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PRESS RELEASE



FROM THE LOUISIANA OFFICE OF STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

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LOSFA action mitigates effects of Hurricane Katrina on students, postsecondary institutions

In response to the unprecedented devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) has taken extraordinary measures to address the disaster's impact on students and educational institutions in affected areas.

For the student aid programs administered by LOSFA, the following guidance is provided to address the many issues arising from this disaster.

Tuition Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)

For TOPS, "displaced students" are:

- Those students who were enrolled in a high school in the parishes affected by Hurricane Katrina, or
- TOPS recipients and students eligible for TOPS whose home of record is in the parishes affected by Hurricane Katrina or who were enrolled in a postsecondary institution located in one of those parishes.

- more -

LOSFA Action
Add 1

- A. For the 2005-06 Academic Year, a blanket one-year exception to the Continuous Full-Time Enrollment Requirement will be granted to displaced students. This means that students who were enrolled at an institution in the areas affected by the hurricane or whose home address was in those areas, will retain their eligibility for TOPS even if they do not enroll, enroll part-time, transfer to another institution (in-state or out-of-state) or they do not complete 24 hours in this academic year. TOPS eligible students whose ZIP Code shows them to be residents of the affected parishes will be automatically granted an exception on the LOSFA system without having to submit a formal request.
- B. Displaced students eligible for TOPS, who first enrolled at an institution affected by Hurricane Katrina and subsequently transferred to another institution as full-time students, remain eligible. The gaining eligible Louisiana institution may bill LOSFA for TOPS awards due full-time students at the gaining institution rate.
- C. For the 2005-06 Academic Year, displaced students eligible for TOPS, who first enrolled at an institution affected by Hurricane Katrina and subsequently transferred to another institution as part-time students, will remain eligible. The gaining eligible Louisiana institution will be permitted to bill LOSFA for TOPS awards for part-time students at the gaining institution rate, if the student authorizes the institution to do so. Institutions must use "KP" as special student coding when billing for these part-time students. Payment for part-time enrollment in a semester (term) will result in a reduction of the student's TOPS eligibility by one full semester (term).

Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (LEAP)

LEAP funds initially allocated for this academic year to institutions whose opening dates cannot yet be determined are being reallocated to all other eligible institutions. Enrolling students who have been displaced from an institution in the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina should be given priority by the gaining institution when awarding these additional need-based funds.

Student Tuition Assistance and Revenue Trust (START)

Scheduled disbursements from the START Saving Program, Louisiana's "529" college savings plan, that were payable to an institution that is temporarily closed, have been canceled pending further direction from owners of the saving accounts.

- more -

LOSFA Action
Add 2

Rockefeller State Wildlife Scholarship

Displaced students who present themselves to the financial aid office as Rockefeller State Wildlife Scholarship awardees will continue to be eligible to receive those funds even if the receiving institution does not offer a corresponding curriculum. The financial aid office should contact Joyce Price, Administrator, LOSFA Special Programs at (800) 259-5626, Ext. 3219, for information. Note: For the Rockefeller obligation to be discharged, the student must complete the degree in the appropriate field of study as stated in their promissory note.

TOPS Tech Early Start

Displaced high school students who had funds reserved through the TOPS Tech Early Start Portal may have those funds transferred to another campus if requested. The campus that the student is transferring to should contact Joyce Price, Administrator, LOSFA Special Programs at (800) 259-5626, Ext. 3219, for instructions.

TOPS Teacher Service Repayment

Teachers whose teaching service for repayment of their TOPS Teacher Awards was disrupted due to school closings in affected parishes should contact Joyce Price, Administrator, LOSFA Special Programs at (800) 259-5626, Ext. 3219, for forbearance information.

Questions relating to this information and guidance should be directed to LOSFA's public information representatives at (800) 259-5626, Ext. 1012, or in the Baton Rouge area at 922-1012, or by email at custserv@osfa.state.la.us.