

Alaska DHSS Public Notice

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

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PUBLIC NOTICE on SHARP-I: Opportunity for Healthcare Practitioner Loan Repayment for State Fiscal Year 2017

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) announces a SHARP-I loan repayment opportunity for selected healthcare practitioners in State Fiscal Year 2017.

• **SHARP-I Site Application**

- SHARP-I Site Application forms will be available for **Site Applicants** on SHARP website, from 12/1/16 & onward.
- All Site Applicants must also sign and endorse the provided Attestation Page, which will also be on SHARP website.
- The SHARP website address is: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/HealthPlanning/Pages/sharp/default.aspx> .

- **Due-date for all SHARP-I Site Applications** is: Wednesday, February 15th, 2017 at 5:00 pm.
- For technical assistance teleconferences, which are optional, interested sites can call-in.
 - Content repeats on the following dates
 - Call (800) 944-8766, then code 18105
 - Friday Dec. 16th from 11:00-12:00
 - Friday Jan. 20th from 11:00-12:00
 - Friday Feb. 10th from 11:00-12:00

• **SHARP-I Practitioner Application**

- **The Practitioner Application forms** are due no later than: Wednesday, February 15th, 2017 at 5:00 pm.
- Practitioner Application forms will be found at: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/HealthPlanning/Pages/sharp/default.aspx> .
- Blank Practitioner Application forms will be available on that website from: 12/1/16 through 2/15/17 at 5:00 pm.
- All eligible applications will be reviewed for prioritization no later than: February 22nd, 2017
- Service contract (MOA) are projected to start on or after: March 1st, 2017

SHARP-I: New Opportunities for Healthcare Practitioner Loan Repayment for State Fiscal Year 2017

SHARP is designed to help ensure that residents throughout the state, including recipients of medical assistance and/or Medicare, and the uninsured, experience improved access to healthcare services. SHARP 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. The goal of Alaska's SHARP program is to increase recruitment and retention of healthcare practitioners to serve in DHSS-designated healthcare service shortage areas in exchange for the repayment of qualifying education loans.

SHARP-I is for those practitioners who provide direct patient care (medical, dental or behavioral health) typically in primary care or related settings. Practitioners who are selected sign a two-year memorandum of agreement (service contract) stating their commitment to serve in identified high-need areas and facilities, beginning in SFY 2017. DHSS anticipates that up to about 40 practitioners will be awarded contracts as a result of this solicitation. Both full-time and half-time options are available.

SHARP-I is operated by DHSS, in accordance with the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Grant # H56CR25037 (aka State Loan Repayment Program). Selection of SHARP candidates is based on funding availability and SHARP Council's assessment of prioritized community, facility and population needs. This opportunity also depends on the type of facility, and whether the individual position is categorized as full-time or half-time, and either regular-fill or a very hard-to-fill.

Eligible practitioner categories for SHARP-I are grouped into two tiers. Tier 1 includes: Doctor of Allopathic Medicine (M.D.); Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.); Dentist (D.D.S. or D.M.D); and Pharmacist. Tier 2 includes: Clinical or Counseling Psychologist (Ph.D. or Psy.D.); Licensed Clinical Social Worker; Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC); Marriage and Family Therapist; Nurse Midwife; Nurse Practitioner; Physician Assistant; Registered Clinical Dental Hygienist; & Registered Nurse (R.N.).

Loan repayment support is paid in the amount of up to a maximum annual benefit for the participating 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. This loan repayment is exempt from federal personal income tax according to federal regulation governing state loan repayment programs. 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. Once a practitioner has received an initial two-year contract award, and remains in good standing then he/she is welcome to apply upon completion of initial contract. However, all applications occur in a competitive process, and thus receipt of an initial award does not ensure receipt of a second contract.

During this SHARP-I solicitation, a variety of healthcare delivery locations are anticipated to become eligible, including selected private non-profit and public (government) healthcare sites. Examples include, but are not limited to, community health centers, critical access hospitals, community mental health clinics, tribal health entities, drug treatment facilities, long-term care facilities and others. Among the factors considered for SHARP-I site eligibility, the site must be identified as, or being within, a federally-designated Health Professions Shortage Area (HPSA). This iteration of SHARP-I funding requires a partial employer matching-payment at the rate of 34% (minimum), payable upon quarterly invoice. A partial waiver of this match requirement is possible in those unusual circumstances wherein the applicant-agency demonstrates an “inability to pay.”

SHARP-I service-contract awards are funded by a range of sources that include: U.S. Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA), the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA), the Alaska Division of Behavioral Health, the Mat-Su Health Foundation, and required partial employer match.

Application guidelines, forms and contract-example will be available on SHARP’s website beginning December 1st, 2016. SHARP website address is: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/HealthPlanning/Pages/sharp/default.aspx> . Both individual healthcare practitioners and individual healthcare delivery sites (agencies) are welcome to apply individually. However, all finalist decisions are for the purpose of offering joint practitioner-site service contracts. That is, each party can apply separately, but final contracts are provided jointly. For this and other reasons, interested clinicians are strongly urged to begin dialogue with their current or prospective employers (sites) at their early opportunity. If there are individual practitioners and site applicants in need of corresponding partners then SHARP may be able to provide respective contact information.

This SHARP-I solicitation is time-limited with practitioner applications being accepted only from Thursday 12/1/16 to Wednesday 2/15/17, at 5:00 pm (AT). All practitioner applications must be submitted in the web-provided clickable PDF format, via emailed attachment to: robert.sewell@alaska.gov . In the unusual case that another route of practitioner application-submission is needed, then please contact Robert Sewell (phone 907-465-4065) for arrangement.

Site applications (from applicant-agencies) will be accepted on an ongoing basis. However, for purposes of this solicitation, all SHARP-I site applications are due no later than Wednesday Feb. 15th, 2017, at 5:00 pm. All site application forms and any supporting documents must be submitted by emailed attachments. In the unusual case that another route of site application-submission is needed, then please contact Robert Sewell (phone 907-465-4065) for arrangement.

The SHARP Advisory Council will meet during February 2017 to make SHARP-I award decisions. Decision results will be announced in later February 2017. All applicants will be notified in writing as to outcome. It is anticipated that those practitioners who are admitted may begin service contracts as early as March 1st, 2017. 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 are scheduled for interested parties to learn more about this SHARP-I opportunity, and to receive technical assistance. The teleconference call-in number to use is (800) 944-8766, then pass-code: 18105. Dates & times follow:

- Teleconference schedule for interested Practitioners:
 - 12-13-16 – Tuesday (9:00-10:00 am)
 - 01-18-17 – Wednesday (5:00-6:00 pm)
 - 02-09-17 – Thursday (12:00-1:00 pm)

- Teleconference schedule for interested Sites:
 - 12-16-16 – Friday (11:00 – 12:00 noon)
 - 01-20-17 – Friday (11:00 – 12:00 noon)
 - 02-10-17 – Friday (11:00 – 12:00 noon)

All interested parties are asked to use the scheduled teleconferences listed above to have their questions addressed. If this is not possible for you, then Robert Sewell, SHARP Program Director, is available for questions via e-mail (preferred) at robert.sewell@alaska.gov or phone 907-465-4065. For more information about Alaska's SHARP program, please review the SHARP website on or after 12/1/16 at the following web address: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/HealthPlanning/Pages/sharp/default.aspx> .

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.