

Minnesota John R. Justice Loan Repayment Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q1: Why is three years of previous eligible service required to apply?

A1: Federal program guidelines establish general applicant eligibility requirements but also allow state agencies administering the program to include additional requirements. The State of Minnesota added this requirement in order to ensure applicants were committed to serving in their in the eligible service before committing to an additional three years of eligible service. The intent is to ensure selected recipients are those which are most likely to complete the requirements of the service agreement.

Q2: What if someone does not have three years of previous eligible service?

A2: Those who have served less than three years of eligible previous service are not eligible to apply. The federal government has recently improved the loan repayment options available to all federal student loan borrowers. In addition, some federal student loan borrowers who work in public and non-profit sectors may be eligible to for federal loan forgiveness through the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program. More information on federal student loan repayment options and the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program can be found at: <https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/repayment/repaying-101>.

Q3: What is considered eligible previous service?

A3: Applicants must have worked full-time, defined as at least 30 hours a week for a year, as one of the following for at least three previous years:

- Employee of the state of Minnesota or unit of local government (including tribal government) who prosecutes criminal or juvenile delinquency cases at the state or unit of local government level, including supervision, education, or training of other persons prosecuting such cases. Prosecutors who are employees of the federal government are not eligible; or
- Employee of the state of Minnesota or unit of local government (including tribal government) who provides legal representation to indigent persons in criminal or juvenile delinquency cases including supervision, education, or training of other persons providing such representation; or
- Employee of a nonprofit organization operating under a contract with Minnesota or unit of local government who devotes substantially all of the employee's full-time employment to providing legal representation to indigent persons in criminal or juvenile cases including supervision, education, or training of other persons providing such representation; or

- Employed in Minnesota as a full-time federal defender attorney in a defender organization pursuant to Subsection (g) of section 3006A of Title 18, United States Code, that provides legal representation to indigent persons in criminal or juvenile delinquency cases.

Q4: Does clerking for a judge count towards the three years of previous service as a public prosecutor or public defender?

A4: No, only service as a full-time public criminal prosecutor or public defender counts towards the three years of previous eligible service.

Q5: By what date do applicants have to have met the three years of previous service requirement to apply?

A5: To be eligible to apply, an applicant must have met the three years of previous service requirement by the end of the application period.

Q6: What if an applicant needs to update information provided on the application?

A6: If an applicant would like to update education loan or income information provided on the original application, please email GWI.OHE@state.mn.us.

Q7: What if my federal student loans have been consolidated with private student loans into a private consolidation loan?

A7: If an applicant has a private consolidated educational loan, it must be listed on the application as a private educational loan regardless of whether or not some federal student debt was included in the consolidation.

If an applicant is selected for an award, all the loans in a consolidated educational loan must be either Federal Stafford Loans, Federal Direct Loans, Federal PLUS loans (not borrowed to fund your child's education) or Federal Perkins Loans in order for it to be an eligible loan to which the repayment award can be paid.

Q8: Are there tax consequences associated with receipt of JRJ benefits?

A8: The Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Minnesota Office of Higher Education do not provide legal advice on tax issues. The information available at the websites below is provided for informational purposes only. Beneficiaries of John R. Justice Student Loan Repayment Program benefits remain responsible for, and should consult with their tax advisors for advice on, any tax obligations resulting from benefits paid on their behalf. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has provided a response to BJA's John R. Justice (JRJ) Tax Issue inquiry made on December 9, 2010. The information regarding any tax liability associated with receiving a repayment award is available at: https://www.bja.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?Program_ID=65.

Q9: Am I still eligible for Federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness if I receive a John R Justice Loan Repayment Program award?

A9: Yes, however it is important to remember **Federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)** requires 120 qualifying monthly payments under a qualifying repayment plan while working full-time for a qualifying employer. You cannot complete the 120 qualifying monthly payments requirement faster by making larger payments. If you receive a John R Justice Loan Repayment Program award, be sure to provide payment instructions when you use your award to make a lump-sum payment to a qualified student loan.

Specifically, you should state that the excess is not intended to cover future installments, which will ensure you continue to be obligated to make future payments over subsequent months. Each loan servicer provides, on the billing statement, information regarding how you must provide payment instructions.

For more information about Federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness visit: <https://studentaid.gov/pslf/>

Q10: Where can I find out more information about John R Justice Loan Repayment Program?

A10: The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) provides more information via the FAQ available at: <https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/media/document/FY21-JRJ-FAQs-December-2020.pdf>.

Q11: Where can I find more information about how to repay my student loans?

A11: Additional information about repayment plans may be found at: <https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/repayment/repaying-101>