

**Public Notices**

**Alaska's SHARP Program — Providing Support-for-Service to Healthcare Clinicians**

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**Alaska's SHARP Program Announces Availability of Applications  
SHARP-II: New Opportunities for Healthcare Practitioner Loan Repayment & Direct Incentive**

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**Body of Notice:**

This is notification of a new Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) loan repayment & direct incentive opportunity for selected healthcare practitioners in state fiscal year 2014 and onward. This notice regards Alaska's SHARP program, now in its fourth year of operation by the State of Alaska, the purpose of which is to recruit and retain healthcare professionals to serve in DHSS-designated healthcare service shortage areas in exchange for the repayment of qualifying education loans &/or payment of direct incentive, pursuant to a signed SHARP memorandum of agreement with the State of Alaska.

Entitled SHARP-II, this new opportunity was established by Alaska's 27<sup>th</sup> Legislature (via HB-78; AS 18.29.010-.099) to help ensure that residents throughout the state, including recipients of medical assistance and Medicare, have access to healthcare and that residents of rural areas of the state, in particular, experience improved access to healthcare services. SHARP-II is intended to help address the worsening shortage of certain healthcare professionals in the state by increasing the number and improving the distribution of healthcare professionals who provide direct patient care.

SHARP-II depends on several factors, including funding availability and DHSS assessment of prioritized community, facility and population needs. This opportunity also depends on the type of facility (public, non-profit, or for-profit), and whether the individual position is categorized as regular-fill or a very hard-to-fill.

Selected healthcare practitioners sign a three-year memorandum of agreement (contract) stating their commitment to serve in identified high-need areas and facilities, beginning in Fall 2013. Overall, DHSS expects that approximately 90 practitioners will be selected for this new cohort, with 45 of these garnered from this solicitation. Both full-time and half-time options are available.

Eligible practitioner categories include:

Tier-1:

- Doctor of Allopathic Medicine (M.D.)
- Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.)
- Dentist (D.D.S. or D.M.D.)
- Pharmacist

Tier-2:

- Nurse Practitioner
- Physician Assistant
- Registered Clinical Dental Hygienist
- Clinical or Counseling Psychologist (Ph.D. or equivalent)
- Clinical Social Worker
- Registered Nurse (R.N.)
- Physical Therapist

In this Clinician Solicitation-2, there is particular emphasis on finding candidates in the above-listed "Tier-2" occupations. This emphasis is not wholly exclusive of Tier-1 candidates. Rather, the Tier-2 emphasis is due the substantial number of Tier-1 clinicians admitted to program during Solicitation-1 (Spring 2013).

Loan repayment and/or direct incentive support will be paid in the amount of up to a maximum annual benefit for the practitioner. This amount is dependent upon whether the occupation is categorized as Tier-1 or Tier-2, and whether the position is full-time or half-time, and whether it's categorized as regular-fill or very hard-to-fill. The Maximum Annual Benefit amounts are: Tier-1: \$35,000 - \$47,000 and Tier-2: \$20,000 - \$27,000. The program can pay a mix of loan repayment & direct incentive, but this yearly payment will not exceed the stipulated Maximum Annual Cap. This loan repayment per se is exempt from federal personal income tax according to federal regulation governing state loan repayment programs, however direct incentive is treated as taxable personal income. This support-for-service award is strictly in addition to, and is not a supplanting of, the clinician's regular employer-provided wage and benefit.

A wide variety of healthcare delivery locations are anticipated to become eligible, including selected private non-profit, for-profit and public (government) healthcare sites. Potential examples include, but are not limited to, community health centers, hospitals, community mental health clinics, private for-profit clinics, drug treatment facilities, long-term care facilities, and prisons, amongst others. Among the factors considered for eligibility, the site must be identified as, or being within, a state-designated healthcare services shortage area. An employer matching-payment is required at the rate of: 10% at government sites, 25% at private non-profit sites, and 30% at for-profit sites. A partial waiver of this match requirement is possible in some instances for private non-profit and for-profit sites.

Application guidelines, forms and contract-example are found on the program's website (<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/healthplanning/sharp/>). In brief, both individual healthcare practitioners and individual healthcare delivery sites must apply. The solicitation of practitioner applicants is time-limited with clinician applications being accepted from Thursday 08/08/13 to Monday 09/30/13 at 5:00 pm (AT). All clinician applications must be submitted via the SHARP program's web-based application format, which is accessed through the SHARP website. No other means of clinician application will be accepted.

Site applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis with no time-limit. Note that for any clinician-candidate to be finally selected, he/she must have had a corresponding site application submitted by an extant or prospective employer. All site application forms and any supporting documents must be submitted by email as PDF attachments. No hardcopy paper or faxed materials or documents in other formats will be accepted.

The SHARP Advisory Council will convene during October 2013 to make award decisions. Decision results will be announced in later October 2013. All applicants will be notified in writing as to outcome. We anticipate that those clinicians who are admitted may begin service contracts as early as November 2013. DHSS reserves the right to not accept any or all applications received, and further, it retains the option to solicit again for more candidates.

Six statewide teleconferences will be held for interested parties to learn more about SHARP-II. The teleconference call-in number to use is (800) 944-8766, then pass-code: 18105. Dates & times follow:

- For interested clinicians
  - 08-23-13 – Friday (9:00-10:00) - Teleconference – for Clinician-Applicants
  - 09-09-13 – Monday (4:00-5:00) - Teleconference – for Clinician-Applicants
  - 09-20-13 – Tuesday (12:00-1:00) – Teleconference – for Clinician-Applicants
  
- For interested sites
  - 08-30-13 – Friday (9:00-10:00) - Teleconference – for Site-Applicants
  - 09-16-13 – Monday (4:00-5:00) - Teleconference – for Site-Applicants
  - 09-26-13 – Thursday (12:00-1:00) – Teleconference – for Site Applicants

For information about HB-78 itself, see Alaska Basis at: [http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get\\_bill.asp?bill=HB%20%2078&session=27](http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?bill=HB%20%2078&session=27)

For information about corresponding adopted regulation, see: <http://ltgov.alaska.gov/treadwell/services/regulations/adopted-regulations.html>

Robert Sewell, SHARP Program Manager, is available for questions via e-mail (preferred) at [robert.sewell@alaska.gov](mailto:robert.sewell@alaska.gov) or phone 907-465-4065.

If you are a person with a disability who needs a special accommodation to participate in this process, please contact Robert Sewell no later than five days before the accommodation is needed, to ensure that any necessary accommodations can be provided.

For more information about Alaska's SHARP support-for-service program, see the DHSS website at:

<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/healthplanning/sharp/>