

Alaska SHARP Program FAQs for SHARP-II

CONCURRENT SERVICE OBLIGATIONS

1. Q. Can you use SHARP-II in conjunction with other service-for-repayment obligations?

A: No. Holding any other concurrent service obligations is specifically disallowed.

2. Q. If applicants receiving SHARP-II benefits can't have any other service obligations, does that apply to commitments I have to my current employer?

A: If you have service obligations with your current employer such as a signing bonuses or moving expenses, they can be revoked by the employer in the form of a short letter to the employee with a copy to the SHARP office. It is not necessary to return the service or benefit to the employer as long as the employer relinquishes the service obligation.

3. Q. If I received WWAMI loans, does this service obligation make me ineligible for the SHARP-II Program?

A: WWAMI constitutes another service obligation under the SHARP-II Program. The WWAMI service obligation must be deferred during the SHARP-II contractual period. This can be done by contacting the Alaska Commission on Post-Secondary Education and requesting a waiver form.

4. Q. Are there exceptions to the concurrent service obligation rule?

A: The applicant is not barred from a concurrent service obligation if the obligation consists of service in:

- 1) The reserves of the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard;
- 2) The National Guard; or
- 3) The commissioned corps of the United States Public Health Service.

5. Q. Am I eligible for the SHARP-II Program if I am a U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Officer?

A: Yes. U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Officers are one of the allowed current service obligations under the SHARP-II Program. Language contained in the Memorandum of Agreement states:

- "... Individuals in the Reserve Component of the U.S. Armed Forces or National Guard or USPHS Commissioned Officers Corps are eligible to participate in SHARP. If the SHARP Practitioner's military or USPHS-related training and/or service, in combination with the participant's other absences from the service Site, exceed 35 workdays per service year, the SHARP service obligation end-date will be extended to compensate for the break in full-time service."

6. Q. It's my understanding that if a provider is currently in the SHARP program, they are not eligible for another type of loan repayment until they've completed the current program, is that correct?

A: Yes, that is correct. For detail, see below.

- Language in the Statute:
 - (e) A loan or interest on a loan is not eligible for repayment under this section if the loan or interest is to be repaid by another source, including another loan repayment or forgiveness program or an employer-sponsored repayment program;

- Language in the Regulations:
 - 7 AAC 24.080. Employee eligibility to participate. The department will not consider a participant that has a simultaneous contract or service obligation with another entity for loan repayment. However, a participant is not subject to the limitation in this section if the obligation consists of service in (1) the reserves of the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard; (2) the National Guard; or (3) the commissioned corps of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, Public Health Service.

- Language in the Contract (MOA):

The Practitioner agrees and certifies that he or she: Has no outstanding contractual obligation for health professional service to the Federal Government (e.g., an active military obligation, National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program, National Health Service Corps Scholarship Program, Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program, Nursing Scholarship Program, or Indian Health Service Loan Repayment Program obligation), or to any other State or any other entity, whether it be public, private, employer, state or federal. This includes, but is not limited to, loan repayment, signing bonuses, a service-option loan, moving expense agreements, and or similar financial benefits that entail a service obligation. If incurred, the Clinician and the Site must immediately

declare in writing to the SHARP program any healthcare profession service obligation of any nature. The clinician-applicant will declare if he or she does hold another service obligation.

7. Q. If I am currently completing a repayment-for-service obligation but I will be done with that obligation in the coming months, can I still apply for SHARP-II?

A: It is possible to apply for SHARP-II even though the applicant is currently satisfying another loan repayment obligation. However, the applicant cannot participate in the program until the other obligation is completed. The applicant should contact the service site to verify if a later start date is possible. Also, the SHARP-II Program prioritizes applicant based on their work readiness. If the applicant's field is competitive as regards applications to SHARP-II, then those who must wait until they can begin work under the program will receive a lower priority.

8. Q. Can I apply for other loan repayment programs if I am also applying for SHARP-II?

A: All SHARP-II applicants are definitely welcome to apply for support-for-service benefits elsewhere, as well, and are encouraged to do so. However, no clinician is allowed to actually participate in more than one support-for-service program (e.g. loan repayment) concurrently. That is, "double-dipping" is disallowed, by SHARP, NHSC, or the IHS. So, yes, apply to more than one, but you can only participate in one, once admitted.

9. Q. As the employer, do we need to issue the letter rescinding the service obligation at the time of candidate application, or can this be done following submission of the application? (We almost always have a service commitment tied to relocation and/or signing bonus)

A: Yes, you do. It can be a simple "conditional" letter that relinquishes the service obligation part of those benefit-arrangements stating that if the SHARP-II award is given, you will issue a letter that relinquishes the service obligation.