

Alaska SHARP Program

Program Announcement of SHARP-1 Clinician Service Contract Opportunity

SHARP ANNOUNCEMENT re: SHARP-1 – Opportunity for Healthcare Practitioner Loan Repayment for State Fiscal Year 2022

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) announces the continuation of our SHARP-1 loan repayment opportunity for selected healthcare practitioners in State Fiscal Year 2022. This is our standard SHARP-1 applicant-solicitation. Alaska's SHARP Council has endorsed making this enrollment opportunity available to all eligible SHARP-1 occupations.

This here-announced **SHARP-1 “regular-cycle”** solicitation is competitive and is strictly dependent upon the availability of requisite federal funds. Alaska's SHARP Program has submitted its long-planned, and Council-endorsed, HRSA-SLRP-5 grant proposal. We now await anticipated receipt of award. This here-current announcement is proactive preparation for that planned outcome.

Availability of Applications

For both SHARP-1 and SHARP-3, both the practitioner application form and the employer application forms remain continuously available. To access the application forms, interested parties should click into the following link: [SHARP Inquiry Submission Form](#).

The SHARP Admissions Committee convenes monthly to review applications that have been submitted during the preceding month. For any month's consideration, know that applications must be received by the 15th of that month (i.e., due date is 15th of the month). For SHARP-1, the **ongoing monthly** Admissions Committee review regards our **SHARP-1 “off-cycle”** contract option.

IMPORTANT for THIS Announcement

In addition, we now expect that there will be a large upcoming opportunity for Alaska's SHARP Program to admit more practitioners into SHARP-1. This is because SHARP expects to win another large federal grant from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The resulting federal funds will be used to help resource new SHARP-1 clinician contracts. For more detail as to SHARP's now-anticipated federal grant, please see the accompanying SHARP-1 SLRP-5 Project Abstract.

To be included in the practitioner-applicant pool for this **SHARP-1 “regular cycle”** solicitation, practitioner applications must be received by Friday July 15th, 2022, at 5:00 pm (AT). Then, in later July 2022, the SHARP Admissions Committee will convene to review the received applications. For practitioners who are admitted, the expected contract start-date is to be Sept 1st, 2022 (or thereafter, given individual practitioner circumstance). The SHARP-1 service contract is a two-year (24 months) service commitment.

SHARP-1 Employer (Site) Application

During this solicitation, we anticipate that assorted healthcare agencies will be found eligible; including private non-profit and public (government) healthcare sites, (for-profit entities are not eligible for SHARP-1). 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 Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). Any interested party can learn whether any specific locality and/or facility has a HPSA designation by going to the following website: <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/shortage-area/hpsa-find>

- The SHARP website address is <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Emergency/Pages/healthcare/sharp/default.aspx>
- To be considered for participation, any interested healthcare employer must apply to become eligible.
- All employer application forms can be accessed through the following web-link: [SHARP Inquiry Submission Form](#)

SHARP-1 Practitioner (Clinician) Application

Alaska's SHARP Council has decided to make this solicitation open to all eligible SHARP-1 occupations. These eligible 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); Pharmacist, Clinical or Counseling Psychologist (Ph.D. or PsyD), and Nurse Practitioner with a doctorate; Tier-2 includes Licensed Clinical Social Worker; Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC); Marriage and Family Therapist; Nurse Midwife; Nurse Practitioner (without doctorate); Physician Assistant; Registered Dental Hygienist; and Registered Nurse (R.N.). To be eligible for SHARP-1, practitioners must be clinician generalists (aka primary care) who work largely in outpatient clinics. The exception to this allows for the inclusion of those practitioners who have substantial in-hospital duties in either tribal health organizations and/or critical access hospitals.

- Direct route to web-link for the Practitioner Application form is: <https://form.jotform.com/alaskasharp/sharp-practitioner-app>
- The Practitioner Application form, and more information, is also available by clicking: [SHARP Inquiry Submission Form](#)
- The SHARP website address is <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Emergency/Pages/healthcare/sharp/default.aspx>

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 annual amounts are: Tier-1: \$35,000 - \$47,000, and Tier-2: \$20,000 - \$27,000, with the maximum amounts (within each

Tier) dependent upon four factors: (a) occupation type (Tier-1 or Tier-2); (b) participation size (full-time or half-time); (c) amount of eligible loan-debt owed (i.e. program only pays up to “cap amount” per year); and (d) position type: regular fill vs. very hard-to-fill.

In addition to the payment amount, the benefit also includes other aspects. (a) One is that all SHARP education loan repayments are exempt from federal personal income tax according to federal regulation. (b) 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. (c) 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.

No-Cost Application

SHARP does not charge either the clinician or the employer for applying, and no other cost(s) are anticipated to result from this solicitation’s application process.

Contract Start-Date and Duration

The SHARP Council’s Admissions Committee meets monthly. Applicants that are admitted to program are then proffered a required SHARP service contract for inspection. Upon full signature by the practitioner, the employer, and that State of Alaska, then contract’s effective date is set. Once begun, know that all SHARP-1 contracts are (at least) two years (24 months) in duration. There are virtually no circumstances in which a clinician is authorized to leave contract earlier than 24 months of service.

For More Information

For more information about Alaska’s SHARP program, please review the Alaska SHARP Program’s website at the following web address: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Emergency/Pages/healthcare/sharp/default.aspx>. The program asks that ALL individual questions about SHARP be posed by clicking into the following [SHARP Inquiry Submission Form](#)

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.

Technical Assistance

For all questions, please pose those by clicking into [SHARP Inquiry Submission Form](#). In addition, for more technical assistance, two statewide Zoom calls are scheduled regarding this SHARP-1 regular-cycle opportunity. These Zoom videoconferences are optional, and any interested party can tune in. Topic: SHARP Technical Assistance re: SHARP-1 (two zoom meetings; content repeats)

- Option-1 Time: Jun 24, 2022, 02:00 PM Alaska
- Option-2 Time: Jul 8, 2022, 02:00 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81005863070?pwd=QzMyVkpUelRXT0JnengyellXTzJoZz09>

Meeting ID: 810 0586 3070

Passcode: 3601Cstree

Information about SHARP-1:

New Opportunity for SHARP-1 Healthcare Practitioner Loan Repayment in SFY 2022

What is SHARP?

SHARP is designed to help ensure that residents throughout the state, including recipients of medical assistance or Medicare, certain other recipients of federal health benefits (e.g., I.H.S.), 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 (in SHARP-1, this is only eligible education loan repayment, and does not include "direct incentive"). Alaska has now had considerable experience with support-for-service, having now issued more than 508 service-contracts to-date. SHARP selects all practitioner-participants only by 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/Emergency/Pages/healthcare/sharp/default.aspx>.

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 strictly on funding availability and SHARP Council’s assessment of prioritized community, facility and population needs.

Funding Sources and Planned Project Size

For SHARP-1, the key funding resource is periodic receipt of our recurring federal HRSA-SLRP partnership grant. Our most recent (current) grant project (SHARP-1 SLRP-4) is our largest-to-date. Further, we now expect receipt of our 5th HRSA grant award (SLRP-5). Highlights of this upcoming SHARP-1, SLRP-5 four-year project budget include contributions from: (a) the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (\$4,000,000, i.e., \$1M/year), (b) the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (\$800,000, i.e., \$200K/year), and critically (c) that from participating employers. Over the coming 4-year award period, we expect to issue at least 221 SHARP-1 service contracts.

This expected opportunity is strictly dependent upon available funds. Alaska’s submitted proposal to HRSA is currently under review. This “regular-cycle” solicitation is being conducted proactively, in anticipation of SHARP’s receipt of that federal grant.

Resulting Service Contract has Three Parties

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 SHARP only provides final (resulting) contracts jointly. Therefore, SHARP urges interested clinicians to begin dialogue with their current or prospective employers at their earliest opportunity. If individual practitioners and site applicants need to find suitable partners, then SHARP is (sometimes) able to provide helpful contacts.

Required Partial Employer Match

SHARP-1 funding always requires a partial employer matching-payment at the rates stated below (minimum 50% of total contract value), payable over time based on quarterly invoices. The phrase “total contract value” means the “support-for-service” (SFS) amount that is paid on the practitioner’s behalf (in SHARP-1 this means education loan repayment paid to the eligible lender). The phrase “employer match” means portion of total contract value. The phrase “administrative fee” means the statute-required cost-of-operation in an amount equal to 5% (five percent) of total contract value. The phrase “total contract cost” means the sum of (the “total

contract value” (SFS)) plus (the administrative fee). A partial waiver of this match requirement is possible in those extremely unusual circumstances wherein the applicant-agency proves an “inability to pay.” In the SHARP-1 “regular-cycle” solicitation, there are two possible levels of required partial employer match.

Contract-1 – Employer match at 50% of total contract value: It is expected that each employer that participates in this solicitation will be able to have its first three contracts (aka highest priority) with the 50% level of required employer match, provided that the employer, the position, and the practitioner are otherwise eligible.

Contract-2 – Employer match at 80% of total contract value: Experience has shown that several of the larger employers often seek to have more than three clinicians become SHARP participants from a given solicitation. This is quite fine, and encouraged, however within this solicitation more than the employer’s top three (highest priority) three resulting contracts for that employer will have an 80% level of required employer-match.

Required Administrative Fee

Beginning in October 2020, SHARP began charging a standard per-contract program administration fee. This regulations-required administrative fee is based on State of Alaska, DHSS regulation 7 AAC 80.045, and is equal in amount to 5 percent of each contract’s total value. For simple illustration, if the total contract value (amount paid to clinician) is \$100, then the program administrative fee is \$5, and thus the resulting total contract cost is \$105.

Council Decision and Announcement of Contract Awards

Alaska’s SHARP Council’s Admissions Committee meets monthly to review applicant data and then to potentially issue SHARP program award decisions. Council addresses these and related matters in business meetings that are open to the public, which are pre-announced via the regular DHSS Public Notices process. All program-admittance decisions by 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 regarding the application. DHSS reserves the right not to accept some or any applications received, and further, to solicit again for more candidates.

For the SFY-2022 “regular-cycle” solicitation, the Admissions Committee will convene in later July 2022. Thereafter, the employers of the Committee-endorsed candidates will be contacted for their required, respective employer endorsements. Then, the concluding step is SHARP’s issuance of a proffered SHARP contract for inspection and signatures by the employer, the practitioner, and the State of Alaska.

Robert Sewell, MA, Ph.D., Program Director
SHARP – Alaska’s Healthcare Workforce Incentive Program
Alaska Department of Health & Social Services
Division of Public Health, Sec Rural & Community Health Systems

ALL QUESTIONS should be submitted by clicking into: [SHARP Inquiry Submission Form](#)

Phone (907) 465-4065, E-mail: robert.sewell@alaska.gov
<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Emergency/Pages/healthcare/sharp/default.aspx>

