



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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NHSC offers loan repayment money for primary care providers in Alabama

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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More than 3,300 primary care providers nationwide will be eligible for approximately \$200 million through additional funding to the National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program. This opportunity through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act will assist primary care providers who are seeking opportunities to serve in the nation's neediest communities.

In Alabama the Office of Primary Care and Rural Health Development of the Alabama Department of Public Health works to improve access to health care, including recruiting health care professionals for rural and underserved communities. Sixty-one of the state's counties are designated as primary care physician shortage areas, 65 counties are designated as dental health shortage areas, and 65 counties are considered deficient in numbers of mental health care providers.

Charles Graves, health professional placement administrator, stated, "National Health Service Corps clinicians are a unique group of dedicated primary care providers who care for millions of people who live in communities where health care is scarce. Alabama has a field strength of about 75 NHSC providers who are serving across the state. This is a mixture of primary care specialists serving the medically needy in deeply rural and very low income inner city areas. We encourage primary care providers to apply for this new program which will make it possible for more fully trained dentists, doctors, nurse practitioners and social workers to serve while having their student loans paid off."

The office maintains a list of about 100 opportunity sites where graduates can apply, be assigned and commit to work to repay student loans. The office works closely with the NHSC, which is administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration. HRSA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services charged with increasing access to health care for those who are medically underserved. HRSA is playing a key role in providing jobs and services to people impacted by the economic downturn.

In exchange for two years of service at an eligible high-need site, the program offers repayment of educational loans for clinicians who are providing full-time clinical services. Up to \$50,000 towards qualifying educational loan debt is available. Clinicians who stay at their sites longer may be eligible to apply for additional years of support.

Now through September 2010, or as funding permits, loan repayment awards will be available on a first-come, first-served basis for graduate specialists in the following fields: Primary Health Care Clinicians, Allopathic or Osteopathic physicians, Certified Nurse Practitioners, Certified Nurse Midwives, Physician Assistants, General Practice Dentists, Pediatric Dentists, Dental Hygienists, Health Service Psychologists, Licensed Clinical Social Workers, Psychiatric Nurse Specialists, Marriage and Family Therapists, and Licensed Professional Counselors.

How to Apply: Clinicians can begin applying for this NHSC opportunity at: www.nhsc.hrsa.gov or for more information, call 1-800-221-9393. New features are as follows:

More Choices of Sites and Vacancies Eligible for Loan Repayment: More than 7,000 already eligible service sites will be able to post significantly more new vacancies and increase the number of clinicians eligible for loan repayment awards at their sites. Additionally, more sites are being approved every day.

Apply Starting Today: Loan repayment awards to primary health care clinician applicants who are interested in loan repayment will be made on a first-come, first-served basis, opening new opportunities for areas in high-need sites located in Health Professional Shortage Areas with lower scores. Applications will be accepted on an open, continuous basis until all Recovery Act funds are expended -- 15 months or sooner.

More Application Flexibility: For the first time, primary health care clinicians interested in the National Health Services Corps loan repayment program do not need to be employed at the site at the time of application.

More Efficient Application Process: Most applications will be processed within eight weeks of receipt of a complete application, including receipt of all supporting documentation.

More Information:

www.nhsc.hrsa.gov - Official NHSC Web site

www.nhsc.hrsa.gov/loanrepayment/apply.htm - NHSC Job Opportunities

http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/join_us/lrp.asp - NHSC eligible disciplines

For more information in Alabama, call Dr. Graves at (800) 255-1992 or visit www.adph.org/ruralhealth/.