

## **National Health Service Corps**

The National Health Service Corps (NHSC) was established in 1972 within the Public Health Service Act to provide support to medical, mental, and dental health professionals in exchange for service in areas identified as experiencing a health professions shortage. Since 1982, more than 30,000 health professionals have received funding through the Corps. The federal government estimates that 80 percent remain in their communities beyond the end of their service, while half dedicate their careers to health care for medically underserved populations.

### **Scholarship Program**

The NHSC scholarship pays tuition, required fees, and some other education costs, tax free, for as many as four years. Education costs may include books, clinical supplies, laboratory expenses, instruments, two sets of uniforms and travel for one clinical rotation. Recipients also receive a monthly living stipend. The stipend is taxable.

### **Loan Repayment Program**

The NHSC recruits primary care medical, dental and behavioral and mental health clinicians who are dedicated to providing care to the Nation's underserved people. In return, they can reduce or eliminate their health professions student debt by providing care at a National Health Service Corps-approved site. The Full-Time Program starts with an initial award of \$50,000 for 2 years of service, which is an increase from the \$35,000 that was available prior to enactment of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA). A new Half-Time Pilot Project starts with an initial award of \$50,000 for 4 years of service. Participants may apply to extend their service until their debt is paid.

The ACA permanently reauthorized the NHSC and resulted in the following changes:

### **THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE CORPS TRUST FUND**

The ACA contained a total of \$1.5 billion in new, dedicated funding for the National Health Service Corps over five years starting FY2011 (\$290M) to FY2015 (\$310M). The National Health Service Corps Trust Fund is in addition to existing discretionary funding, which was authorized at \$320M in FY2010 and increases to \$1.15B in FY2015.

### **What is the difference between “mandatory” and “discretionary” spending?**

Mandatory spending is also known as entitlement spending and goes to programs such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Discretionary spending must be approved by the Congress every year in the appropriations process and, unlike most mandatory spending, is subject to a predetermined limit each year.

### **PROGRAMMATIC CHANGES**

#### **Changes to Loan Repayment**

Beginning in FY2011, the award full-time Corps members could receive was increased from \$35,000 to \$50,000, including possible additional inflationary increases starting in FY2012. The NHSC offers an initial award of up to \$60,000 for two years of full-time service. After the initial two-year commitment, providers may

be eligible to receive additional support in exchange for continued service; up to \$170,000 for five years of service.

### **Teaching as Eligible Service**

Teaching can count for up to 20 percent of the NHSC clinical practice service obligation and teaching under the new “teaching health center graduate medical education program” can count for up to 50 percent of the NHSC clinical practice service obligation. Teaching health centers are discussed in greater detail in the 2010 section of this guide.

### **Part-time Clinical Practice**

Corps members may satisfy their service obligation through part-time clinical practice (a minimum of 20 hours per week). The Corps member must enter into a written agreement to either double the period of obligated service or receive 50 percent of the full-time loan repayment amount.

## **INFORMATION FOR INTERESTED APPLICANTS**

### **When is the application deadline for the Scholarship Program?**

The application cycle will not open until the Spring 2014. Interested applicants can sign up to be notified when the 2014 application becomes available at: <http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/>.

### **How can I apply?**

The Application form and program guidance can be found at: <http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/scholarship/>.

### **What are the eligibility requirements?**

You must be:

- U.S. Citizen or National
- Enrolled or Accepted for Enrollment
- Pursuing An Eligible Degree In An Accredited Program Located in the U.S. (joint programs that provide dual degrees are not eligible):
  - Physician: MD or DO
  - Dentist: DDS or DMD
  - Family Nurse Practitioner: master's degree or post-master's certificate
  - Certified Nurse-Midwife: master's degree or post-master's certificate
  - Physician Assistant: associate, bachelor's or master's degree

### **What is the service commitment?**

NHSC scholars are committed to serve one year for each year of support (minimum of two years service) at an approved site in a high-need Health Professional Shortage Area soon after they graduate, serve in a primary care residency (family medicine, general pediatrics, general internal medicine, obstetrics/gynecology or psychiatry for physicians and general or pediatric for dentists) and are licensed. Scholars compete for employment at the approved service sites of their choice from a listing of job vacancies in their discipline and specialty. The NHSC helps scholars select a compatible service site and pays for travel to and from interviews.

## **When is the application deadline for the Loan Repayment Program?**

The application cycle for 2013 is now closed. Interested applicants can sign up to be notified when the 2014 application becomes available at: <http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/>.

## **How can I apply for a full-time service award?**

The application form and program guidance can be found at: <http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/loanrepayment/>.

## **Is there a part-time option?**

Yes, the NHSC now offers a part-time status option for the loan repayment program. To qualify, the applicant must work a minimum of 20 hours per week, but not exceeding 39 hours per week, for a minimum of 45 weeks per service year. No less than 2 days per week, and no more than 12 hours work in a 24-hour period. A maximum of 7 weeks (35 half-time workdays) per service year is allowed away from the service site for vacation, holidays, continuing education, illness, or any other reason. All health professionals, with some exceptions, must spend at least 16 hours/week providing direct patient care in the outpatient ambulatory care setting(s) at the approved service site(s) during normally scheduled office hours. The remaining 4 hours/week are spent providing clinical services for patients or teaching at the approved site(s), providing clinical services in alternative settings (e.g., hospitals, nursing homes, shelters) as directed by the approved site(s), or performing practice-related administrative activities. Teaching and practice-related administrative activities shall not exceed a total of 4 hours/week.

## **How can I apply for the part-time option?**

The application form and program guidance can be found at: <http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/loanrepayment/halftimeprogram/index.html>

## **How can I convert from full-time status to part-time status?**

Information on the NHSC's policy on converting from full-time to part-time status can be found at: <http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/downloads/lrpapplicationguidance.pdf>

## **What are the eligibility requirements for the loan repayment awards?**

You must be:

- U.S. citizen or National
- Trained and licensed in one of the following primary care disciplines:
  - Allopathic (MD) or Osteopathic (DO) Physician
  - Primary Care Nurse Practitioner
  - Certified Nurse-Midwife
  - Primary Care Physician Assistant
  - Dentist
  - Dental Hygienist
  - Health Service Psychologist
  - Licensed Clinical Social Worker
  - Psychiatric Nurse Specialist
  - Marriage and Family Therapist

- Licensed Professional Counselor
- Working or applying to work at a site that is approved by or has applied to become approved by the NHSC
- Unpaid government of commercial loans for school tuition, reasonable educational and living expenses that are not consolidated with non-educational debts

**What is the service commitment for the loan repayment awards?**

NHSC loan repayors are committed to serve 2 years (full time) or 4 years (part time) for up to \$60,000 at an approved site in a designated Health Professional Shortage Area. There is also an option for 2 years of part-time service for up to \$30,000.