



Student Loan Debt Relief: Do Your Homework

1. Never pay for information about how to pay back your student loans.

If someone approaches you to assist you in this process for a fee, it is likely a scam—the law prohibits upfront fees for assistance with consumer debt. There are many legitimate services that provide their assistance with student loan debt for free, including:

- o Consumer Financial Protection Bureau: www.consumerfinance.gov
- o National Consumer Law Center's Student Loan Borrower Assistance: <http://www.studentloanborrowerassistance.org/>
- o U.S. Department of Education: www.studentaid.ed.gov

2. Learn about your repayment options.

Your options depend on the types of student loans you have and your individual circumstances. To start, review your records about the student loans you owe, including whether the loans are federal or private.

- o If you do not know whether you have federal or private loans, visit the Department of Education's National Student Loan Data System at https://nslds.ed.gov/nslds/nslds_SA/ or call the Department of Education's Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-433-3243 or 1-800-730-8913 (TDD). (Note: This website provides information about your federal loans only. If you need information about your private loans, you must contact your servicer—the entity to whom you make your payments. See below in #3 for information on identifying your servicer.)
- o For federal loan recipients, the following resources will also provide additional information about repayment options:
 - U.S. Department of Education (check the "Repayment Estimator" as a handy tool): <http://studentaid.ed.gov/repay-loans/understand/plans/pay-as-you-earn>
 - Federal Student Aid: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/>
 - www.studentloans.gov

3. After you have studied your options, then contact your servicer—the entity to whom you make your payments. (If you are behind on your payments, you may need to contact your debt collector instead.)

- o The U.S. Department of Education provides information about who loan servicers are and what they do. Visit <https://studentaid.ed.gov/repay-loans/understand/servicers>.
- o If you feel you are not getting appropriate answers from your servicer, you should ask for a supervisor or your servicer's complaint or ombudsman division.

4. If you are experiencing a problem with your student loan servicer or debt collector, contact:

- o Consumer Financial Protection Bureau: <http://www.consumerfinance.gov/>
- o Student Loan Ombudsman of the U.S. Department of Education:
 - Call 1-877-557-2575, or
 - Visit www.ed.gov
- o Illinois Attorney General's Student Loan Debt Helpline:
 - 1-800-455-2456; TTY: 1-800-964-3013