

# Building the Behavioral Health Workforce: *Federal Initiatives*



## Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA): Bureau of Health Workforce

National Health Service Corps (NHSC): <http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/>

The National Health Service Corps recruits healthcare professionals to provide culturally competent, interdisciplinary primary health, behavioral health and oral health care to underserved populations.

NHSC offers tax-free, loan repayment assistance to support qualified health care providers who choose to take their skills where they're most needed. Licensed health care providers may earn up to \$50,000 toward student loans in exchange for a two-year commitment at NHSC-approved sites.

- **National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program** for primary care medical, dental, and behavioral health clinicians (<http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/loanrepayment/index.html>)
  - Eligible Behavioral Health Providers: *Psychologist; Licensed Clinical Social Worker; Psychiatric Nurse Specialist; Marriage and Family Therapist; Licensed Professional Counselor*
- **National Health Service Corps Scholarship Program** for primary care medical and dental providers (only) "in-training." (<http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/scholarships/index.html>)
- **National Health Service Corps Students to Service Loan Repayment Program**. Students to Service Loan Repayment Program - Medical students (MD or DO, only) may earn up to \$120,000 in their final year of school through the Students to Service Loan Repayment Program (S2S LRP). Students must commit to serving either 3 years full-time or 6 years part-time at an NHSC-approved site with a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) score of 14 or higher.
- **State Loan Repayment Program** - Through the NHSC, states and territories may offer a State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) program for health professionals that provide primary care in Health Professional Shortage Areas within their state.

**Nurse Corps:** <http://hrsa.gov/loanscholarships/repayment/nursing>

National Nurse Loan Repayment Program for *registered nurses (RN)* and *advanced practice registered nurses (APRN)* working in public or private non-profit critical shortage facility OR nurse faculty employed by an accredited school of nursing.

Nurse Corps Loan Repayment Program participants receive 60% of their total outstanding qualifying educational loan balance incurred while pursuing an education in nursing in exchange for a 2-year service commitment. Qualifying participants may receive an additional 25% of their original loan balance for a 3<sup>rd</sup> year of service.

**Faculty Loan Repayment Program:** <http://www.hrsa.gov/loanscholarships/repayment/faculty/index/html>

Degree-trained, health professionals from disadvantaged backgrounds serving on the faculty at accredited health professions' college or university can receive \$40,000 plus a tax benefit for 2 years of service to prepare future clinicians.

## Indian Health Services (IHS)

**Indian Health Service Loan Repayment Program (IHS LRP)** offers health professionals the opportunity to pay off their qualified student loans while assisting the IHS in meeting the staffing needs of Indian health programs. The IHS LRP awards loan repayment to health professionals practicing in specific health profession disciplines who are willing to commit to an initial two-year service obligation while working in health facilities serving American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

The program will pay participants up to \$20,000/year in exchange for the two-year service obligation, plus 20 percent of Federal income tax on the award. Applications are accepted year-round beginning October 1 through the Friday of the second full week of August and evaluated monthly beginning in January. For further information or to request an application, visit <https://www.ihs.gov/loanrepayment/>

## Veterans Administration (VA)

**Education Debt Reduction Program (EDRP)** provide student loan reduction payments to *current* VA employees with qualifying loans who are in health care positions providing direct patient care services. Participants may receive up to \$120,000 over a 5 year period, towards a qualified loan (tuition, education/living expenses, books, supplies, lab fees, etc). Each Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facility determines which positions are hard to recruit and retain and when the facility will offer EDRP for these positions. <http://vacareers.org>

**Employee Incentive Scholarship Program (EISP)** awards scholarships to permanent full- and part-time Veterans Health Administration (VHA) employees pursuing degrees or training in health care disciplines for which recruitment and retention of qualified personnel is difficult.

**National Nursing Education Initiative (NNEI)** is a scholarship awarded to permanent full- and part-time VA registered nurses seeking baccalaureate and advanced nursing degrees from an authorized, accredited education program. VA requires nurses to have BSN degrees to advance beyond the Nurse Level 1 position. NNEI scholarships may also be used to pursue other advanced degrees in related fields.

**Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA)** ensures that Veterans are able to compete for government positions that previously may have only been available to existing civil service employees. The Veterans Preference gives special consideration to eligible Veterans looking for Federal employment. Veterans who are disabled or who served on active duty in the United States Armed Forces during certain specified time periods or in military campaigns are entitled to preference over non-Veterans both in hiring and in retention during reductions in force.

**Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E)** is an employment-oriented program that assists Veterans with service-connected disabilities by offering services and assistance to help them prepare for, find, and keep suitable employment. Suitable employment is work that is within the Veterans' physical, mental, and emotional capabilities and matches their patterns of skills, abilities, and interests.

**Pathways Internship Program (PIP)** provides students with opportunities to explore careers in Federal government. The PIP provides students in high schools, colleges, trade schools and other qualifying educational institutions with paid opportunities to work in agencies and explore Federal careers while completing their education. Through the Internship Program, students are able to gain valuable work experience for pay while enrolled at least half-time in school. Student Pathways internship opportunities are advertised and managed locally by each of the VA Medical Centers.

<http://www.opm.gov/hiringreform/pathways/>

## United States Public Health Service Corps (USPHSC)

The mission of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps is to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of our Nation. As America's uniformed service of public health professionals, the Commissioned Corps achieves its mission through:

- Rapid and effective response to public health needs
- Leadership and excellence in public health practices
- Advancement of public health science

Among the many benefits Commissioned Corps officers receive are:

- Competitive starting pay that increases with promotions and years of service
- Loan repayment potential
- Health care and dental care for officers at no cost
- Thirty days of paid vacation per year – beginning the first year
- Paid sick leave, maternity leave, and Federal holidays
- Retirement plan with benefits eligibility beginning after 20 years of service
- Thrift Savings Plan (retirement saving and investment plan similar to 401(k))

DoD-USPHS Partnership for Psychological Health (<http://www.usphs.gov/aboutus/dod-hhs.aspx>)

The Department of Defense and the U.S. Public Health Service Partnership for Psychological Health initiative was designed to ensure that service members, their families, and veterans receive the resources they need by increasing the availability of behavioral health services such as psychiatric counseling, family and group therapy, and preventive and resiliency building services.

Behavioral health officers in the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service are detailed to military medical treatment facilities across the Nation to treat service members who are returning from overseas deployment with conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), insomnia, anxiety, flashbacks, and depression.

## Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

**Prevention Fellowship Program (PFP)** is a 2-year fellowship program that provides 10 participants with the education and training to build the needed skills for success in the substance abuse prevention and behavioral health fields. Fellows spend a required 32 hours each week during their fellowship building their skills in substance abuse prevention. They are supported by mentors from participating states and territories to establish or assess the performance of substance abuse prevention efforts.

**Minority Fellowship Program (MFP)** supports the training of behavioral health practitioners to work with people of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Through seven national behavioral health professional organizations, the program assists students seeking doctoral and master's-level degrees and plan to work to improve behavioral health outcomes for minority communities. Visit individual MFP grantees' websites for information on program eligibility and application procedures:

- [American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy](#)
- [American Nurses Association](#)
- [American Psychiatric Association](#)
- [American Psychological Association](#)
- [Council on Social Work Education](#)
- [NAADAC: The Association for Addiction Professionals](#)
- [National Board for Certified Counselors and Affiliates](#)

