



Work Commitment: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

How long do I have to find a job before I am expected to pay back any expenses?

All graduates/completers have 6 months after graduation or completion of program to find employment in a Chicago Early Learning (CEL) program. All cases will be reviewed on individual basis should you not be able to find employment within 6 months. In partnership with the Chicago Mayor's Office, the CELWS team is working to centralize access to resources for employment through the CEL website. Scholarship advisors at your respective Institution of Higher Education (IHE) will also inform you of career fairs you can attend.

When does the 3-year period begin/end and must it be consecutive? *Yes, the 3-year work commitment must be consecutive. Should there be a medical/family emergency that would prevent you from fulfilling this commitment consecutively you should reach out to the CELWS Admin team at scholarships@chilearn.org. All cases will be reviewed individually and documentation should be provided if necessary.*

How is my employment verified? *A survey will be sent out to all graduates/completers on a yearly basis. This is a mandatory form that must be filled out regarding employment status. If employment status changes at any time before official verification is sent, it is the individual's responsibility to reach out and update their status. Individuals can e-mail scholarships@chilearn.org.*

Are the 3 years of commitment based on a school, calendar or academic year? *The 3-year commitment is dependent on your CEL program's definition of a full year. Some programs run year-round and some programs run on an academic school calendar.*

What happens if I lose my job or go on FMLA/Maternity Leave? *In the event that an individual should go on FMLA/Maternity leave, individuals are able to finish their commitment upon return. If circumstances do allow an individual to return, they should contact the CELWS Admin team at scholarships@chilearn.org. All cases will be reviewed individually.*

What if I have to move out of the city/state? *All graduates/completers are expected to fulfill their 3- year work commitment at a Chicago Early Learning program. All graduates/completers must sign a Commitment letter upon receiving their award. If graduates/completers are not able to fulfill their commitment, repayment of scholarship procedures will take place.*

How much and how will I be asked to pay back if I don't meet the requirement? *The amount the student will be required to pay back will be pro-rated according to the percentage of the 3-year work commitment, which was completed by the individual.*

What if I am working while I complete my degree/endorsement/program? Does that count towards the work commitment period? *No, the 3-year work commitment begins after graduation or completion of your approved education program. This is clearly stated on the commitment letter that all students sign upon scholarship award.*

What if I own a family child care business? *As long as your family child care business is a CEL program, you may continue to fulfill your 3-year work commitment at your child care business. If you are unsure if your family child care business is a CEL site, please visit the [Chicago Early Learning](#) website to verify whether the site is CEL funded.*

What if I retire before my 3-year work commitment is complete? *The commitment letter that is signed during scholarship award onboarding clearly states that ALL graduates/completers must commit to be in the workforce for a minimum of 3 years after graduation or completion of program. If the 3-year work commitment is not something that can be completed, an individual should not apply and will not be eligible for CELWS.*

What if I am a licensed teacher and I am asked to move up grade bands (CPS)? *The CELWS 3-year work commitment is required to be completed in a Birth- Pre-k classroom. No exceptions will be made for licensed teachers. After the 3-year work commitment is completed, licensed teachers may choose to move to older grade bands.*

Will someone help me find a job after I graduate/complete my program? *All students are encouraged to reach out to their advisors and contact career centers at their college/university for work resources and postings. All IHEs have different resources and events, which assist students with work opportunities. Additionally, in partnership with the Chicago Mayor's Office, the CELWS team is working to centralize access to resources for employment through the CEL website.*

How do I know if my place of employment is CEL-funded? What if my place of employment loses its funding? *Individuals are encouraged to ask their Director/Fiscal Manager/ Principal/ Administrator what the funding stream(s) of their program are to ensure that they are a CEL approved site. Additionally, individuals are encouraged to visit the [Chicago Early Learning](#) website to verify whether their site is CEL.*

What if there is a change in my job location/position? *All graduates/completers are required to fulfill their 3-year work commitment at a Birth through Pre-k CEL site. Should there be a change in your job location/position, please e-mail scholarships@chilearn.org to update your records.*

Am I required to fulfill the 3-year work commitment if I only need a few courses to complete my degree/program? *Regardless of the number of courses taken, all scholarship recipients are required to fulfill a 3-year work commitment upon graduation at a Birth through Pre-k CEL site.*

Do I need to be a classroom teacher to satisfy the work commitment? May I fulfill the commitment working as a center director, parent educator, etc.? *No, you do not have to be a classroom teacher. The CELW Scholarship is designed to support a diverse population and careers within Early Childhood (birth through Pre-k). If you are unsure of a specific role/title, please reach out to scholarships@chilearn.org.*

What if my spouse and/or I are in the military and are re-assigned, and we need to re-locate out of Chicago? *If this situation arises, please contact the CELWS Administration team at scholarships@chilearn.org to discuss further. All cases will be reviewed on an individual basis. Documentation may be required.*

Do I have to work at Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to satisfy the work commitment? *No, any site that is considered a [CEL site](#), whether Chicago Public Schools (CPS) or a Community-based organization (CBO), will fulfill the work commitment. All 3-5 Pre-k classrooms in Chicago Public Schools are considered CEL work sites.*

What happens if I lose my job due to COVID-19? *If you should lose your job due to COVID -19, you should e-mail scholarships@chilearn.org immediately. All cases will be reviewed on an individual basis.*