



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

December 8, 2008

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

CB-08-14

Subject: Medical Technician Loan Cancellation Benefit in the Federal Perkins Loan Program

Summary: This letter clarifies the eligibility criteria for the medical technician cancellation benefit provided in the Federal Perkins Loan Program.

Dear Colleague:

Under section 465(a)(2)(H) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, (HEA) a Perkins Loan borrower may qualify for a medical technician cancellation for full-time employment as a medical technician providing health care services. The term "medical technician" is defined in Perkins Loan program regulations as: "An allied health professional (working in fields such as therapy, dental hygiene, medical technology, or nutrition) who is certified, registered, or licensed by the appropriate State agency in the State in which he or she provides health care services. An allied health professional is someone who assists, facilitates, or complements the work of physicians, and other specialists in the health care system." See 34 C.F.R. §674.51(l). Note that not all allied health professionals, even those certified, registered, or licensed by a State agency, meet the Perkins Loan definition of "medical technician."

To help schools determine whether a borrower's profession qualifies for the medical technician cancellation, we previously advised schools to consult a list of allied health professions available on the Web site of the American Medical Association (AMA). Recently, it has come to our attention that the AMA has expanded its list of allied health professions into a broader list of "health professions," which includes occupations beyond the scope of the statutory provision providing cancellation benefits to medical technicians. This change in the scope of the AMA's listing has confused some institutions in their administration of the medical technician cancellation and requires that we clarify and reaffirm the limited scope of the term "medical technician."

When the AMA expanded the scope of its list from "allied health professions" to the more general "health professions," it added occupations such as dentist, physician (Doctor of Medicine and Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine), podiatrist, psychologist, and veterinarian. The health professionals in these areas are not generally considered medical technicians and do not fit the definition or examples in 34 C.F.R. §674.51(l). Furthermore, authoritative sources such as the Association of Schools of the Allied Health Professions (ASAHP) and the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) do not classify these professions as allied health professions. Accordingly, this Dear Colleague Letter notifies schools that Perkins

borrowers in these health professions are not eligible for the cancellation for medical technicians.

We will remove the reference to the AMA's list from the definition of "medical technician" in the next edition of the Federal Student Aid Handbook. In place of the AMA's list of "health professions," we now recommend that schools and servicers consult the allied health page of the ExploreHealthCareers.org Web site, which is available at the following link:

<http://www.explorehealthcareers.org/en/Field.1.aspx>

This Web site provides valuable information on the allied health field, and features an overview of careers in allied health that has been reviewed and approved by ASAHP. Another useful resource is the Web site for CAAHEP which is available at the following link:

<http://www.caahep.org/>

While there is no one authoritative list of allied health professions, we believe that the information on the allied health field and the examples of allied health professions provided on these two Web sites will help schools to determine whether a Perkins borrower meets the eligibility criteria for a medical technician cancellation.

Should you have any questions concerning the guidance provided in this letter, please contact Pamela Moran at (202) 502-7732 or Brian Smith at (202) 502-7551.

Sincerely,



Cheryl A. Oldham

Acting Assistant Secretary

Office of Postsecondary Education