

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS
Stimulus Package
WORKFORCE

Economic Stimulus Statement: On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law a massive economic stimulus measure entitled the **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act**, or “ARRA” for short. The new law, which contains more than \$787 billion in spending and tax cuts, contains several major initiatives related to Health Centers, totaling well over \$2 billion.

Core Elements: \$500 million for primary care workforce development, including \$300 million for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) and \$200 million for the Title VII Health Professions and Title VIII Nurse Training Programs.

Of the \$300M for the NHSC administered by the Bureau of Clinician Recruitment and Services (BCRS), \$240M is for recruitment and \$60M for the field line to administer the program. Seventy five million of the \$300M will remain for the NHSC through September 30, 2011. Of the \$240M for recruitment, \$196M is for Loan Repayment, \$24M for the NHSC Scholarship Program (a 10% statutory requirement), and \$20M for the State Loan Repayment Program administered by HRSA’s Bureau of Health Professions (BHP).

It took 38 years to build the NHSC to the present 4,000 recipients; the ARRA doubles that in two years. As a result of the ARRA, BCRS anticipates recruiting an additional 4,200 primary care clinicians over the next two years – resulting in 8,722 years of service and providing an additional 18,076,800 primary care visits to 4,519,200 patients.

What can the funds be used for? Funds will not be directed to individual Health Centers but they can take advantage of increased recruitment and retention opportunities through the NHSC.

NHSC program policy update:

- BCRS will open up the NHSC application cycle soon and the application cycle will be continuous through 2010.
- BCRS anticipates a process of reviewing applications in groups as they come in – ie: 200 at a time – and processing all approved applications as soon as possible. BCRS anticipates making awards every couple of months as applications come in and are reviewed.
- BCRS is in the process of developing a Federal Register Notice that will address expanding the numbers of vacancies that can be listed per NHSC site. BCRS will continue to maintain geographic diversity. Presently, there are 6,986 vacancies among all disciplines; actually this number changes literally on a daily basis.
- Under the reauthorization of the NHSC in 2002, a part-time demonstration project can be implemented. BCRS is still considering the details.

- BCRS is working internally with HRSA staff to develop the capability for provisional qualification for loan repayment. At this time, BCRS envisions the ability to offer provisional qualification to persons in their last year of training who agree to practice in underserved areas. We believe this will be an important recruitment incentive that health centers can offer to health professions rotating through health centers.
- BCRS understands the concerns about the complexity of the loan repayment application and envisions that the new application will be somewhat less onerous but is still in the process of modifying.
- BCRS is developing a robust plan to recruit applicants which will employ a professional marketing firm, new social networking tools, and enhanced cooperation with external partners. NACHC has asked, but at this point there does not appear to be direct funding for PCA recruitment activities.
- BCRS is redesigning their website for better communication, which might be ready this Spring.

What is the time frame for accessing resources? It is anticipated that the new NHSC policy guidelines might be released in late April and May, 2009.

What will Health Centers have to do to receive benefit of the funding? Health centers, regardless of HPSA scores, should update their vacancy lists and their Recruitment and Retention Assistance Application now and, until we know the new guidelines, prepare for increased availability of NHSC loan repayment opportunities.

What resources are available to assist Health Centers to receive this funding?

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