

Growing the Health Workforce and the Biden-Harris Administration

The National Health Service Corps

Thanks to the efforts of the Biden-Harris Administration, the National Health Service Corps has grown to historic levels. The National Health Service Corps is the signature federal program that provides scholarships and loan repayment to train more primary care health professionals and incentivize primary care health professionals to practice in historically underserved and rural communities. Participants receive federal support in return for their commitment to serve in the highest need communities. As a result, family and internal medicine physicians, pediatricians, geriatricians, obstetricians, psychiatrists, psychologists, dentists, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, licensed clinical social workers, psychiatric nurses, marriage and family therapists, and licensed professional counselors are now practicing in areas that have had significant shortages of health care providers.

The Biden-Harris Administration has:

- **Funded Historic Growth in Scholarships and Loan Repayment in Return for Primary Care Practice in High-need Communities:** The Administration has supported nearly 25,000 clinicians through the National Health Service Corps, including awarding a historic 2,994 scholarships and making more than \$1.1 billion in loan repayments to 24,024 primary care providers in return for their service in health professional shortage areas. Investments during this Administration have supported nearly one-third of all National Health Service Corps participants in the 50-year history of the program.
- **Increased Award Amounts To Better Reflect the Cost of Medical Education:** In this Administration, the National Health Service Corps raised the award amount for primary care providers by 50% to better reflect the growing cost of medical education and the increased challenge of recruiting primary care providers to high-need areas—including rural areas. Today, primary care providers are eligible for \$75,000 in loan repayment in return for a 2-year service commitment. As a result, applicants to this loan repayment program grew by 34% in 1 year.
- **Added Incentives To Encourage Maternal Care Providers to Practice Where They Are Needed Most, Including Rural Communities:** The Administration created an enhanced loan repayment for obstetricians, nurse-midwives, and family medicine physicians practicing obstetric services to participate in the National Health Service Corps, and has recruited nearly 50 maternal care providers to areas with limited services thanks to these incentives.
- **Expanded Language Access to Improve Care:** The Administration launched an award enhancement for applicants who could demonstrate capacity to provide medical care in Spanish to help health care organizations improve health care quality and patient and provider experiences. In the first year, more than 40 clinicians received this supplement.

National Health Service Corps Snapshot: Fiscal Year (FY) 2024

The National Health Service Corps field strength—meaning the number of clinicians practicing in high-need communities as part of their service commitment—was 17,419 clinicians at the end of FY 2024.

Program	Field Strength
Overall Field Strength	17,419
Loan Repayment Programs*	13,627
Scholars in Service	1,085
State Loan Repayment Programs	2,707

* Includes Traditional, Substance Use Disorder Workforce, Rural Community, Students to Service

- Mandatory funding for the National Health Service Corps expires on December 31, 2024, along with funding for the Community Health Center Program and the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education Program, impacting HRSA's ability to sustain these gains.
- Record numbers of scholarships were awarded in 2021 and 2022. Scholars finishing schools and entering service are helping to keep field strength numbers high for now, but this will decline in the years ahead without increased resources.
- If funded at the FY 2024 level, HRSA anticipates the field strength dropping by an additional 1,600 providers this year, as there are fewer scholars finishing school to enter service and various loan repayment recipients complete their service obligations and/or extensions.

Student and Health Professionals' Interest in the National Health Service Corps Is Very High

- In FY 2024, the National Health Services Corps was able to award just 5% of eligible scholarship applications and half of eligible loan repayment applications.
- Applications for the loan repayment program with a 2-year service commitment grew by 34% in 1 year, while the number of communities seeking National Health Service Corps placements also continued to grow.
- Consistent funding allows National Health Service Corps sites to more effectively recruit clinicians and for programs to reach and maintain a motivated, engaged pool of applicants.

Meeting the Primary Care Needs of the Nation

- More than half of National Health Service Corps participants serve at community health centers that treat people regardless of ability to pay.
- More than 6,700 participants are serving at rural sites.
- The demand for NHSC is expected to grow as primary care practices, hospitals, and clinics in rural and underserved communities are contracting or closing entirely.
- Reauthorization and investment are essential to maintaining primary care services in underserved and rural communities and building the workforce to deliver these services.



Scan to learn more about the Bureau of Health Workforce Field Strength and Student and Trainees Dashboard.

About the National Health Service Corps (NHSC)

The NHSC provides scholarships and loan repayment in exchange for commitments to work in rural or underserved communities. The NHSC is funded through both mandatory (approximately 70%) and discretionary appropriations. Since 1972, more than 80,000 physicians, dentists, behavioral health professionals, and women's health clinicians have completed NHSC service.