

A Self-Directed Guide to Educational Debt Management for Residents by Paula Crow

INTRODUCTION

Facing student loans can seem daunting, confusing, and even downright frustrating. You have to know what your options are so you can make the best choices for you and your future. After all, let's be honest—there is a lot of money at stake. That is why we have created this step-by-step approach to how to take control of your loans and manage your debt.

Please note that this information is as accurate as possible at the time of writing but that because of the changing financial aid and legislative environment, it may be subject to change.

GET IT TOGETHER: 1-2-3-4

The first step to managing your educational debt is to organize your student loan records. Once you have all of your materials in order and in one place, you will be able to make better, more informed decisions about how to manage your debt.

Step 1: Identify Who You Borrowed From and Who Services Those Loans

If you have kept good records, you might already know the answers to these questions. Don't despair if you do not have this information at your fingertips, though. You have two great resources:

- Your medical school's financial aid office. They can help you to identify who you borrowed your loans from and who services those loans.
- [The National Student Loan Data System \(NSLDS\)](#) is the US Department of Education's central database for student aid. It is a repository for all federal student loan data. If you have Federal and/or Direct Subsidized, Unsubsidized Stafford, Federal Perkins, PLUS, and/or Federal or Direct Consolidation Loans, they will show up here. Other non-federal loans (e.g., private, alternative loans, institutional loans) will not be listed on the NSLDS Web site. You will need to track these loans down separately either by consulting with your medical school financial aid office or by contacting the lender.

Now that you know who your lender is, the next step is to find out who services the loan(s). Your original lender might have sold your loan(s) to a loan servicer. Do not be alarmed. This happens all the time. It does not mean that your loan amount will increase. The terms of the loan should not change.

A **loan servicer** is the organization that works with borrowers on repayment. But that is not all they do. Before beginning your residency or any time your contact information changes, you will need to provide them with your new address and contact information. Also, they will help you handle your deferment and forbearance options. To find out who services your loans, contact your lender.

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