

**TITLE 450. DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE
SERVICES
CHAPTER 1. ADMINISTRATION**

**SUBCHAPTER 13. BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FUND
[NEW]**

450:1-13-1. Purpose [NEW]

The purpose of this Subchapter is to set forth criteria and procedures for the disbursement of monies from the Behavioral Health Workforce Development Fund. All monies allocated to the Behavioral Health Workforce Development Fund by the Oklahoma Legislature will be appropriated to and budgeted for use by ODMHSAS for the purpose of repaying student loans for qualified behavioral health practitioners, increasing the number of psychiatric residencies, expanding licensure cohorts to increase the number of clinicians at master's level and above, and developing training, recruitment and supervision capacity. The aim of the fund is to increase the number of behavioral health practitioners providing services in underserved areas of the State by helping to recruit and retain qualified individuals.

450:1-13-3. Applicability [NEW]

This Subchapter is applicable to ODMHSAS and individual practitioners who are eligible for or applicants of student loan repayment and behavioral health graduate cohort programs funded through the Behavioral Health Workforce Development Fund.

450:1-13-5. Student Loan Repayment [NEW]

(a) **Eligibility.** ODMHSAS will provide student loan repayment to behavioral health practitioners in accordance with the rules in this Subchapter and state law. To be eligible for these funds the practitioner must:

- (1) Be a Licensed Behavioral Health Professional as defined in this Chapter. Licensure candidates are not eligible until fully licensed;
- (2) Be appropriately licensed and in good standing with the applicable state licensing entity;
- (3) Be an Oklahoma resident;
- (4) Be employed as a practitioner of clinical mental health and/or substance use disorder/addiction services at a behavioral health provider organization with a physical service location in the State of Oklahoma; and
- (5) Commit to providing direct clinical care in Oklahoma in a full-time (at least 32 hours per week) capacity for a period of two (2) years, or an equivalent amount of hours over a period of more than two (2) but not more than four (4) years. A minimum of twenty (20) hours per week over the employment period is required to be eligible.

(b) Eligibility does not guarantee that student loan repayment will be provided. Funds will be disbursed to eligible practitioners as funds are available through the Behavioral Health

Workforce Development Fund at the discretion of ODMHSAS. The following factors may be considered in the selection of which practitioners will receive student loan repayment:

- (1) Date of application submission;
- (2) Type of clinical services provided (e.g., primarily mental health or substance related; outpatient or inpatient);
- (3) Demographics of the service area and/or service recipients;
- (4) Eligibility for other loan repayment programs;
- (5) Number of prior applicants in the service area who have received repayment through the fund.

(c) **Application.** Applications for student loan repayment from the Behavioral Health Workforce Development Fund shall be submitted to ODMHSAS on a form and in a manner prescribed by the Commissioner or designee. The application must include the following:

- (1) Application form completed in full according to its instructions;
- (2) Proof of Oklahoma residency in the form of:
 - (A) An Oklahoma driver's license or identification card;
 - (B) An Oklahoma voter identification card; or
 - (C) A utility bill dated within three (3) months prior to the application date, excluding internet and cellular phone bills.
- (3) Documentation of current, valid license to practice in the State of Oklahoma by the appropriate licensing entity;
- (4) Verification of current employment with a behavioral health organization in Oklahoma, including number of hours worked per week;
- (5) Employer information, including name of organization and location(s) where the applicant will be providing services;
- (6) Job description and/or written documentation from an authorized representative of the employing organization describing the job duties; and
- (7) Signed Commitment Letter.

(d) Optional items that may be submitted with the application include:

- (1) Reference letters from previous or current employer(s); and
- (2) Documentation of additional certifications, credentials, and/or licenses related to behavioral health.

(e) **Disbursement.**

- (1) Successful applicants will be eligible to receive up to \$30,000 in direct student loan repayment over a maximum of four (4) years of eligible employment.
- (2) Full-time practitioners (at least thirty-two [32] hours per week over the employment period) will be eligible for an initial payment of up to \$20,000 after the completion of twenty-four (24) months of eligible employment. Subsequently, full-time practitioners may renew for a third year to receive an additional \$10,000 in student loan repayment.
- (3) For practitioners working less than full-time (twenty [20] to thirty-one [31] hours per week over the employment period) during the first two (2) years, initial student loan repayment will be provided in the amount of up to \$15,000 after the completion of twenty-four (24) months of eligible employment. Subsequently, part-time practitioners

may renew for a third year and fourth year to receive up to an additional \$7,500 in student loan repayment for each additional year.

(4) Payment is dependent upon the practitioner providing all requested information and documentation to substantiate employment and student loan information. Failure of the practitioner to provide requested items within requested timeframes may delay or terminate eligibility for student loan repayment.

(5) Funds will be paid directly by ODMHSAS to the current lender associated with the student loan and shall not exceed the total student loan debt.

450:1-13-7. Tuition Assistance [NEW]

(a) **Eligibility.** ODMHSAS will provide tuition assistance to eligible applicants selected for an approved behavioral health graduate level cohort program with a university partner established by ODMHSAS which will provide an educational path to become a Licensed Behavioral Health Professional as defined in this Chapter. Funds will be disbursed to eligible applicants as funds are available through the Behavioral Health Workforce Development Fund at the discretion of ODMHSAS. To be eligible for these funds the applicant must:

(1) Possess a bachelor's degree with an undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher. Some exceptions may apply for GPAs of 2.5 – 2.99;

(2) Be attending or planning to attend a master's level program with a university partner established by ODMHSAS;

(3) Be an Oklahoma resident;

(4) Be employed at a behavioral health provider organization with a physical service location in the State of Oklahoma; and

(5) Commit to continued employment with a behavioral health provider organization with a physical service location in Oklahoma in a full-time (at least thirty-two [32] hours per week) capacity for a period of two (2) years, or an equivalent number of hours over a period of more than two (2) but not more than four (4) years. A minimum of twenty (20) hours per week over the employment period is required to be eligible.

(b) Eligibility does not guarantee that tuition assistance will be provided. Funds will be disbursed to accepted applicants as funds are available through the Behavioral Health Workforce Development Fund at the discretion of ODMHSAS. The following factors may be considered in the selection of which applicants will receive tuition assistance:

(1) Date of application submission;

(2) Type of clinical services provided by the employer of the applicant;

(3) Demographics of the service area and/or service recipients of the employer of the applicant; and

(4) Number of prior applicants in the service area who have received tuition assistance through the fund.

(c) **Application.** Applications for tuition assistance from the Behavioral Health Workforce Development Fund for an approved behavioral health graduate cohort program with an established university partner shall be submitted to ODMHSAS on a form and in a manner prescribed by the Commissioner or designee. The application must include the following:

(1) Application form completed in full according to its instructions;

(2) Proof of Oklahoma residency in the form of:

(A) An Oklahoma driver's license or identification card;

(B) An Oklahoma voter identification card; or

(C) A utility bill dated within three (3) months prior to the application date, excluding internet and cellular phone bills.

(3) Verification of current employment with a behavioral health organization in Oklahoma, including number of hours worked per week;

(4) Employer information, including name of organization and location(s) where the applicant is working;

(5) Three reference letters from previous or current employer(s); and

(6) Signed Commitment Letter.

(d) Optional items that may be submitted with the application include documentation of additional certifications, credentials, and/or licenses related to behavioral health.

(e) Disbursement.

(1) Successful applicants for the graduate cohort program will be eligible to receive tuition assistance in an amount not to exceed \$2,500 per semester, paid directly to the university established by ODMHSAS on a semester-by-semester basis. The Behavioral Health Workforce Development Fund shall not pay for the cost of textbooks, supplies, transportation, meals, lodging or any of the expenses or fees incurred in pursuing the education program.

(2) Participants shall maintain a passing grade for each of the required courses. The fund will not pay for the cost to retake a failed course.

(3) Participants shall remain employed to a qualified behavioral health provider and maintain their scheduled hours of a minimum of twenty (20) hours per week.

(4) Payment is dependent upon the participant providing all requested information and documentation to substantiate employment and hours worked. Failure of the participant to provide requested items within requested timeframes may delay or terminate eligibility for tuition assistance.

(5) Funds will be paid directly by ODMHSAS to the established university for the behavioral health graduate cohort program and shall not exceed the tuition amount.