



**January, 2011**  
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## **Welcome to the Montana Primary Care Office (MT-PCO) News**

This newsletter is intended to communicate information to CHCs, RHCs, NHSC sites and other partners regarding shortage designation activities, NHSC, and J-1 activities and other matters of interest to partners. We welcome your input and recommendations regarding content.

### **Affordable Care Act bolsters the primary care workforce in medically underserved communities**

Photo by Gabe Schroeck, MT



In December 2010, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced the launch of the new application cycle for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) [Loan Repayment Program](#). The NHSC offers primary care medical, nursing, dental and mental health clinicians up to \$60,000 to repay student loans in exchange for two years of service at health care facilities in medically underserved areas. This year's investment in the program, which includes \$290 million from the Affordable Care Act, seeks to address shortages in the primary health care workforce and translates into greater

access to healthcare for those who might otherwise go without.

“As we continue to seek ways to impact both the primary care workforce shortage and the increasing debt burden on new providers, NHSC serves as a model for addressing both challenges simultaneously,” said Secretary Sebelius. “Increasing access to primary care physicians who can support the physical and mental well-being of individuals can help prevent disease and illness, and ensure everyone – regardless of where they live – has access to comprehensive, high quality care.”

The Affordable Care Act also provides more flexibility in how the Corps administers the loan repayment program. In addition to monetary awards that are higher than previous years, the Corps will give members the option of working half-time to fulfill their service obligation and provide credit for some teaching hours.

“By the end of FY2011, we expect that over 10,800 clinicians will be caring for more than 11 million people, more than tripling the National Health Service

Corps since 2008,” said NHSC Director Rebecca Spitzgo. “By 2015, with the historic funding opportunities offered by ARRA and the Affordable Care Act, the Corps will support more than 16,000 new primary care professionals.”

For the first time, clinicians may apply to the NHSC loan repayment program online where they will find tutorials and additional information to assist in the application process. Eligible disciplines include: physician, dentist (general or pediatric), psychiatrist, nurse practitioner (primary care), certified nurse-midwife, physician assistant, dental hygienist, psychologist (health service), licensed clinical social worker, psychiatric nurse specialist, marriage and family therapist, licensed professional counselor.

### Join the NHSC & Pay Back Your Student Loans

- \$60,000 – (Increased for 2011)  
2 Years of Service
- \$170,000  
5 Years of Service
- Total debt can be paid off  
[6 or More Years of Service](#)

### Follow the path to find your pot of NHSC Gold



Typical MT Road to the Pot of NHSC Gold, Photo by John Schroeck

The goal of the NHSC is to expand access to health care services and improve the health of people who live in urban and rural areas where health care is scarce. The NHSC recruits a variety of primary care, dental, and mental

health providers who are dedicated to serve communities in need.

National Health Service Corps members are required to practice full-time or part-time for at least two years in a NHSC approved site. Approved sites are located across the country in Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs).

Corps members are required to engage in clinical practice of the profession for which they were awarded a NHSC loan repayment award, at their approved site.

Many types of health care facilities are NHSC-approved sites. About half of Corps members serve in federally supported health centers. Other approved sites are rural and Indian Health Service clinics, public health department clinics, hospital-affiliated primary care practices, managed care networks, prisons, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement sites.

**As of January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2011, Montana has 250 approved NHSC sites across the state with 133 loan repayers and scholars working in Montana. You too can become one of Montana’s NHSC team members. Search for current NHSC eligible positions at: <http://nhscjobs.hrsa.gov>**

### Apply Online – [at the NHSC web site](#)

Create an account and complete the [online application](#). [Download and review the full Application Checklist and Instructions](#) to help you complete your application. Be sure to have your NHSC-approved site's name and address, which you will need to complete the online application.

[Download and review the full Application Checklist and Instructions](#) to identify the **additional documentation that may be required.**

For technical assistance:  
Call **1-800-221-9393** or visit HRSA  
[FAQs »](#) or you can contact PCO at  
406-444-3934 or [jschroeck@mt.gov](mailto:jschroeck@mt.gov)

### NHSC Vacancy Listing Instructions

Health centers can update their vacancy lists at any time. In order to maximize opportunities for recruitment, it is in the best interests of the health center to ensure this vacancy list is accurate and current.

Health centers submit a vacancy list with their NHSC R&R Assistance application and may update their vacancy list through the NHSC's Recruitment, Training, and Support Center (RTSC) at 1-877-313-1823. The NHSC vacancy list is posted on the NHSC Opportunity List Web site <http://nhscjobs.hrsa.gov/> and is for use not only by NHSC clinician participants, but by any clinician who visits the NHSC site.

### 2010-2011 MT State Loan Repayment Program (MT-SLRP)

The 2010-2011 MT-SLRP cycle is open for submission of applications. Eligible professionals include: Nurse Practitioners, Physician Assistants, Certified Nurse Midwives, Dentist, Dental Hygienist and Mental Health Professionals including Licensed Clinical Social Workers, Psychiatric Nurse Specialist, Marriage and Family Counselor, Health Service Psychologist and Licensed Professional Counselors.

For More Information about MT-SLRP  
Please contact:  
**Lisa Benzel** Director, SC MT AHEC  
(406)683-2790  
[lisa@mtha.org](mailto:lisa@mtha.org)



### Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program opens for applications

The Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program is a selective program of the U.S. Government that helps alleviate the critical shortage of registered nurses currently experienced by certain types of non-profit health care facilities by helping nurses working at them to repay their student loans.

In exchange for the initial two years service commitment, participants receive 60 percent of their total qualifying nursing education loan balance. For an optional third year of service, participants may receive 25 percent of their original total qualifying nursing education loan balance.

- Last year, NELRP received 6,978 eligible applications and made 954 initial awards and 135 continuation awards to RNs working at Critical Shortage Facilities.
- In addition, NELRP made 185 initial awards to nurse faculty working at eligible schools of nursing.
- Total obligated funds in the NELRP last year totaled \$56,961,802.49.

**Apply Today! Applications are due  
February 8, 5 pm ET.**

<http://www.hrsa.gov/loanscholarship/s/repayment/nursing/>

- Applicants selected to receive funding will be notified no later than September 30.
- Applicants who submitted complete application packages, but are not selected for funding, will be notified in October.



Photo by John Schroeck, MT

## Shortage Designations

**Starting January 2011, the Montana Primary Care Office is conducting phone surveys for primary care physicians and mental health providers. This information is critical for completion of shortage designations over the next few years. Please ask your providers to complete this survey when contacted!**

### Current Pending HPSA Designations

These applications are currently being reviewed by the Shortage Designation Office, HRSA. For more information about shortage designations please visit: <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/shortage/>

Primary Care – Mineral HPSA

## Montana J-1 Visa Waiver Guidelines update of status

The Montana J-1 Visa Waiver guidelines are under revision. As soon as the revisions are completed they will be released for public comment.

The Montana PCO has approved two new J-1 applications since October 1, 2010. There are still 28 J-1 slots available for Montana through September 31, 2011.



Photo by John Schroeck, MT

## PCO Contact Information

As always, if you need additional information about the NHSC, shortage designations or foreign medical graduates, please don't hesitate to contact us at the address or telephone numbers listed below:



John Schroeck, M.Ed.  
MT PCO Officer  
Montana Primary Care Office  
MT DPHHS  
(406) 444-3934  
(406) 444-2606 Fax  
[jschroeck@mt.gov](mailto:jschroeck@mt.gov)



Mark Squires  
MT PCO Specialist  
MT DPHHS  
(406) 444-2660  
(406) 444-2606 Fax  
[msquires@mt.gov](mailto:msquires@mt.gov)

1400 Broadway  
PO Box 202951  
Helena, MT 59620

Montana PCO Web Site:  
<http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/PHSD/Primary-Care/primary-care-index.shtml>

