



**For Immediate Release July 12, 2010**

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## **Health care practitioners may apply to state for student loan repayment assistance**

*This application period ends July 30*

(Anchorage, AK) — Alaska's student loan repayment program, SHARP (Supporting Health care Access through loan Re-Payment) is accepting applications from health practitioners. Applications must be received by July 30, 2010.

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services program helps recruit and retain health care providers in areas of Alaska that have a provider shortage. Alaska has 2.06 physicians per 1,000 residents, below the national average of 2.38 per 1,000.

Practitioners eligible to apply include primary care physicians (M.D. or D.O.); general practice dentists; registered clinical dental hygienists; primary care physician assistants; certified nurse practitioners; psychiatrists; psychologists; clinical social workers; psychiatric nurse specialists; marriage and family therapists; and licensed professional counselors.

A tax-free loan repayment benefit of up to \$35,000 per year will be paid by the state directly to the lender.

Practitioners must work full-time for at least two years for an organization federally recognized as serving an area or population with a health care shortage. There are stiff penalties for not fulfilling the required commitment.

These grants are jointly funded through the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and an equal state match funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and other sources.

HRSA started its federal-state loan repayment program in 1987, and gave 24 other states \$7 million in grants in 2008. The program has helped participating states recruit and retain nearly 3,500 clinicians nationwide so far.

Applications and eligibility criteria may be downloaded at:  
<http://hss.state.ak.us/dhCS/healthplanning/sharp>.

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