

Education Debt Consumer Assistance Program (EDCAP)

2019-2023 Program Report

Helping New Yorkers manage and
eliminate student loan debt.



Executive Summary

In New York, 2.4 million individuals carry an average student loan debt exceeding \$41,000. Many student loan borrowers don't know where to find help navigating the complex student debt system and can fall victim to scams. EDCAP is here to help borrowers make informed decisions about managing and eliminating their student debt.

Since its establishment in 2019, the Education Debt Consumer Assistance Program (EDCAP) has made significant strides in addressing student debt issues in New York State:

- EDCAP's extensive outreach and educational campaigns have reached over 5.1 million New Yorkers, raising awareness and addressing key student debt topics.
- The program has conducted educational workshops for 18,888 borrowers and provided one-on-one counseling to 6,967 individuals across New York State, equipping them with knowledge and tools required to manage their student debt.
- EDCAP has also delivered over \$17 million in savings to borrowers through federal relief, forgiveness, and discharge programs, significantly reducing their financial burdens.

In 2022, the establishment of the EDCAP network, now comprised of 11 community based organizations (CBOs) geographically spread across the state, further enhanced localized support for borrowers. (See page 9 for list of CBOs)

Demographically diverse, EDCAP's clients span across age groups, income levels, and ethnic backgrounds, with a strong commitment to assisting individuals who are most adversely impacted by this debt—women, people of color, and older adults.

The **Community Service Society of New York (CSS)** set a precedent in 2019 by launching the Education Debt Consumer Assistance Program (EDCAP), the first-of-its-kind direct consumer assistance program for student loan borrowers in the US. Through a network of organizations, EDCAP serves federal and private loan borrowers across New York State, delivering tailored, unbiased assistance to empower individuals in managing their student debt effectively and improving their financial well-being.

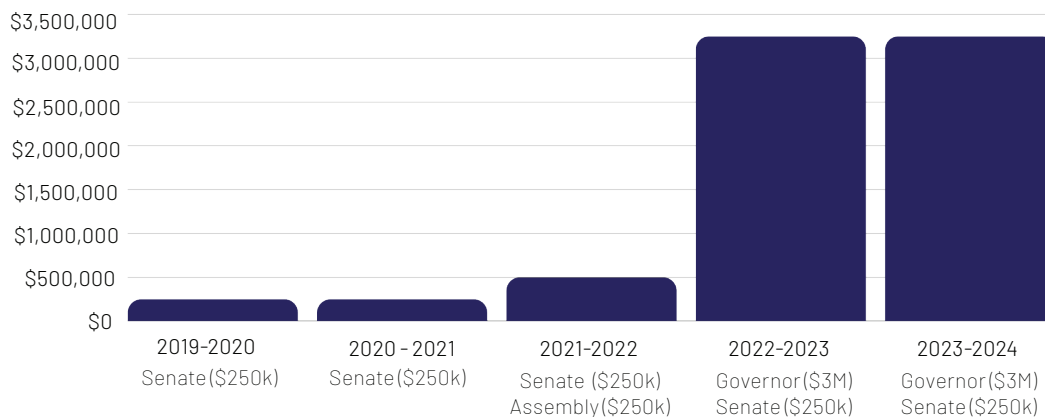
EDCAP's Model

EDCAP uses a "hub-and-spokes" service delivery model. With CSS as the "hub", EDCAP conducts extensive outreach and education and provides free, unbiased, one-on-one consumer assistance through its central, live-answer student debt "Helpline."

In 2022, EDCAP received \$3.25 million in funding from the Governor and State Legislature allowing it to expand its reach by establishing a network of 11 CBOs, the "spokes," located across New York State. These organizations now provide direct consumer assistance in their respective communities, ensuring that support is readily accessible and tailored to local needs.

Our Funding

EDCAP is funded by New York State and overseen by the Department of Financial Services (DFS). Below is our funding since program inception. This allowed for the expansion and creation of its EDCAP Network.




EDCAP is critical to addressing the student loan debt crisis in New York State.

Student loan debt has reached \$1.7 trillion in the United States and is the second-largest form of consumer debt next to mortgages. Before the COVID related payment pause, a student loan borrower went into default every 28 seconds. This debt is especially onerous for low-income borrowers, first generation college students, women, and older adults.

Here are the facts about student debt in New York State:

- 2.4 million borrowers
- \$98.9 billion in outstanding debt
- \$41,429 average loan balance
- 279,433 borrowers in delinquency
- \$8.4 billion outstanding delinquent debt
- 44% increase in seniors owing student debt

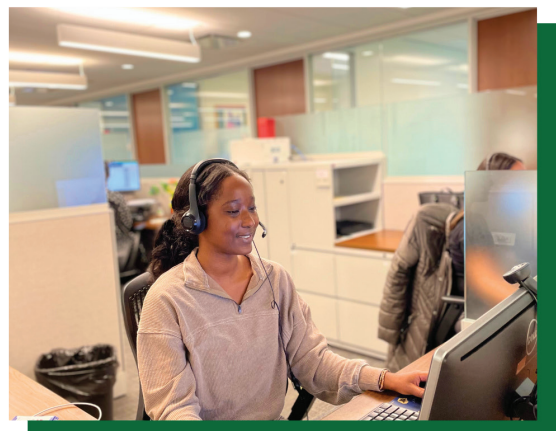


\$80,000
The average EDCAP client student loan balance before receiving our counseling.
Nearly 2x the national average.

The EDCAP Helpline is here for these borrowers with dedicated staff Monday to Friday, 9 am to 4 pm.

Our helpline provides borrowers in need of assistance with free, unbiased, honest, and confidential student loan guidance. We can be reached by:

- Phone: 888-614-5004
- Email: edcap@cssny.org
- Web: edcapny.org
- Social Media:
 - [Facebook.com/EDCAP.NY](https://www.facebook.com/EDCAP.NY)
 - [Instagram.com/edcap.ny](https://www.instagram.com/edcap.ny)
 - [Twitter.com/EDCAP_NY](https://twitter.com/EDCAP_NY)
 - [Tiktok/@edcap.ny](https://www.tiktok.com/@edcap.ny)



EDCAP helps individuals navigate the complex student loan system to minimize or eliminate debt with the following counseling services:



Educate consumers on repayment options, rights, and responsibilities.



Develop individualized debt-tackling strategies.



Assist with applying for forgiveness and discharge programs.



Resolve student loan disputes with loan servicers and lenders.



Prevent wage garnishment and financial impacts by helping consumers exit default.



Aid in filing complaints with state and federal regulators.



Provide advice on college affordability and financial aid offers.

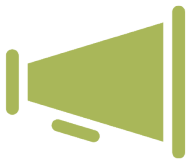


Identify and report issues to stakeholders to drive systemic change and policy reforms.



Refer consumers to other services and resources as needed, including legal representation.

Our Impact at a Glance: 2019 - 2023



5.1 million+ New Yorkers reached through outreach and education campaigns.



18,888 borrowers reached through educational workshops.



6,967 one-on-one counseling sessions.

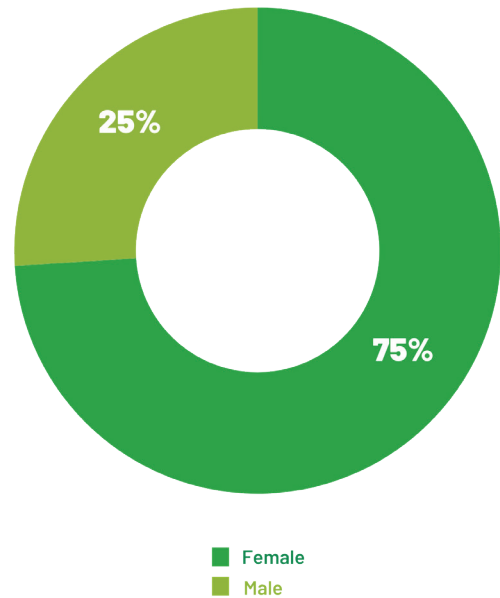


\$17,916,687 in consumer savings.

We are helping those most impacted by student loan debt.

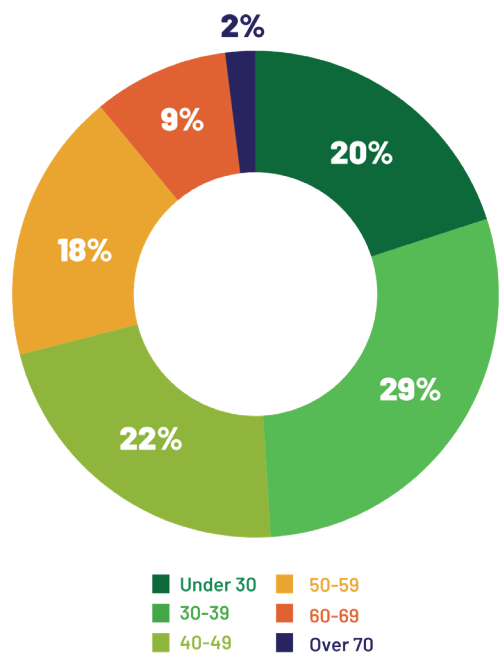
EDCAP Clients by Gender:

75% of EDCAP's clients are women. Nationally, women owe two-thirds of all outstanding student loan debt, with Black women carrying the highest burden of any racial or ethnic group and struggling more to repay and meet basic needs as a result.



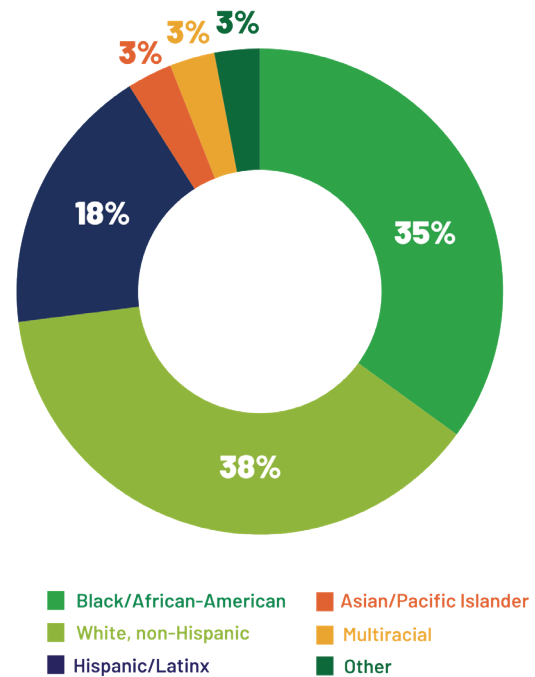
EDCAP Clients by Age:

Student debt is impacting individuals across age groups. However, the rate of increase in the number of older borrowers and the amount of debt they owe has far outpaced their younger counterparts. About 29% of EDCAP's clients are 50 years of age or older.



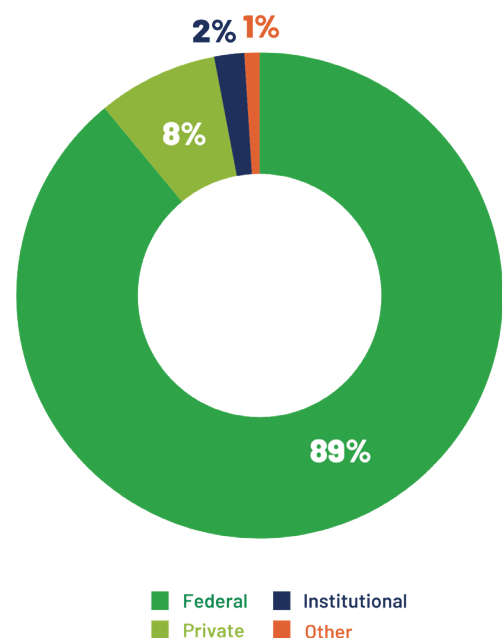
EDCAP Clients by Race/Ethnicity:

EDCAP is serving diverse clients and those most impacted by student debt. Black borrowers are twice as likely to default on their student loans and see their balances increase over time compared to their peers.



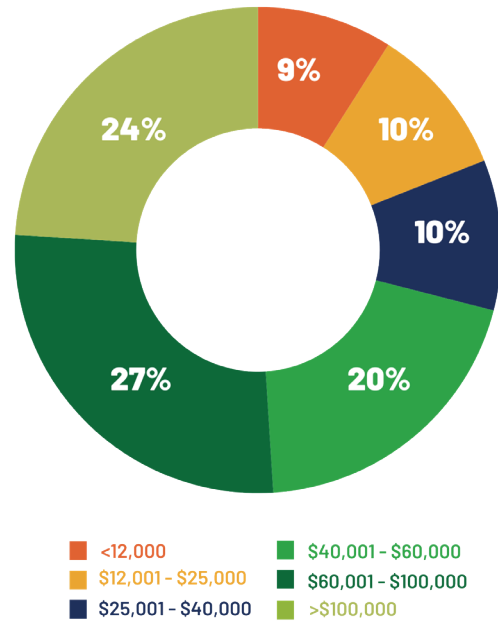
EDCAP Clients by Type of Debt:

EDCAP's clients are representative of the national student loan debt market. Most borrowers have federal student loans. Private student loans and institutional debt (money owed directly to schools) make up a smaller percentage of the total.



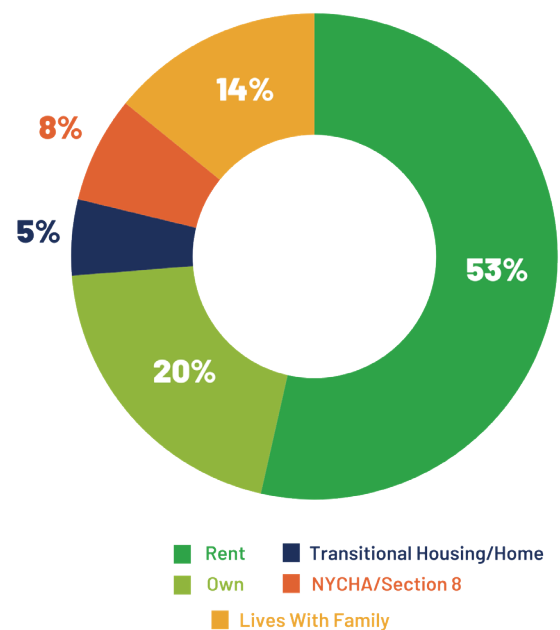
EDCAP Clients by Income:

EDCAP clients come from a diverse mix of socio-economic backgrounds. 49% of our clients have household incomes that are at or below \$60,000.



EDCAP Clients by Housing Type:

At 53%, the majority of our clients rent and 8% live in NYCHA/Section 8 housing. Only 20% of our clients own a home, while 14% live with family.



The EDCAP Network: Building Capacity

New Yorkers can contact one of our partner agencies below to get help remotely or in person locally.



AGENCY

COUNTIES SERVED

Community Service Society of New York	Statewide
Brooklyn Legal Services	NYC
City Bar Justice Center	NYC
Day Care Council of New York	NYC
Nassau Suffolk Law Services	Nassau, Suffolk
United Way of Long Island	Nassau, Suffolk
New York Legal Assistance Group	NYC, Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester
Neighborhood Legal Services Inc.	Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans, Wyoming
Parachute Credit Counseling	Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans, Wyoming
Empire Justice Center	Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren, Washington, Westchester
Legal Assistance of Western New York	Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Chemung, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Tioga, Tompkins, Wayne, Yates
Volunteer Lawyer's Project of Central New York	Cayuga, Cortland, Jefferson, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego

The EDCAP Network consists of 11 community-based organizations chosen through a competitive process that share our mission of addressing the student debt crisis. These trusted partners, possessing subject matter expertise, deliver high-quality assistance to borrowers in their communities.



New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)

SERVING: NYC, NASSAU, SUFFOLK, WESTCHESTER

“For years, NYLAG has witnessed how student loans can saddle borrowers with debt that stunts economic progress for generations. NYLAG is proud to be part of the EDCAP Network, which is designed to provide clear and concise information to help borrowers avoid default and maintain financial health.”

– LISA RIVERA, PRESIDENT AND CEO

Parachute Credit Counseling

SERVING: ALLEGANY, CATTARAUGUS, CHAUTAUQUA, ERIE, GENESEE, NIAGARA, ORLEANS, WYOMING

“My message to student loan borrowers: Know that you are not alone—there is reputable help available.”

– NOELLE CARTER, PRESIDENT AND CEO



Empire Justice Center

SERVING: ALBANY, COLUMBIA, GREENE, RENSSELAER, SARATOGA, SCHENECTADY, WARREN, WASHINGTON, WESTCHESTER

“The student loan system is overly complicated. There are many options, and it’s hard to figure out how to manage your loans properly. That’s why having student debt counselors across the state is so valuable. I’ve been working in New York for 20 years, and we’ve never had this kind of help before. It’s wonderful to provide this level of support to people.”

– KIRSTEN E. KEEFE, SENIOR STAFF ATTORNEY

Public Awareness and Education

EDCAP conducts comprehensive educational outreach campaigns and public service announcements to inform borrowers about new relief programs, important deadlines, changes in the student loan system, valuable debt management tips, and the availability of our counseling services.

Our outreach efforts span various channels to connect with borrowers from diverse demographics across New York State. These include the following:



Social media platforms



Cable and connected television



Search engine advertising



Out-of-home advertising, targeting at-risk borrowers in the Bronx



Direct mail, targeting at-risk borrowers



Digital web content, educational videos, articles, and guides

In the last program year (2022-2023), EDCAP's content:

- **Received 19.6 million views**
- **Reached a minimum of 5.1 million New Yorkers**
- **Generated 1.1 million unique engagements***

Return to Repayment:

Our "return to repayment" campaign, viewed over 7.9 million times, reached over 2.2 million New Yorkers.

Public Service Loan Forgiveness:

Our PSLF Temporary Waiver campaign, with over 482,000 views, has brought thousands of New Yorkers closer to achieving public service loan forgiveness.

*Unique engagements include: reactions, comments, shares, likes, clicks, saves, video ThruPlays, website interactions, QR code scans, and unique telephone calls tied to a specific communication.

Content at a glance:

425K+



Unique engagements on social media.

738K+



views of our educational video content

28K+



Direct mailers sent to at-risk student loan borrowers.



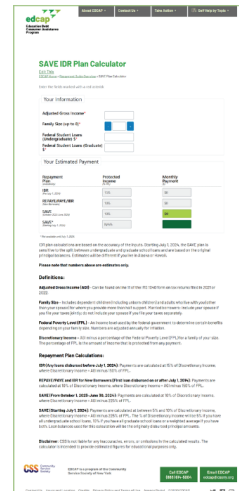
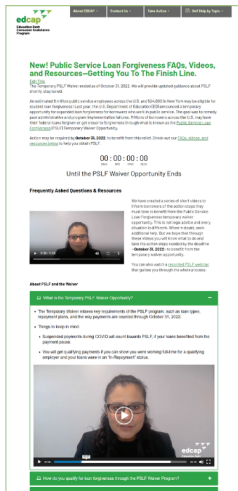
Digital guides, infographics, and PSAs



Weekly news recaps and updates for borrowers



Video explainers and tutorials



222K+



Page views of EDCAP's web-based content.

395K+



Unique engagements on our website.

Our website offers a wealth of interactive guidance, including videos, step-by-step tutorials, informative articles, borrower-specific advice, and a comprehensive FAQ section. As illustrated above (from left to right), we highlight our dedicated webpages on the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Waiver, Repayment options, and a monthly payment calculator designed to empower borrowers and hold loan servicers accountable.

Our Consumer Stories

Understanding and enrolling in the right repayment plan

EDCAP helps borrowers understand and enroll in the best repayment plan based on their personal and financial circumstances and short- and long-term objectives.

“My EDCAP counselor helped me navigate and find my best repayment plan, and strategize going forward. I left my appointment with everything all set up!”



Bailey, a 2023 graduate, proactively sought help to manage her student loans. Her EDCAP counselor helped her find the right repayment plan and learn how to manage her student loans on her own moving forward.

“My EDCAP counselor eliminated my debt anxieties, offering the best guidance and hope for student loan repayment.”



David, a married father with \$100,000 in debt, sought help from EDCAP to manage his financial stress as he returned to school while working. EDCAP’s strategy allowed him to earn credit towards forgiveness, enrolled him in an affordable repayment plan, and put him on a faster student debt elimination path.

Helping borrowers achieve the promise of student loan forgiveness

Federal student loan forgiveness programs provide critical financial relief for borrowers. Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) discharges debt after 10 years in public service. Income-Driven Repayment Forgiveness forgives balances after 20-25 years of repayment in an IDR plan. EDCAP helps borrowers navigate these programs and ultimately achieve forgiveness.

“After 25 years of loan payments for my undergraduate and graduate degrees, I am finally debt-free!”



Cara had loans from the 1990s, which weren't eligible for the COVID payment pause. EDCAP helped her consolidate, allowing her to earn credit towards forgiveness through the IDR Account Adjustment. In August 2023, she received forgiveness.

“EDCAP’s guidance led to the forgiveness of my loan balance, opening doors to mortgage pre-approval and an improved quality of life. I am truly grateful to EDCAP for their commitment to the community.”



Sandra, a single parent with 17 years of service with the City of New York, was perplexed about Public Service Loan Forgiveness. EDCAP's assistance led to the forgiveness of her \$152,000 debt, enabling her to secure her first mortgage shortly after.

Helping parent borrowers make informed decisions and protect their own financial security

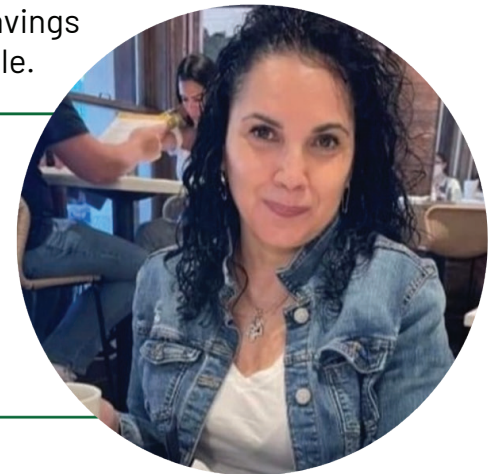
An increasing number of parents are borrowing to finance their children's education, resulting in a staggering \$108.5 billion in Parent Plus loans. Over the last nine years, the number of Parent Plus borrowers has surged by almost 20%, accompanied by an alarming 80% growth in their debt burden. This mounting financial pressure, coupled with high interest rates and restricted repayment alternatives, is not only preventing parents from retiring but also jeopardizing their financial security during retirement.

"As a single mother, assuming this additional responsibility can be a lot. EDCAP helped me make an informed decision."



Maria was concerned about taking out a Parent Plus loan for her daughter to attend nursing school. EDCAP had a joint counseling session with Maria and her daughter to explore additional funding options and have an honest conversation about the impact of this debt. Both mother and daughter agreed on cost savings measures to ensure the total debt would be manageable.

"I needed my daughter to have a college education, I didn't want her to go through what I've been through. I can breathe easier and hopefully retire in the near future."



Frances is a NYC Health + Hospitals nurse. She was repeatedly told her Parent Plus loans did not qualify for forgiveness. Her EDCAP counselor guided her through the process and she received over \$200,000 in forgiveness shortly before the end of the payment pause.

Getting loans out of default and helping borrowers regain financial health

Nearly 20 percent of all federal student loan borrowers are in default and millions more are behind on their payments. EDCAP helps borrowers get out of default and avoid collection fees, tax refund intercepts, and social security offsets.

“I want to move forward and find a permanent home. I can’t believe the government is doing this to me and people like me.”



Donald was living in a shelter and his social security was being offset to pay off a defaulted student loan. EDCAP helped him get his student loans out of default through rehabilitation and stopped his social security offset, which has allowed him to move into more permanent housing.

“I want to be done with this debt. I have been dealing with this for 50 years.”



Kate is 71 years old. She took out a student loan in 1971 to finish her bachelor’s degree. At the time, she was a single mom and struggled financially. She got a student loan judgement against her that increased her loan’s interest rate to 9 percent. With her social security offset, she was left with just \$750 per month. EDCAP helped her settle her remaining loan balance. Kate is now debt free.

Helping private student loan borrowers

New York's private student loan borrowers owe approximately \$10.6 billion, accounting for 8% of the total student loan portfolio. These borrowers face heightened risks of financial distress and loan default compared to those with federal loans. EDCAP educates borrowers on options and default consequences, negotiates settlements, and refers to network specialists for bankruptcy and legal representation when needed.

“EDCAP not only gave me the knowledge I needed on how to navigate my dire private loan situation, but they also empowered me with very helpful tools and resources on how to rebuild my educational and financial goals, as a whole.”



Ryan was struggling to manage his private student loans and prevent his co-signer from being negatively impacted. EDCAP helped him develop a plan of action and he is now free of student loan debt.

Ensuring EDCAP Can Meet Future Challenges

Helping New Yorkers successfully enter repayment

With the end of the COVID payment pause in October 2023, EDCAP's role in assisting New York borrowers with repayment and accessing federal relief programs is pivotal. To sustain these essential services and support borrowers within their communities, EDCAP requires an annual funding of \$3.5 million.

Strengthening Our Services Statewide

We are continuing to seek out partners to expand our service network. In October 2023, the Volunteer Lawyer's Project of Central New York (VLPCNY) joined the EDCAP Network. They are the largest provider of pro-bono legal services in Central New York. They are located in Syracuse and would focus on providing student debt counseling in six counties: Onondaga, Oswego, Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, and Jefferson.



EDCAP is a program of the Community Service Society of New York (CSS). It was created to help New Yorkers struggling with student debt navigate the student loan repayment system and regain financial health.

EDCAP is funded by New York State.
Learn more at www.edcapny.org.



Looking for help?

Call or email us: **888-614-5004** or **edcap@cssny.org**

All services are free and unbiased.



The Community Service Society of New York (CSS) has worked with and for New Yorkers since 1843 to promote economic opportunity and champion an equitable city and state. We power change through a strategic combination of research, services, and advocacy to make New York more livable for people facing economic insecurity. By expanding access to health care, affordable housing, employment, opportunities for individuals with conviction histories, debt assistance, and more, we make a tangible difference in the lives of millions. Join us at www.cssny.org.