Reduction Program before Dec. 31, 2001.

SUBCHAPTER VIII—SPECIALTY EDUCATION LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM

**§ 7691. Establishment**

As part of the Educational Assistance Program, the Secretary may carry out a student loan repayment program under section 5379 of

title 5. The program shall be known as the Department of Veterans Affairs Specialty Education Loan Repayment Program (in this chapter referred to as the “Specialty Education Loan Repayment Program”).

(Added Pub. L. 115–182, title III, §303(a), June 6, 2018, 132 Stat. 1464.)

#### Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

##### OFFER DEADLINE

Pub. L. 115–182, title III, §303(e), June 6, 2018, 132 Stat. 1467, as amended by Pub. L. 115–251, title II, §211(b)(6)(B), Sept. 29, 2018, 132 Stat. 3177, provided that: “In the case of an applicant who applies before receiving a residency match and whom the Secretary of Veterans Affairs selects for participation in the Specialty Education Loan Repayment Program under subchapter VIII of chapter 76 of title 38, United States Code, as enacted by subsection (a), the Secretary shall offer participation to the applicant not later than 28 days after—

- “(1) the applicant matches with a residency in a medical specialty described in section 7692 of title 38, United States Code, as enacted by subsection (a); and  
“(2) such match is published.”

##### PUBLICITY

Pub. L. 115–182, title III, §303(f), June 6, 2018, 132 Stat. 1467, provided that: “The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall take such steps as the Secretary determines are appropriate to publicize the Specialty Education Loan Repayment Program established under subchapter VIII of chapter 76 of title 38, United States Code, as enacted by subsection (a).”

#### § 7692. Purpose

The purpose of the Specialty Education Loan Repayment Program is to assist, through the establishment of an incentive program for certain individuals employed in the Veterans Health Administration, in meeting the staffing needs of the Veterans Health Administration for physicians in medical specialties for which the Secretary determines recruitment or retention of qualified personnel is difficult.

(Added Pub. L. 115–182, title III, §303(a), June 6, 2018, 132 Stat. 1464.)

#### Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

##### NEEDS OF THE VHA

Pub. L. 115–182, title III, §303(c), June 6, 2018, 132 Stat. 1467, provided that: “In making determinations each year under section 7692 of title 38, United States Code, as enacted by subsection (a), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall consider the anticipated needs of the Veterans Health Administration during the period 2 to 6 years in the future.”

#### § 7693. Eligibility; preferences; covered costs

(a) **ELIGIBILITY.**—An individual is eligible to participate in the Specialty Education Loan Repayment Program if the individual—

- (1) will be eligible for appointment under section 7401 of this title to work in an occupation described in section 7692 of this title;  
(2) owes any amount of principal or interest under a loan, the proceeds of which were used by or on behalf of that individual to pay costs relating to a course of education or training which led to a degree that qualified the individual for the position referred to in paragraph (1); and

(3) is—

- (A) recently graduated from an accredited medical or osteopathic school and matched to an accredited residency program in a medical specialty described in section 7692 of this title; or  
(B) a physician in training in a medical specialty described in section 7692 of this title with more than 2 years remaining in such training.

(b) **PREFERENCES.**—In selecting individuals for participation in the Specialty Education Loan Repayment Program under this subchapter, the Secretary may give preference to the following:

- (1) Individuals who are, or will be, participating in residency programs in health care facilities—  
(A) located in rural areas;  
(B) operated by Indian tribes, tribal organizations, or the Indian Health Service; or  
(C) affiliated with underserved health care facilities of the Department.

(2) Veterans.

(c) **COVERED COSTS.**—For purposes of subsection (a)(2), costs relating to a course of education or training include—

- (1) tuition expenses;  
(2) all other reasonable educational expenses, including expenses for fees, books, equipment, and laboratory expenses; and  
(3) reasonable living expenses.

(Added Pub. L. 115–182, title III, §303(a), June 6, 2018, 132 Stat. 1464; amended Pub. L. 115–251, title II, §211(a)(12), Sept. 29, 2018, 132 Stat. 3176.)

#### Editorial Notes

##### AMENDMENTS

2018—Subsec. (a)(1). Pub. L. 115–251 substituted “will be eligible for appointment” for “is hired”.

#### Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

##### PREFERENCE

Pub. L. 115–182, title III, §303(d), June 6, 2018, 132 Stat. 1467, as amended by Pub. L. 115–251, title II, §211(b)(6)(A), Sept. 29, 2018, 132 Stat. 3176, provided that: “In granting preference under section 7693 of title 38, United States Code, as enacted by subsection (a), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall determine whether a facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs is underserved based on the criteria developed under section 401 of this Act [38 U.S.C. 8110 note].”

#### § 7694. Specialty education loan repayment

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Payments under the Specialty Education Loan Repayment Program shall consist of payments for the principal and interest on loans described in section 7682(a)(2) of this title for individuals selected to participate in the Program to the holders of such loans.

(b) **FREQUENCY OF PAYMENT.**—The Secretary shall make payments for any given participant in the Specialty Education Loan Repayment Program on a schedule determined appropriate by the Secretary.

(c) **MAXIMUM AMOUNT; WAIVER.**—(1) The amount of payments made for a participant under the Specialty Education Loan Repayment