

The National Center on Service Obligations (NCSO) tracks the service obligation fulfillment of scholars/obligees who receive Personnel Development Grant Program funds through their Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) for special education training.

NCSO tracks scholars/obligees funded by fiscal year (FY) 2005 and later grants.

The NCSO Web site provides grant rules and frequently asked questions (FAQs) to assist project directors.

**Please see the links below.**

[Http://www.ServiceObligations.ed.gov](http://www.ServiceObligations.ed.gov)

P. O. Box 2335  
Hyattsville, MD 20784-2324  
Phone: 1-800-285-NCSO (6276)  
E-mail:  
[info@serviceobligation.org](mailto:info@serviceobligation.org)  
Fax: 1-301-576-5187  
M-F 9-5 pm

For TTY dial 711 for your state's Relay Service Provider or dial extension 3 when connected.

#### **2006 Regulations**

<http://www.serviceobligations.ed.gov/2006regs.pdf>

#### **2005 Requirements**

<http://www.serviceobligations.ed.gov/2005Regs.pdf>

#### **Frequently Asked Questions**

<http://www.serviceobligations.ed.gov/FAQ.cfm>

# NCSO Helpful Hints

Project Director Conference  
July 19 – 21, 2010

This handout provides NCSO's Helpful Hints for Personnel Development Grant project directors. Items 4 through 10 below refer to the most common frequently asked questions (FAQ) available on the NCSO Web site and for your convenience, the FAQ and full text are provided in this handout. NCSO encourages you to read all the FAQs on the Web site.

#### **1. Grant Rules**

Grants funded in FY 2005 are governed by the 2005 Requirements and grants funded in FY 2006 and thereafter, are governed by the 2006 Regulations. To determine which year your grant was funded identify the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> characters in the grant number (i.e. H325K**07**1234 funded in FY 07). There is a list of FAQs for each set of grant rules.

#### **2. Provide NCSO's contact Information**

IHEs should provide scholars/obligees with NCSO contact information and encourage scholars/obligees to contact NCSO Helpdesk for regulatory and technical assistance.

#### **3. Provide Service Obligation requirements, regulations and FAQs**

The grant requirements, regulations and FAQs are available on the NCSO Web site. You can also download PDF versions of these items.

#### **4. Pre-scholarship Agreements and Exit Certifications**

Please refer to FAQ #6 on page 2 and FAQ #35 on page 3 of this handout and also available on the NCSO Web site.

#### **5. Additional service obligation requirements imposed by IHES**

Please refer to FAQ #7 on page 2 of this handout, and it is also available on the NCSO Web site.

#### **6. Service Obligation Calculation**

Please refer to FAQ #10 on page 2 of this handout, and it is also available on the NCSO Web site.

#### **7. Grace Period**

Please refer to FAQ #14 on page 2 of this handout, and it is also available on the NCSO Web site.

#### **8. Provide Social Security numbers (SSN)**

Please refer to FAQ #19 on page 2 of this handout, and it is also available on the NCSO Web site.

#### **9. Funding foreign scholars/obligees**

Please refer to FAQ #34 on page 3 of this handout, and it is also available on the NCSO Web site.

#### **10. Repayment of grant funds to U.S. Department of Education (ED)**

Please refer to FAQ #39 on page 4 of this handout, and it is also available on the NCSO Web site.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS SERVICE OBLIGATION AND REPAYMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTS AWARDED IN FISCAL YEAR 2005**

### **6. Are scholars'/obligees' pre-scholarship agreements and exit certifications legally binding?**

Yes. Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) are responsible for the accuracy of the pre-scholarship agreements and exit certifications which are legally binding documents as long as they are consistent with Section E (a) and (c) in the 2005 Requirements available on the NCSO Web site at (<http://www.serviceobligations.ed.gov/ProgramRegs2005.cfm#agreement>). Please refer to frequently asked question (FAQ) 35 regarding the information to be provided in exit certification.

### **7. Can Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) add stipulations or specific requirements to the service obligation of scholars?**

For scholars who are funded 100 percent by an IDEA grant, Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) are not allowed to extend the scope of or create any stipulations to the IDEA service obligation requirements that apply. However, with respect to any additional funds that an IHE may give to a scholar who is not 100 percent funded by an IDEA grant, Federal law and regulations do not prohibit the IHE from adding its own service obligation or other requirements to those additional funds.

### **10. How is the length of the service obligation calculated?**

The length of the service obligation is the full-time equivalent of 2 years for each academic year of scholarship assistance provided. (See question 2 for definition of academic year). If a scholar receives scholarship assistance for a portion of an academic year, then his or her service obligation will be calculated proportionally. For example, if a scholar receives assistance for three semesters at a grantee institution that considers an academic year to be two semesters, then the scholar's service obligation is three years. The service obligation is based upon the "accumulated academic years" of training for which the scholar received assistance, not the amount of time the scholar spends in the program.

### **14. How long do scholars/obligees have to complete their service obligations?**

The period of time within which any individual who owes a service obligation (an obligee) must fulfill his or her obligation is calculated by determining the sum of the number of years of service owed plus a grace period of three additional years.

### **19. What is the legal basis for the U.S. Department of Education, to require Institutions of Higher Education to provide Social Security numbers to the National Center on Service Obligations, operated by contractor, Optimal Solutions Group?**

In order to ensure that scholars/obligees comply with their service obligation (See section 662(h)(3)(A) of IDEA), ED requires IHEs to provide to NCSO the SSNs of students who receive OSEP Personnel Development Program scholarships. This is authorized under 34 CFR § 99.31(a)(4)(i), which states that an IHE may disclose personally identifiable information from records of a student without the student's consent if the disclosure is in connection with financial aid of the student and is necessary to "[e]nforce the terms and conditions of the aid." Given that the funding provided to scholars/obligees in the

Personnel Development Program by their IHEs is considered financial assistance, and ED through NCSO is responsible for tracking the service obligation requirement and/or repayment of that financial assistance, this provision authorizes IHEs to provide the SSNs of scholars/obligees to NCSO.

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

#### **34. Can Personnel Development Program grants be used to fund foreign scholars?**

Yes. A scholar/obligee must satisfy the citizenship/resident requirements outlined in the 2005 Requirements (<http://www.serviceobligations.ed.gov/ProgramRegs2005.cfm>) governing their grant. Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) are responsible for ensuring the compliance of their scholars with these requirements and, if necessary, must seek clarity with the Department of Homeland Security to ensure that the proper documentation has been completed.

IHEs must ensure that the scholar/obligee:

1. Is a citizen or national of the United States; or
2. Is a permanent resident of:
  - a. Puerto Rico, United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; or
  - b. The Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, or the Republic of Palau during the period in which these entities are eligible to receive an award under the Personnel Development to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities program; or
3. Provides and maintains evidence for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that the individual is—
  - a. A lawful permanent resident of the United States; or
  - b. In the United States for other than a temporary purpose with the intention of becoming a citizen or permanent resident

#### **35. What is the "exit certification" that the grantee must receive from the scholar when a scholar completes his or her program?**

The grantee must provide notification (certification) to the scholar at the time of exit from the program that includes all of the obligee's obligations under section E of the notice. Upon receipt of such notification, the obligee must also certify, in writing, that the information is correct (see section 304.23(c)). The required certification must identify—

1. the number of years the individual obligee must to work to satisfy the service obligation requirements of the notice;
2. the total amount of scholarship assistance received that is subject to the work-or-repayment requirements;
3. the time period during which the obligee must satisfy the service obligation;
4. all other obligations of the obligee, as applicable.

Upon receipt of such written certification from individual obligees, the grantee administering the grant through which individual scholarships have been provided must enter in the NCSO web-based Service Obligation Tracking System (SOTS) the information contained in items 1 through 4 above, each

obligee's name, address, e-mail address, social security number, and complete written certification as well as any other information that is necessary to carry out the Secretary's functions under section 662 of IDEA. If the grantee is aware that any scholar has chosen not to fulfill or will be unable to fulfill the obligation under section F(d) of the notice, the grantee must enter the relevant information in the SOTS when the scholar exits the program.

**39. Who collects the funds repaid by an obligee if he or she does not fulfill the service obligation through eligible employment?**

If an obligee does not comply with the service obligation requirements by fulfilling the terms of his or her obligation, ED is responsible for collecting the funds (scholarship, interest, and collection costs) according to a schedule established by the Secretary. Interest is charged in accordance with the Debt Collection Act of 1982, as amended 31 U.S.C. 3717.