

**Massachusetts Department  
of Public Health  
Health Care Workforce Center**



***PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN  
RECRUITMENT PROGRAMS  
IN MASSACHUSETTS***

THIS INFORMATION HAS BEEN COLLECTED THROUGH A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT  
BETWEEN THE  
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
PRIMARY CARE OFFICE  
AND  
THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SCHOOL  
MASSAHEC NETWORK  
A PROGRAM OF COMMONWEALTH MEDICINE

UPDATED DECEMBER 2008



## **PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT PROGRAMS:**

A variety of programs are available to recruit primary care health professionals who will provide services in high-need/underserved communities in Massachusetts. These programs are funded by the federal and state government and other organizations and coordinated by state agencies and organizations at the national, state, and community levels. Many of the program activities are coordinated through the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Primary Care Office.

### **MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

#### **PRIMARY CARE OFFICE**

The Massachusetts Primary Care Office (PCO) is funded in part by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Bureau of Primary Health Care and Bureau of Health Professions. The Massachusetts PCO works collaboratively with Federal, State, and Local partners to coordinate resources to address issues related to the delivery of comprehensive primary care services, and the retention, recruitment and oversight of health professionals for populations in medically underserved areas.

The mission of the Massachusetts PCO is to coordinate and maximize resources that support and increase health care and safety net capacity, and address health disparity needs in Massachusetts.

### **UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SCHOOL**

#### **COMMONWEALTH MEDICINE**

#### **MASSAHEC NETWORK**

The Massachusetts Area Health Education Center (MassAHEC) Network is funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Bureau of Health Professions and the University of Massachusetts Medical School. The MassAHEC Network includes six community based agencies that address health care workforce issues at the local level, an AHEC office at the Boston University School of Medicine and a coordinating office at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester. The MassAHEC Network is housed in the Training, Education and Dissemination division of Commonwealth Medicine.

The mission of the MassAHEC Network is to reduce health disparities across the Commonwealth by enhancing the skills and increasing the diversity of the health care workforce and facilitating access to culturally and linguistically responsive health care services.

***Comments on this report can be shared with Joan Bohlke, MassAHEC-DPH, Workforce Analyst, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 617-624-5991, [Joan.Bohlke@state.ma.us](mailto:Joan.Bohlke@state.ma.us)***

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**Disclaimer:** The contents of this document are subject to change at any time. Please contact the identified program to confirm deadlines and requirements.



## **Health Professional Shortage Areas**

### **Medically Underserved Areas**

### **Medical Underserved Populations:**

Areas of the state are designated as Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) or medically underserved areas and/or medically underserved populations (MUAs/ MUPs). These areas are identified by the Massachusetts Primary Care Office and approved by the federal Department of Health and Human Services Bureau of Health Professions, Shortage Designation Branch.

Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA, "hipsas") are designated for primary care (family medicine, general practitioners, general pediatricians, general obstetricians/gynecologists, general internal medicine, and general geriatrics); dental or mental health. HPSAs are determined by:

- Geography, by designating an area of the state that has a shortage of providers for the total population in an identified rational service area (RSA).
- Population based, including underserved areas for low income populations, migrant or seasonal farm workers, Native Americans, or other populations who face specific language, cultural or access barriers.
- Facility based designations, including public or non-profit facilities such as Rural Health Clinics or Federally Qualified Health Centers, or Correctional Facilities.
- Federally recognized Tribes.
- Federal and state correctional facilities.

Currently HPSAs are updated approximately every five years through a complex assessment process. To determine the HPSA designation of an area or facility go to: <http://hpsafind.hrsa.gov> or contact the Primary Care Office to determine the latest designation.

HPSA and MUA/MUP designation may qualify a primary care physician or facility for certain loans and recruitment incentive programs that are defined here.

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## **The Massachusetts State Loan Repayment Program**

The Massachusetts State Loan Repayment Program now has two components for which primary care physicians are eligible. The new health care workforce loan repayment program, Component C, in addition to the current Component A was established by MGL Chapter 305 in the Acts of 2008 Section 25N and is funded in the FY 2009 state budget. The overarching goal of the Massachusetts State Loan Repayment Program (MSLRP) is to increase the number of primary care health professionals providing services to the most vulnerable populations in the Commonwealth. The MSLRP establishes contracts with qualified physicians seeking financial support for professional education loan repayment. Please review the description of both Component A and C below. The MDPH Primary Care Office (PCO) administers both Component A and C.



**Component A:** A grant from the federal Bureau of Health Professions (BHPr) and state monies from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) fund MSLRP Component A.

*Who is Eligible?* Doctors of Allopathic Medicine and Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine practicing within the primary care specialties of family medicine (and osteopathic general practice), internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics/gynecology, and psychiatry.

- ❖ U.S. Citizen
- ❖ \$25,000/ yr. of service (\$50,000 total award over two years)
- ❖ Applicants must work in a public and/or non-profit agency located in a federally designated health professional shortage area (HPSA)
- ❖ Applications must be submitted jointly by the physician and the employer
- ❖ Applicants must **not** be a National Health Service Corps member or a participant in other loan repayment programs concurrently; however, the MSLRP can be sequenced with other federal and state programs and applicants can also reapply
- ❖ Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis and reviewed quarterly
- ❖ Awards are made quarterly
- ❖ Awards are not considered taxable income
- ❖ Applications must be submitted to the Massachusetts Primary Care Office

To retrieve a copy of the Massachusetts State Loan Repayment Request for Response (RFR) go to: [www.mass.gov/osd](http://www.mass.gov/osd).

Click on CommPass on the left, click on *Browse all Open Solicitations*, *Browse by Entity/Department*, search for **Department of Public Health** and click on the √. Find the **Massachusetts State Loan Repayment Program** and click on the *AR*.

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MDPH Primary Care Office Website: <http://www.mass.gov/dph/primarycare>

**Component C:** A new health care workforce loan repayment program established by MGL Chapter 305 in the Acts of 2008 Section 25N and is funded in the FY 2009 state budget.

*Who is Eligible?* Doctors of Allopathic Medicine and Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine practicing within the primary care specialties of family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, psychiatry or obstetrics/gynecology.

- ❖ U.S. Citizen or legal permanent resident
- ❖ \$25,000/ yr. of service (\$50,000 total award over two years)
- ❖ Applicants must provide full or part time direct patient care at a not-for-profit, non-profit and/or public sector healthcare/employer organization including:
  - health care organizations located in a geographic area or community that is federally designated as a Medically Underserved Area/Population (MUA/P);
  - health care organizations including but not limited to individual or group practices, rural health centers and community based mental/behavioral health care providers;
  - outpatient primary care practices of small rural hospitals;
  - public sector, non-federal, health facilities;
  - other health care organizations not located in a HPSA or MUA/P (specific eligibility applies).
- ❖ Applications must be submitted jointly by the physician and the employer
- ❖ Applicants must **not** be a National Health Service Corps member or a participant in other loan repayment programs concurrently; however, the MSLRP can be sequenced with other federal and state programs and applicants can also reapply
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MDPH Primary Care Office Website: <http://www.mass.gov/dph/primarycare>

## Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers –

### Primary Care Physician Loan Repayment Program



The Massachusetts Community Health Center Primary Care Physician Loan Repayment Program is managed by the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers and is funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and by donations from Bank of America, Partners HealthCare System, Inc. and other corporate institutions. This initiative supports the expansion of primary care capacity at **all community health centers in Massachusetts**. It is anticipated that with the ease in education debt, more physicians will choose primary care practice and commit to working at community health centers to provide critical health care services to medically underserved and uninsured residents. An overview of program information includes the following.

- ❖ Primary care physicians who have been working at a Massachusetts community health center for a minimum of two years at the time of the application deadline, and will commit to an additional two years of full time in an eligible Massachusetts community health center.
  - Forgivable loan awards of up to \$25,000 a year for up to 2 years
- ❖ Primary care physicians who have completed their training and have been newly hired to work in a Massachusetts community health center, with a hire date within one year of the application due date; medical students; interns; and residents still in training.
  - Forgivable loan awards of up to \$25,000 / yr. for up to 3 years
- ❖ Must have outstanding educational loans from an accepted institution or loan program
- ❖ Applications must be submitted to the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers
- ❖ All application dates should be checked. In 2009, applications are due by either March 1 (notification by April 8, 2009) and by June 1 (notification by July 8).

Applications available at: <http://www.massleague.org/ClinicalCorner/CareerOpportunities-Loan.htm>

### University of Massachusetts Medical School Learning Contract



The University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMass Med) offers matriculated medical students the opportunity to enter into a Learning Contract which defers payment of tuition with payment made with approved service to the Commonwealth. A graduate must submit a request for approval to the Learning Contract Advisory Group. The service payback must meet one of three criteria: a primary care practice; practice in an underserved area; or community/public service of particular benefit to the Commonwealth.

- ❖ Eligibility: University of Massachusetts Medical School matriculated medical students
- ❖ Information is available in the UMass Medical School's Financial Aid Office
- ❖ Learning Contract defers payment of two-thirds of tuition each year until completion of advanced training; payment can then be made with approved service for four years as a full-time equivalent.

[http://www.umassmed.edu/financialaid/learn\\_contract/index.aspx](http://www.umassmed.edu/financialaid/learn_contract/index.aspx)





## **Conrad-30/J-1 Visa Waiver Program**

Federal law (Conrad Amendment to P.L. 103-416) provides MDPH with the authority to assist Massachusetts health care facilities located in federally designated medically underserved areas with physician recruitment by supporting a waiver request for physicians with a J-1 visa. This exemption waives the foreign residency rule for physicians that requires them to return home for two years after training.

MDPH may support no more than thirty Conrad-30/J-1 Visa Waiver requests per federal fiscal year (October 1-September 30). Applications are reviewed with special attention to primary care services, identified areas of greatest need, and providing a service in the public interest in the Commonwealth. Applicants with language skills appropriate to the community that they intend to serve are also given priority.

The decision to support a waiver request is at the discretion of MDPH. Those requests that are supported by MDPH will be forwarded to the U.S. Department of State (DOS), Bureau of Consular Affairs which reviews and forwards the approved J-1 Visa Waiver applications to the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Community Health Centers and hospitals with federally qualifying disproportionate share percentages, or other measure of high utilization by underserved populations, will receive priority as placement sites for Conrad 30 waivers through this program.

- ❖ Requests are accepted from the employing health care facility or practice located in a health professional shortage area (HPSA) or Medically Underserved Area/ Population (MUA/MUP)
- ❖ The physician must agree to practice medicine full-time in the health care facility for a minimum of three (3) years and begin employment within ninety (90) days of receipt of their waiver.
- ❖ Priority is for primary care physicians including internal medicine, pediatrics, family practice, obstetrics-gynecology or psychiatry.

Applications are accepted beginning on October 1<sup>st</sup> of each year; with a deadline of January 15<sup>th</sup>. Applications are processed at MDPH and forwarded to the DOS. Physicians can submit multiple applicants from different states however the DOS will process only the first application per physician.

The Primary Care Office informs both applicant-facility, and physicians, when their application is supported; and also informs those applicants that are not supported. This process is completed approximately April/May.

\*\* H-1B: A physician with an H-1B temporary worker visa who has already completed a three year service obligation may request a letter of support from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Primary Care Office when applying for permanent residency.

MDPH Primary Care Office Contact:

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[http://www.mass.gov/Eeohhs2/docs/dph/com\\_health/j1\\_visa\\_waiver\\_policies.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/Eeohhs2/docs/dph/com_health/j1_visa_waiver_policies.pdf)



## **US Dept. of Health and Human Services Exchange Visitor Program:**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (US-DHHS) Exchange Visitor Program also accepts applications to request a waiver of the two-year foreign residency requirement for participation in either a Research (Supplement A) or Clinical Care (Supplement B) program. The Clinical Care program brings additional visa slots to the Commonwealth but is limited to certain sites.

### **Supplement B - Clinical Care**

Physicians with J-1 visas must agree to deliver health care services for three years in mental health or primary care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs).

### **Physician Eligibility**

The applicant must be a physician in a primary care specialty (family medicine, general internal medicine, general pediatrics, obstetrics - gynecology) or general psychiatry.

### **Facility Eligibility**

In order to target communities and populations with the greatest need for primary care and mental health services, US-DHHS will only process an application for waiver from a facility in or with a **health professional shortage area (HPSA) score of 07 or higher**. Furthermore, a facility in a HPSA that scores 07 or higher must be one of the following:

- ❖ A health center as defined under Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act, and which is receiving a grant from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration under this section;
- ❖ A rural health clinic as defined under Sections 1102 and 1871 of the Social Security Act; or
- ❖ A Native American/Alaskan Native tribal medical facility as defined by the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (P.L. 93-638).

### **Waiver Application Form and Supplement Instructions**

The following items are required for the applications.

- ❖ A **case number** obtained from the U.S. Department of State.
- ❖ **Form HHS 426 – Application for Waiver of the Two-Year Foreign Residence Requirement of the Exchange Visitor Program (DOC - 41KB) (PDF - 29KB)**
- ❖ Supplement instructions:
- ❖ **Supplement B – Clinical Care** (See also **Requirements for Waiver for Clinical Care**)

For program details and program contact information contact Michael K. Berry 301-443-4154 or: <http://www.globalhealth.gov/exchangevisitorprogram/>

MDPH Primary Care Office Contact for technical assistance:

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The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the primary federal agency for improving access to health care services for people who are uninsured, isolated or medically vulnerable. HRSA is comprised of five Bureaus, one of which is the Bureau of Clinician Recruitment and Service (BCRS) that oversees recruitment and retention activities of health professionals. The National Health Service Corps is the major national primary care loan repayment and scholarship program under the BCRS.

### **National Health Service Corps**



The National Health Service Corps (NHSC) is committed to improving the health of the nation's underserved by uniting communities in need with health professionals, and supporting communities' efforts to build better systems of care. The NHSC helps medically underserved communities recruit and retain primary care clinicians, including dental and mental and behavioral health professionals.

The Primary Care Office is the identified liaison for Massachusetts with the NHSC and participates in the approval process by assessing new applicant sites and health professionals. The PCO also offers technical assistance for sites seeking to become NHSC placement sites and when appropriate, identifying sites eligible for NHSC placement in high-need communities.

### **National Health Service Corps Scholarship Program**

- ❖ Full-time students enrolled or attending fully accredited U.S. allopathic or osteopathic medical schools are eligible to apply
- ❖ Participants receive payment of tuition and fees, books, supplies, and equipment for up to 4 years of education, and a monthly stipend
- ❖ Each year of received support requires 1 year of service in an approved practice site, located in a federally designated health professional shortage area (HPSA)
- ❖ Minimum service commitment of two years, after completion of residency
- ❖ Massachusetts has approximately 15-25 NHSC Scholars each year
- ❖ Applications postmarked after the deadline will not be accepted
- ❖ Applicants selected for an interview will be notified in April-May, applicants not selected will be notified in May
- ❖ Applicants selected to receive the scholarship and alternates will be notified by letter as early as August 1 Applicants whose scores did not fall within the competitive range are notified in May

Applications and important date information: NHSC Toll Free Number: 1-800-221-9393

<http://nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov/applications/scholarship/>

MDPH Primary Care Office Contact for technical assistance:

**Email:** [Nicole.Watson@state.ma.us](mailto:Nicole.Watson@state.ma.us)

**Phone:** 617-624-6051

## **National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program**

- ❖ Fully trained allopathic or osteopathic primary care physicians
- ❖ Must agree to provide full time primary care services in an approved practice site located in a federally designated health professional shortage area (HPSA)
- ❖ Funding preference given to applicants serving in HPSAs of greatest need (based on the HPSA scores)
- ❖ Awards are made on an ongoing basis to applicants who propose to serve an NHSC community with a HPSA score of 14 or above (2008 determination, HRSA determines the eligible score annually)
- ❖ Applicants who propose to serve an NHSC community with a HPSA score of less than 14 will not be funded until after the application deadline, and will be funded after that date, by decreasing HPSA score, only to the extent funding remains available
- ❖ Two year commitment required, with opportunities beyond two years available
- ❖ Amounts up to \$50,000 available for the first two years of service based on qualifying educational loans
- ❖ Applications are available in the fall. Applications and supplemental documents are typically due to NHSC at the end of March, with a preference for early applications; please check the NHSC website verification of all dates.
- ❖ Notification of awards generally begins in March
- ❖ Non-awardees are notified in August-September of the award year.
- ❖ Massachusetts had 75 NHSC loan re-payers (2007)

Applications can be found at <http://nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov/applications/lrp/>

Qualifying facilities: <http://nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov/jobs/>

NHSC Toll Free Number: 1-800-221-9393

MDPH Primary Care Office Contact for technical assistance:

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## **Scholarship for Disadvantaged Students**

- ❖ Applicants must apply for this scholarship at the student financial aid office of the school where you are or intend to be enrolled
- ❖ Students must be full-time, enrolled in health professions programs, from disadvantaged background, and a U.S. citizen, national, or lawful permanent resident
- ❖ An individual from a disadvantaged background is defined as one who comes from an environment that has inhibited the individual from obtaining the knowledge, skill, and abilities required to enroll in and graduate from a health professions school, or from a program providing education or training in an allied health profession; or from a family with an annual income below a level based on low income thresholds according to family size published by the U.S. Census, adjusted annually for changes in the CPI, and adjusted by the Secretary, HHS, for use in health professions and nursing programs.
- ❖ Participating schools determine need and do not provide scholarships that exceed the cost of attendance (tuition, reasonable educational and living expenses)

<http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/DSA/sds.htm>

## **Loans for Disadvantaged Students**

- ❖ Potential applicants must apply for this scholarship at the student financial aid office of the school where you are or intend to be enrolled, and a U.S. citizen, national or lawful permanent resident of the United States
- ❖ Program provides long-term, low-interest rate loans to full-time, financially needy students from disadvantaged backgrounds, to pursue a degree in allopathic medicine and osteopathic medicine
- ❖ Participating schools are responsible for selecting loan recipients, making reasonable determinations of need and providing loans which do not exceed the cost of attendance (tuition, reasonable educational expenses and reasonable living expenses)
- ❖ An individual from a disadvantaged background is defined as one who comes from an environment that has inhibited the individual from obtaining the knowledge, skill, and abilities required to enroll in and graduate from a health professions school, or from a program providing education or training in an allied health profession; or comes from a family with an annual income below a level based on low income thresholds according to family size published by the U.S. Bureau of Census, adjusted annually for changes in the Consumer Price Index, and adjusted by the Secretary, HHS, for use in health professions and nursing programs.

<http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/DSA/lds.htm>

## **Federal Primary Care Loans**

- ❖ Potential applicants must apply for this scholarship at the student financial aid office of the school (allopathic or osteopathic schools of medicine) where you are or intend to be enrolled
- ❖ The Primary Care Loan program provides long-term, low interest rate loans to full-time, financially needy students to pursue a degree in allopathic or osteopathic medicine
- ❖ Recipients must enter and complete residency training in primary care within four years after graduation and practice in primary care for the life of the loan
- ❖ Interest rate is 5 percent and begins to accrue following a one year grace period after you cease to be a full-time student
- ❖ Applicants must be a U.S. citizen, national, or lawful permanent resident of the United States
- ❖ The maximum award for first- and second- year students is cost of attendance (including tuition, educational expenses, and reasonable living expenses). Amounts beyond this may be awarded to third- and fourth-year students.

<http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/DSA/pcl.htm>