

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

**PURPOSE**

The Behavioral Health Workforce Scholarship Program is funded subject to the availability of funds and appropriation from the Massachusetts Legislature. The behavioral health workforce is identified as a priority workforce area. Supporting individuals in the behavioral health pipeline throughout their education and career development is essential to increasing the pool of available behavioral health professionals working to serve the needs of the Commonwealth. The Behavioral Health Workforce Scholarship program provides funds to Massachusetts public and private institutions of higher education (IHEs) to provide financial incentives for behavioral health students to complete graduate-level degree and graduate-level certificate programs and apply newly advanced skills to high need behavioral health settings in Massachusetts.

**DEFINITIONS**

**ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION**

An eligible institution is defined as a state-approved public (as identified in M.G.L. c. 15A, § 5), private, independent, for profit or nonprofit, institution located in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that (1) offers eligible graduate-level programs, and (2) are located in one of the Advancing Health Equity in Massachusetts Priority Geographies (AHEM) municipalities, or if not, are attended by an eligible student that currently lives in one of the AHEM municipalities. The following is a list of institutions that offer eligible graduate-level programs: ??

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE
ANNA MARIA COLLEGE
ASSUMPTION UNIVERSITY
BAY PATH UNIVERSITY
BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC
BOSTON COLLEGE
BOSTON GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PSYCHOANALYSIS INC
BOSTON UNIVERSITY
BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY
CAMBRIDGE COLLEGE
COLLEGE OF OUR LADY OF THE ELMS
EMMANUEL COLLEGE
FISHER COLLEGE
FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY
FRAMINGHAM STATE UNIVERSITY
GORDON COLLEGE

GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
HARVARD UNIVERSITY
LESLEY UNIVERSITY
MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
MCPHS UNIVERSITY
MERRIMACK COLLEGE
MGH INSTITUTE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS
NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
REGIS COLLEGE
SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY
SIMMONS UNIVERSITY
SMITH COLLEGE
SPRINGFIELD COLLEGE
SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY
TUFTS UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS-AMHERST
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS-BOSTON
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS-DARTMOUTH
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS-LOWELL
WESTERN NEW ENGLAND UNIVERSITY
WESTFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY
WILLIAM JAMES COLLEGE
WORCESTER STATE UNIVERSITY

**ELIGIBLE PROGRAM:**

Approved behavioral health graduate degree or graduate-level certificate programs, inclusive of mental health and substance use disorder (SUD)/opioid use disorder (OUD) treatment programs, listed below:

- Master's level Social Work
- Mental Health Counseling
- Substance Abuse Counseling
- Marriage and Family Therapy/Counseling
- Rehabilitation Counseling
- Master's level Psychology programs
- Psychoanalysis
- Master's level Psychiatric/Mental Health Nursing programs
- Master's level Pastoral Counseling programs

Or any other graduate-level programs that directly name behavioral health, mental health, or substance use treatment as its specific area of inquiry within the following CIP Codes:

<b>Program</b>	<b>CIP Code</b>
College Student Counseling and Personnel Services	13.1102
Student Counseling and Personnel Services, Other	13.1199
Pastoral Studies/Counseling	39.0701
Clinical Psychology	42.2801
Counseling Psychology	42.2803
School Psychology	42.2805
Educational Psychology	42.2806
Health/Medical Psychology	42.2810
Forensic Psychology	42.2812
Applied Behavior Analysis	42.2814
Clinical, Counseling and Applied Psychology, Other	42.2899
Social Work	44.0701
Youth Services/Administration	44.0702
Substance Abuse/Addiction Counseling	51.1501
Community Health Services/Liaison/Counseling	51.1504
Marriage and Family Therapy/Counseling	51.1505
Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy	51.1507
Mental Health Counseling/Counselor	51.1508
Mental and Social Health Services and Allied Professions, Other	51.1599
Community Health and Preventive Medicine.	51.2208
Maternal and Child Health	51.2209
Behavioral Aspects of Health	51.2212
Art Therapy/Therapist	51.2301
Music Therapy/Therapist	51.2305
Occupational Therapy/Therapist	51.2306
Therapeutic Recreation/Recreational Therapy	51.2309
Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling/Counselor	51.2310
Rehabilitation and Therapeutic Professions, Other	51.2399
Psychiatric/Mental Health Nurse/Nursing	51.3810
Geriatric Nurse/Nursing	51.3821

## **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

To be eligible for the Behavioral Health Workforce Scholarship program, the student must:

- a) be enrolled in an eligible institution, as defined;

- b) physically reside in Massachusetts for at least one year, as of the start of the enrolled term, with an intent to remain in Massachusetts consistent with Board of Higher Education (BHE) policy;
- c) be a U.S. Citizen, lawful permanent resident, or non-citizen eligible under Title IV regulations; or have an approved eligibility status designated by the BHE pursuant to the Massachusetts Tuition Equity Law<sup>1</sup> or otherwise;
- d) complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or, if ineligible to complete the FAFSA, then complete the Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid (MASFA);
- e) comply with financial aid verification requirements;
- f) not be in default on any federal or state student loans for attendance at any institution, or owe a refund for any previous state financial aid program;
- g) sign a Terms and Conditions Agreement to continue employment and commit to providing behavioral health services in Massachusetts upon completing the eligible certificate or graduate degree requirement, which shall be six months of service for each semester of award under this program, following completion of the program;
- h) enroll, as a matriculated student, on a full-time or part-time basis (minimum of 6 credits, or the equivalent) in an eligible graduate program of study leading to a certificate or graduate level degree;
- i) meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) according to institution's requirements and federal standards; and
- j) not be a recipient of funds under any of the following financial aid workforce programs: Tomorrow's Teachers Scholarship, High Demand Scholarship, Early Childhood Educators Scholarship, or the Paraprofessional Grant. Students who simultaneously apply and meet eligibility criteria for more than one of these workforce programs shall only be determined eligible for one program.

## **PROGRAM CONDITIONS**

- Disbursement of funds: Behavioral Health Workforce Scholarship funding is disbursed to institutions on a semester basis for students who meet all eligibility criteria, as certified by the institution.

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<sup>1</sup> M.G.L. c. 15A, Section 9, as amended by Section 11 of Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2023, and further amended by Section 22 of Chapter 140 of the Act of 2024 For information on the Massachusetts Tuition Equity Law see here: <https://www.mass.edu/tuitionequity>

- Payment of Behavioral Health Workforce Scholarship funds is sent directly to the institution from the Commonwealth's Comptroller's Office. Funds must be disbursed to students by the end of the academic year.
- The institution is required to report recipient, programmatic, and other data to the Department of Higher Education (DHE) upon request, and no less than on a quarterly basis.
- Institutions shall facilitate access to on-campus support services to students who receive assistance under the Behavioral Health Workforce Scholarship program, to promote persistence in and completion of their program of study.
- The institution is responsible for verifying student eligibility.
- Behavioral Health Workforce Scholarships may be awarded to support summer enrollment, if funds are available.
- Institutions are required, upon request, to submit data to the Department of Higher Education to demonstrate maintenance of fiscal effort in their commitment to institutional aid to students, while participating in the Behavioral Health Workforce Scholarship Program.

## **RECIPIENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

To remain eligible for the Behavioral Health Workforce Scholarship program, the student must:

- a) complete the scholarship application and sign a promissory note, annually, for continuation of scholarship funds;
- b) provide an official transcript at the conclusion of each academic year to confirm continued eligibility requirements for the program of study and satisfactory academic progress towards degree completion;
- c) sign a scholarship agreement to obtain certification and/or licensure and commit to working in Massachusetts for at least six months per academic semester of award under this program pursuant to the service commitment section below, and provided that failure to complete the required behavioral health work commitment will result in a repayment of funds as defined in said agreement;
- d) for individuals already employed in an eligible behavioral health setting, remain employed at that setting or another eligible behavioral health setting, and for individuals not yet employed in an eligible behavioral health setting, become employed in an eligible behavioral health setting within 6 months of completing an approved behavioral health graduate degree or graduate-level certificate;

- e) annually provide proof of employment to document fulfillment of the service obligation;
- f) acknowledge that this scholarship is considered repayment through service and in absence of fulfilling that commitment, the scholarship reverts to a loan that must be repaid by the scholarship recipient, per the terms of the promissory note; and
- g) acknowledge the set-forth repayment through service schedule, that 6 months of work will forgive one semester of scholarship.

## **AWARD VALUE**

Pursuant to an interagency service agreement between the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and the Department of Higher Education, the Board of Higher Education is authorized to award up to \$12,500 for tuition, fees, and stipends for each academic year in which a student enrolls in and makes satisfactory academic progress in an eligible program, up to a maximum of \$25,000 per recipient across two academic years; provided, and subject to appropriation and available funding, the Department of Higher Education may increase awards above these limits but not to exceed a student's total cost of attendance (tuition and fees minus all other non-loan aid). Behavioral Health Workforce Scholarship awards are subject to the availability of funding and appropriation by the Massachusetts legislature.

## **AWARD DISBURSEMENT**

Participating institutions must verify that each recipient is eligible in accordance with guidelines established for the Behavioral Health Workforce Scholarship program, and that the student is enrolled in an approved behavioral health program. Disbursement of awards will not be made until the student's signed promissory note has been received and approved by the Department of Higher Education.

Institutions are required to refund to the Department any funds that are deemed to have been improperly awarded and disbursed to recipients who are later determined to be ineligible for the program. Behavioral Health Workforce Scholarships may be awarded to support summer enrollment if funds are available and consistent with the same terms for service commitment as set forth below.

## **FORFEITURE OF SCHOLARSHIP AWARD**

Recipients of Behavioral Health Workforce Scholarships who fail to complete the behavioral health work commitment are required to repay all scholarship funds, as outlined in the promissory note.

## **AWARD PRIORITY**

In the event the fiscal year appropriation is not sufficient to permit a full award to each eligible applicant, awards shall be prioritized for to students meeting all of the award priority criteria noted as follows:

- Students who are culturally/linguistically diverse;
- Students who live in OR are completing programs in schools within Advancing Health Equity in Massachusetts Priority Geographies municipalities;
- Students who are incumbent healthcare workers seeking career advancement in behavioral health who are working at least 20 hours/week; and
- Students who are working in any area of healthcare (including behavioral health) at least 20 hours/week.

Subject to available funding, students that meet some of the criteria may also be eligible for a full award after students meeting all award priority criteria have been awarded. No partial awards will be made for any student.

## **SERVICE COMMITMENT**

All recipients shall commit to working in Massachusetts, for six months per each semester of scholarship received. The maximum service commitment is 24 months for recipients that receive four semesters of scholarship. Recipients shall work in one of the following settings:

- inpatient, outpatient, acute care, substance use treatment, community-based and clinic-based settings, or
- for state-run or state-contracted settings including, but not limited to, settings run or contracted by the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Developmental Services, and the Department of Children and Families, or the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, or
- any additional such settings the Executive Office of Health and Human Services designates as eligible to meet the service requirement of this scholarship program.

For individuals that are already employed in an eligible behavioral health setting upon completion of an eligible program, service in such setting shall begin to count towards this service obligation as of the completion of the program. For all individuals, the program completion date for this purpose shall be the last date of the last academic semester in which the individual completed all program requirements or the date of conferral on the graduate degree or graduate-level certificate, whichever is earlier.

## **ANNUAL REVIEW**

The Department of Higher Education is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the Behavioral Health Workforce Scholarship program. Institutions that have signed an agreement to participate in the Massachusetts State financial aid programs are required to share data for

all students with the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) or its designee, and the Office of Student Financial Assistance for this purpose. The program may be evaluated annually to determine any immediate impact or to determine if adjustments are required for various processes, such as disbursement of funds.

## **PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT**

All institutions receiving funds under the Behavioral Health Workforce Scholarship Program must have an active Massachusetts State Financial Aid Participation Agreement on file with the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA).

## **AUDIT REQUIREMENT**

- a) It shall be the responsibility of each college to maintain documentation of a recipient student's eligibility for the Behavioral Health Workforce Scholarship program.
- b) The Commissioner shall require each institution to furnish annually to the BHE a report detailing specific information regarding recipients of the Behavioral Health Workforce Scholarship program. OSFA will establish the timeline, specifications, and procedures for this report, which shall include the list of eligible institutions receiving allocations, the amount of funds allocated to each institution, the number and type of behavioral health degree programs supported at each institution by CIP code and credential level, the number of students supported by each program at each institution, aggregate demographic information about students participating in the program, enrollment status and graduation rates of students supported by each program, and student-level information including but not limited to employment status, role, and location.
- c) All financial books, records and documents pertaining to this Program shall, at all times, be open to inspection, review and audit by the Commissioner, the State Auditor or their authorized representatives who shall have access to the premises wherever such books, records, and documents are for seven years. An institution may retain such records for a period of five years, if approval is received from the Records Conservation Board in accordance with General Laws, Chapter 30, Section 42.