

Alaska DHSS Public Notice

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

Submitted by: RG Sewell

Submitted: Tuesday 3/5/19

PUBLIC NOTICE on SHARP-1: Opportunity for Healthcare Practitioner Loan Repayment for State Fiscal Year 2019

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) announces a new SHARP-1 loan repayment opportunity for selected healthcare practitioners in State Fiscal Year 2019. This is one of SHARP's periodically issued standard applicant-solicitations.

Availability of Applications

The clinician application form and the employer application form for this solicitation will be available starting Monday April 1, 2019. Once this SHARP-1 application opportunity opens on April 1st the program intends to keep the application opportunity open because SHARP is implementing a new "rolling admissions" process. On 4/1/19 and thereafter, all instructions regarding how to receive and complete the SHARP application will be web-posted to <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/healthplanning/pages/sharp>. Thereafter, Alaska's SHARP Council will periodically meet in publicly noticed meetings to review and select from the pool of eligible applicants.

SHARP-1 Employer (Site) Application

During this solicitation, we anticipate that many healthcare agencies will be found 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 classified as eligible-to-apply, the site must at least either have the designation of, or be within, a federal Health Professions Shortage Area (HPSA). SHARP does not charge a cost for employers to submit an application for this solicitation.

- SHARP-1 site application forms will be available for all employer applicants on SHARP website from 4/1/19 and onward.
- All employer applicants must sign and endorse the provided attestation page, which will also be on the SHARP website.
- The SHARP website address is <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/healthplanning/pages/sharp>
- If an agency has already successfully applied to SHARP (any time after 1/1/18) then the agency need not submit another employer application. However, agencies are free to update their employer applications (e.g. requesting more occupations).

SHARP-1 Practitioner (Clinician) Application

Eligible SHARP-1 practitioner occupations 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 via the internet at <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/healthplanning/pages/sharp>
- Application forms will be available on that website from 4/1/19 and onward.
- 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 for either the review and/or selection of applicants.
- The program does not charge a cost for practitioners to submit a clinician application.

Service Contract Benefit

Education loan-debt 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, with the maximum amounts (within each Tier) dependent upon whether the position is categorized as “regular fill” vs. “very hard-to-fill.” 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 are 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 through the SHARP program’s standard competitive process. Receiving an initial contract does not automatically ensure receipt of a second contract.

Technical Assistance

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

- Call 888-392-4560 then dial code 5818485#
 - Friday 4/05: 11:30-12:30
 - Friday 4/12: 11:30-12:30
 - Friday 4/19: 11:30-12:30
 - Friday 4/26: 11:30-12:30
 - Friday 5/03: 11:30-12:30
 - Friday 5/10: 11:30-12:30

Contact Information

Please poses all individual inquires about this opportunity via email. The address to do so is 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 4/1/19 at the following web address: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/healthplanning/pages/sharp>

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 via 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 does not charge either the clinician or the employer for submitting an application, and, no other cost(s) are anticipated to result from this solicitation's application process.

Information about SHARP-1:
New Opportunities for Practitioner Loan Repayment in SFY 2019

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 using the program's standard competitive process. For selection, a SHARP Council's recommendation is required. More information about Alaska's SHARP Program is available at:

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/healthplanning/pages/sharp>

What is SHARP-1?

SHARP-1 is for those licensed practitioners who provide direct patient care (medical, dental or behavioral health) typically in primary care or related settings. The program has now successfully applied for the federal HRSA-SLRP grant opportunity four times. In these, each participating clinician signs a two-year service contract (memorandum of agreement) stating his/her commitment to serve in an identified high-needs area or facility. 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

For SHARP-1, the pivotal funding resource is periodic receipt of our recurring federal HRSA-SLRP partnership grant. This most recent grant project is our largest-to-date. Highlights of this current four-year project 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 are available. This project has two cohorts (A and

B), with each containing about half of the total planned census. Cohort-A began service contracts on and after 10/1/18. Cohort-B service contracts will begin on or after 6/1/19.

Final Service Contract has Three Parties

Application guidelines, forms and a contract-example will be available on SHARP's website beginning on 4/1/19. The SHARP website address is <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/healthplanning/pages/sharp>. Both individual healthcare practitioners and individual healthcare delivery sites (i.e. employers, or agencies) are welcome to apply separately (i.e. even without the corresponding partner yet identified). However, finalization of each service contract requires the joint agreement and signatures of the clinician and the employer. 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 finding a 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 regularly during the period of May 2019 and onward to issue periodic make SHARP-1 award decisions. Council addresses these and related matters in Business Meetings that are open to the public, which are pre-announced via the regular Alaska DHSS Public Notices process. All program-admittance decisions by Alaska's SHARP Council are conducted via use of blind case-code, and resulting Council decisions are considered final. Each applicant is notified in writing as to the Council's decision as to his or her application. DHSS reserves the right not to 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 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>
- Off-Cycle Contracts (available between regular solicitations), see <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/healthplanning/pages/sharp>