

Alaska DHSS Public Notice

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

Submitted by: RG Sewell

Submitted: Friday 6/15/18

PUBLIC NOTICE on SHARP-1: Opportunity for Healthcare Practitioner Loan Repayment for State Fiscal Year 2018

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) announces a SHARP-1 loan repayment opportunity for selected healthcare practitioners in State Fiscal Year 2018. This is SHARP's standard solicitation for clinician applicants (Cohort-A).

Due-Date for Applications

The due date for all application forms and materials for this solicitation is Friday, 8/31/18 at 5:00 pm. Email all application forms and supporting document(s) to SHARP.Applications@alaska.gov by the due date. Any application that is not completed by the due-date will not be further considered.

SHARP-1 Employer (Site) Application

During this solicitation, we anticipate that many healthcare agencies will become eligible, including private non-profit and public (government) healthcare sites. Examples include, but are not limited to, community health centers, critical access hospitals, community mental health (behavioral health) clinics, tribal health entities, drug treatment facilities, long-term care facilities and others. For a site to be eligible, it must have the designation as, or be within, a federal Health Professions Shortage Area (HPSA).

- SHARP-1 site application forms will be available for all employer applicants on SHARP website from 6/15/18 and 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> .
- SHARP does not charge a cost for employers to submit an application for this solicitation.

SHARP-1 Practitioner (Clinician) Application

Eligible practitioner categories for SHARP-1 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; and Registered Nurse (R.N.).

- Practitioner application forms will be available at <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/HealthPlanning/Pages/sharp/default.aspx>
- Application forms will be available on that website from: 6/15/18 through 8/31/18 at 5:00 pm.
- All eligible applications will be reviewed for prioritization no later than: 9/21/18
- The date of submission (within the eligible range) is not relevant in the prioritization process.
- SHARP does not use a “first come, first served” approach to applications review or selection.
- For selected finalists, we expect that service contracts resulting from this solicitation will start on or soon after 10/1/18.
- SHARP does not charge a cost for practitioners to submit an application for this solicitation.

Contract Award Amounts

Loan repayment support is paid in an amount of up to the maximum annual benefit for the practitioner. Those maximum amounts are Tier-1: \$35,000 - \$47,000, and Tier-2: \$20,000 - \$27,000. All SHARP education loan repayments are exempt from federal personal income tax according to federal regulation. SHARP’s support-for-service awards are strictly in addition to (and is not a supplanting of) the clinician’s regular employer-provided wage and benefit. Once a practitioner has received and completed an initial two-year contract award, and remains in good standing, he/she is welcome to apply again. However, all applications occur within SHARP’s standard competitive process. Receiving an initial contract does not automatically ensure receipt of a second contract.

Notice of HRSA Grant Award

For SHARP-1, the pivotal funding resource is our federal HRSA-SLRP partnership grant. SHARP applied for this competitive continuation grant on 5/7/18. We are now awaiting notice from HRSA to our results from that application. As background, our program has won the SLRP grant during three prior award cycles. At this point, we expect to receive a federal Notice of Grant Award (NGA) on or about 8/1/18. A Public Notice will be issued once the HRSA NGA is received. The amount of funds available is the key determinant as to the ultimate number of practitioner service contracts to be awarded. SHARP will not issue any service contracts until after it receives HRSA’s Notice of Grant Award. In anticipation of the still-to-be-received federal Notice of Grant Award (NGA), we are proactively announcing the opening of our SHARP-1 clinician and employer application cycle. The benefit of opening SHARP’s application cycle now, prior to receipt of our NGA, is that this will allow interested clinicians and employers much more time to apply, and as well, a much earlier potential start-date for finalists.

Technical Assistance

For technical assistance, statewide teleconferences are scheduled for interested parties to learn more about this SHARP-1 Cohort-A opportunity. These teleconferences are optional, and any interested party can call-in. Content repeats on the following dates.

- Call 888-392-4560 then dial NEW code, which is 5818485
 - Friday 6/22: 11:30-12:30
 - Friday 6/29: 11:30-12:30
 - Friday 7/13: 11:30-12:30
 - Friday 7/27: 11:30-12:30
 - Friday 8/10: 11:30-12:30
 - Friday 8/24: 11:30-12:30

Contact Information

Please direct all individual inquiries about this opportunity to: sharp.inquiry@alaska.gov.

All interested parties are asked to use the scheduled teleconferences listed above to have their questions addressed.

For more information about Alaska's SHARP program, please review the SHARP website on or after 6/15/18 at the following web address:

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/HealthPlanning/Pages/sharp/default.aspx> .

If you are a person with a disability who requires a special accommodation to participate in this process, please contact Robert Sewell, SHARP Program Director, at robert.sewell@alaska.gov or phone 907-465-4065. Please do so no later than five days before the accommodation is needed to ensure that any necessary accommodations can be provided.

No-Cost Application

SHARP is not charging any cost to either clinicians or employers for applying, and no other cost(s) are anticipated to result from this solicitation's application process. This SHARP-1 Cohort-A application is a "no-cost" opportunity.

Information about SHARP-1: New Opportunities for Practitioner Loan Repayment in SFY 2018

What is SHARP?

SHARP is designed to help ensure that residents throughout the state, including recipients of medical assistance 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 designated healthcare service shortage areas in exchange for specified support-for-service payments (e.g. education loan repayment). SHARP selects all practitioner-participants only through its standard competitive process. For selection, SHARP Council's recommendation is required. More information about Alaska's SHARP Program is available at:

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/HealthPlanning/Pages/sharp/default.aspx> .

What is SHARP-1?

SHARP-1 is for those practitioners who provide direct patient care (medical, dental or behavioral health) typically in primary care or related settings. We have successfully applied for the SLRP grant opportunity three times before. In these, each participating clinician signs a two-year service contract (memorandum of agreement) stating his/her commitment to serve in an identified high need area or facility, beginning in SFY 2018. SHARP-1 is operated by DHSS, in accordance with the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) guidelines. 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 classified as (1) full-time or half-time and (2) either regular-fill or a very hard-to-fill; and (3) tier level. Further information as to whether a position is categorized as regular-fill vs. very hard-to-fill can be found at [Position Type: Regular v. Very Hard-to-Fill](#).

Funding Sources and Planned Project Size

Highlights of this four-year project's plan and budget include (a) \$16,800,000 budget overall, (b) \$4,000,000 from HRSA, (c) \$800,000 from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA), and (d) \$12,000,000 from other contributors (principally employers). The planned total clinician census is 282 FTE, comprised of 107 medical, 105 behavioral health and 70 dental practitioners. Both full-time and half-time options will be available. The project will have two cohorts (A and B), with each containing about half of the total planned census. Cohort-A is expected to begin service contracts on or around 10/1/18. A key determinant as to the ultimate size of the budget and clinician census will be the federal Notice of Grant Award, which is still pending.

Final Service Contract has Three Parties

Application guidelines, forms and a contract-example will be available on SHARP's website beginning 6/15/18. The SHARP website address is <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/HealthPlanning/Pages/sharp/default.aspx> . Both individual healthcare practitioners and individual healthcare delivery sites (i.e. employers, or agencies) are welcome to apply separately (i.e. without the corresponding partner yet identified). However, all finalist decisions are for offering joint practitioner-employer service contracts. Thus, each party can apply separately, but we only provide final contracts jointly. SHARP urges interested clinicians to begin dialogue with their prospective or current employers at their earliest opportunity. If

individual practitioners and site applicants are in need of corresponding partners then SHARP may be able to provide respective contact information.

Required Partial Employ Match

SHARP-1 funding requires a partial employer matching-payment at the rates stated here-below (minimum 50% of total contract value), 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.” There are three possible levels of required partial employer match. These are listed here below, and are further described at the web-link [Employer Match: Description and Process](#).

- Contract-1: 50% of total value
- Contract-2: 80% of total value
- Contract-3: Off-cycle awards

Council Decision and Announcement of Contract Awards

The SHARP Advisory Council will meet during September 2018 to make SHARP-1 award decisions. The Council will announce its public meeting via the regular DHSS Public Notice process. Each candidate will be notified in writing as to the decision on his/her application. We plan that those practitioners admitted to program may begin their contracts as early as 10/1/18. DHSS reserves the right to not accept any or all applications received, and further, it retains the option to solicit again for more candidates.

New Program Innovations for This Cycle

There are several new features for this SHARP-1 (SLRP-4) four-year grant project. These innovations are designed to make the program more flexible, and to substantially increase the program’s potential impact. These new features and their related web-links are listed below.

- Employer Recruitment Prerogative, see link [Employer Recruitment Prerogative](#).
- Demonstration-1: Recruitment and Retention of Substance Abuse Treatment Clinicians (24), see link [Demonstration Project 1: Recruitment & Retention of Substance Abuse Clinicians](#).
- Demonstration-2: Recruitment and Retention of Clinicians to Replace Locum Tenens (36), see link [Demonstration Project 2: Recruitment & Retention of Clinicians to Replace Locum Tenens](#).
- Site Eligibility for inpatient positions in tribally operated hospitals, and other critical access hospitals, see <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/HealthPlanning/Pages/sharp/default.aspx>.
- Off-Cycle Contracts (available between regular solicitations), see <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/HealthPlanning/Pages/sharp/default.aspx>.

Off-Cycle Applications

On 10/1/18, SHARP will begin accepting “off-cycle” applications on an ongoing (rolling admissions) basis. These off-cycle applications are for Type-3 contracts only. There will be a separate Public Notice issued for this off-cycle opportunity. For more information about off-cycle (Type-3) contracts, see <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/HealthPlanning/Pages/sharp/default.aspx>

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