§ 679-i. New York state child welfare worker loan forgiveness incentive program. 1. Purpose. the president shall grant student loan forgiveness awards for the purpose of attracting workers to be employed in voluntary not-for-profit child welfare agencies in New York state licensed by the office of children and family services as a child welfare worker. Such awards shall be made on a competitive basis, in accordance with rules and regulations promulgated by the corporation for such purposes, to applicants who meet the eligibility criteria.

2. Eligibility. To be eligible for an award pursuant to this section, applicants shall:

a. have graduated and obtained an undergraduate or graduate degree from a college or university located in New York state;

b. have outstanding student loan debt from obtaining such degree;

c. agree to work in a voluntary not-for-profit child welfare agency in New York state licensed by the office of children and family services as a child welfare worker, on a full time basis for a period of no less than five years;

d. apply for this program within two years of college graduation; and

e. comply with subdivisions three and five of section six hundred sixty-one of this part.

3. Awards. Awards shall be granted to qualified applicants in the amount of up to ten thousand dollars per year, per applicant, not to exceed a duration of five years and not to exceed the total amount of such applicant's student loan debt. The corporation shall grant such awards within amounts appropriated for such purposes and based on the availability of funds. No one applicant shall receive more than a total of fifty thousand dollars upon the end of a five-year period.

4. Priority. First priority shall be given to applicants who have received payment of an award pursuant to this section in a prior year

and remain eligible. Second priority shall be given to applicants who are completing the second, third, fourth or fifth year of full-time employment at a voluntary not-for-profit child welfare agency in New York state licensed by the office of children and family services. Third priority shall be given to an applicant who can demonstrate economic need but did not receive an award during the first year of this program's operation. If larger numbers of applicants are eligible pursuant to this subdivision than funds available, applicants shall be chosen pursuant to rules and regulations promulgated by the corporation; provided, however, that each applicant chosen shall receive an award of up to ten thousand dollars in each year such applicant is accepted into the program.

5. Rules and regulations. The corporation is authorized to promulgate rules and regulations, and may promulgate emergency regulations, necessary for the implementation of the provisions of this section.