

COVID-19 Does This Impact Your Education or Service Obligation with Indian Health Service Scholarship Program?

We understand the Coronavirus pandemic continues to unfold and may affect your ability to meet your education or service obligation. We are fully supporting you with flexibility in our program requirements so participants can focus on facing this public health emergency while remaining in compliance with your obligations.

Whom should I contact for information related to COVID-19?

If you are a recipient of an Indian Health Service Scholarship or performing your service obligation, please contact your assigned [Program Analyst](#) by email to discuss options.

Here are some scenarios, along with responses, that could affect your program requirements:

Students currently in school:

1. My school closed temporarily, cancelled classes, changed curriculum to online, changed graduation dates, changed exam dates, etc. What should I do?

Please contact your [Program Analyst](#) by email for questions or concerns regarding IHS Scholarship requirements while in school. Scholarship funds can be applied to online coursework. We will collaborate with you and your school during this pandemic crisis.

2. Will I still receive IHS Scholarship funding?

As long as you are in compliance with IHS Scholarship requirements and making satisfactory academic progress, you will continue to receive funding. School invoices must be uploaded to the [Scholar Portal](#), as well as all other documentation. Please upload [required reporting documentation](#) to continue to receive your monthly stipend. We cannot accept documents via mail. Review the [Student Handbook](#) and contact your assigned analyst to learn more about the specific documents required of you.

3. My advisor is unable to sign a required document for the IHS Scholarship due to a school closure. What should I do?

We understand there may be delays and/or challenges in obtaining appropriate verification documentation because of the COVID-19.

If you and/or your site's point of contact experience issues completing verification documentation due to COVID-19, contact a [Program Analyst](#) to discuss alternate options for obtaining verification forms and/or request a verification deadline extension.

4. *Are you making IHS Scholarship awards during the COVID-19 pandemic?*

The Indian Health Service (IHS) Scholarship program is currently processing scholarship awards for the upcoming academic year beginning in August 2020. The team is working hard to ensure that there are no interruptions in issuing these important awards during the COVID-19 pandemic. Current scholarship recipients should expect to receive award letters by the end of May and new scholarship awardees should expect to receive letters by the end of June. The team will process payments for tuition, fees, and stipends on time.

Students currently in a service obligation:

1. I received notice that the facility at which I work will be temporarily closed and am required to take leave/furlough/reduced hours/laid off.

Please consult with your [Program Analyst](#) on the documentation that may need to be uploaded to the [Scholar Portal](#). Participants who exceed or anticipate exceeding their allotted 7 weeks (35 workdays) of leave may request a suspension of their service obligation (up to six months at a time). This will allow participants to remain compliant, while extending their obligation end date by a timeframe equal to the approved suspension period.

2. I am working on my post-doctoral training or in residency and was informed that my training will be temporarily suspended due to the pandemic.

Please consult with your [Program Analyst](#) on the documentation that may need to be uploaded to the [Scholar Portal](#). Participants who exceed or anticipate exceeding their allotted 7 weeks (35 workdays) of leave may request a suspension of their service obligation (up to six months at a time). This will allow participants to remain compliant, while extending their obligation end date by a timeframe equal to the approved suspension period.

3. *If a clinician's employment status is affected (working offsite, changed to telehealth/telemedicine).*

Scholarship recipients may request approval to provide clinical service via telehealth/telemedicine to accommodate infection control, social distancing, or other appropriate measure to assist in meeting recommended outbreak

reduction/control measures. If approved, IHS Scholarship recipient providers may provide patient care in an approved alternative setting (throughout the duration of the national emergency declaration).

Please note: While flexibilities are appropriate given the current emergency, completion of the service obligation remains required. Waivers may be granted only if you demonstrate that compliance with your commitment is permanently impossible or that it would involve an extreme hardship such that enforcement of the commitment would be unconscionable.

A waiver application will be emailed to you upon your written request. Waivers are rarely granted, and their availability is not triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. It will require documentation of extremely compelling circumstances.

If you default on your service obligation and you have established payment plans, but are unable to make monthly payments due to COVID-19 related issues, you should contact the Debt Collection Center to discuss options for a suspension of payments.

Requests must be submitted in writing to PscDebtServicing@psc.hhs.gov and include the following information: home and/or work address; phone numbers; and, why you are requesting a suspension.

- Payments are not suspended until the request is approved by PSC in writing.
- The written response from PSC will clearly state that payments are suspended for a term of no longer than 90 days; and, debtors will have to request again if an additional suspension is needed.
- Debtors will be informed that interest will continue to accrue on their debt so they should try to pay the monthly interest accrual if possible.

No request for a suspension of payment will be approved over the telephone or from any email account other than PscDebtServicing@psc.hhs.gov.