Welcome to the SeaComm Federal Credit Union podcast! Your guide to financial information and what's going on at your credit union.

If you are one of the over 40 million Americans with student loans, here is some important information for you.

Due to COVID, the Department of Education placed a temporary moratorium on federal student loans, but unless it's extended again, that forbearance period ends May 1st. This means you'll have to resume making payments and as always it's a great idea to make those payments on time to avoid any late fees. As it stands, borrowers with federal student loans should make plans to begin repaying them in May, after nearly two years of having the payments paused as part of the COVID-19 relief package. Those with federal student loans can expect a billing statement or similar notice 21 days before payments are due, according to the Department of Education. The notices should include payment amounts and due dates.

Most borrowers face a student loan landscape that is markedly different from the one that existed two years ago. It's been reported that several large companies that used to service federal student loans have left the business, including Navient, FedLoan and Granite State. This has left about 16 million borrowers without their previous servicers, though many of these loans have been transferred to new servicers, according to the Federal Student Aid website, studentaid.gov. Double-check that your servicer has your current contact information, so that you will receive all notices about the upcoming change. Impacted borrowers should get multiple notices, according to Student Loan Servicing Alliance, a trade group for federal student loan servicers. Come May, if you mistakenly send a payment to your old servicer, the money should be forwarded to your new one, according to that group.

If you're still unemployed or dealing with another financial hardship because of the pandemic, you'll have some options come May. First, put in a request for the economic hardship or the unemployment deferment, experts say. Those are the ideal ways to postpone your federal student loan payments because interest doesn't accrue under them. If you don't qualify for either, though, you can use forbearance to continue suspending your bills. But keep in mind that interest will rack up and your balance will be larger – sometimes much larger – when you resume paying. More information on these options available at studentaid.gov. You should make any changes to your repayment plan as soon as possible. It will probably take the loans servicing agency some time to implement any changes.

One more thing… You should never have to pay to manage your student loans. Do not fall prey to organizations offering to get you student loan forgiveness or other so-called "relief" available because of the pandemic. Contact your servicer, a non-profit such as Education Debt Consumer Assistance Program at edcapny.org or a legal service agency for free help.

That's it for this edition of the SeaComm Federal Credit Union podcast. Thanks for joining us!