

ABSTRACT

Project Title: Alaska's SHARP Program
Applicant: Department of Health and Social Services, State of Alaska
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HRSA Request: \$2,200,000 over 4 years (HRSA-14-033, CFDA 93.165)

Clinicians: Number of clinician to be recruited, by type during four-year project (9/1/14-8/13/18), beginning in FFY2014, with 2 sequential cohorts, each with two-year clinician contracts: 78 total, targeting 25 primary care medical (physicians, PA, NP, RN, or pharmacists); 20 oral health (dentists, or RDH); and 33 behavioral health clinicians (physicians, HSP, LCSW, PNS, LPC, MFT), with 70% in rural locales.

Purpose: Alaska Dept. of Health and Social Services (DHSS) is applying for federal funding to build upon its solidly established SHARP Program. SHARP increases retention and recruitment of primary health care clinicians for Alaska, and thereby improves access to care for underserved and vulnerable populations. Provider organizations (community health centers, mental health programs, tribal health corporations, and critical access hospitals) and governmental entities such as DHSS, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA) and the University of Alaska (UA) have extensively documented the need to increase the number and improve the distribution of primary care clinicians. They have agreed that continuation of our joint state-federal program with at least 50% non-federal match is a critical step for support-for-service in Alaska. Over time, the NHSC and I.H.S. have contributed to Alaska's supply of clinicians, yet much more is needed. The here-proposed build-out of SHARP will help stem loss of clinicians to other states.

Need: Alaska Physician Supply Task Force Report (2006), two Status of Recruitment Resources and Strategies (SORRAS) reports (2004, 2006), as well as several other expert studies have documented shortages (e.g., over 200 physicians), high vacancy rates (14%), high recruitment costs, longer time-to-fill vacancies (especially for rural sites), and problems related to looming state and national shortages. University of Alaska health professions vacancy studies (2007, 2009 and 2012) have further documented increasing difficulty in filling clinician positions.

Program and Capacity: To date, SHARP has had 136 clinician-participants. This program consists of: (1) program management including clinician and site eligibility determination); (2) guidance and interagency collaboration provided by Alaska's SHARP Advisory Council, composed of external partners; (3) loan and lender verification, done by Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, (4) payment processing and accounting arrangements consistent with state and federal guidelines, (5) program evaluation, and (6) a sustainability plan. Budget for this four-year project is \$4.4M for clinician loan repayment, with \$2.2M HRSA, and \$2.2M non-federal derived from DHSS, Alaska's Mental Health Trust, and required partial employer match.