

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The National Health Service Corps (NHSC) is a federal government program administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Bureau of Health Workforce (BHW). Since 1972, the NHSC has been building healthy communities, ensuring access to health care for everyone, preventing disease and illness, and caring for the most vulnerable populations who may otherwise go without care. NHSC programs provide scholarships and student loan repayment to health care professionals in exchange for a service commitment to practice in designated areas across the country with a shortage of health care professionals. Today, more than 22,700 NHSC participants provide comprehensive primary medical, dental, and behavioral and mental health care at more than 19,600 NHSC-approved sites, serving over 23.6 million people who live in rural, urban, and tribal communities. NHSC participants work at NHSC-approved sites located in and serving [Health Professional Shortage Areas](#) (HPSAs), which are communities with limited access to care.

Clinicians at NHSC-approved sites may be eligible to apply to one of the five NHSC programs, including the [NHSC Scholarship Program](#) (SP), the [NHSC Students to Service Loan Repayment Program](#) (S2S LRP), the [NHSC Loan Repayment Program](#) (LRP), the [NHSC Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Program](#) (SUD Workforce LRP), and the [NHSC Rural Community Loan Repayment Program](#) (Rural Community LRP).

[The Division of Regional Operations](#) (DRO) serves as the regional component of HRSA BHW and supports the agency by:

- 1) Completing NHSC site visits and providing technical assistance to sites;
- 2) Reviewing and approving/disapproving NHSC Site Applications and Recertifications;
- 3) Providing support for recruitment and retention of primary health care providers in HPSAs;
- 4) Managing the scholar and S2S placement process; and
- 5) Coordinating with health care partners to promote and support HRSA programs.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS AND QUALIFICATION FACTORS

Eligible Site Types for NHSC Approval

The following types of sites may be eligible to become an NHSC-approved site (see the [“Glossary”](#) section for complete descriptions of site types):

- 1) Federally-Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) that are recipients of Public Health Service Act Section 330 grant funds;
 - a. Community Health Center
 - b. Migrant Health
 - c. Homeless Program

- d. Public Housing Program
- e. School-Based Program
- f. Mobile Clinic
- 2) Indian Health Service Facilities, Tribally-Operated 638 Health Programs, and Urban Indian Health Programs (ITUs);
 - a. Federal Indian Health Service (IHS)
 - b. Tribal/638 Health Facility
 - c. Dual-Funded (Tribal Health Clinic and FQHC 330 Funded)
 - d. Urban Indian Health Program
 - e. IHS Hospitals
- 3) FQHC Look-Alikes (LALs);
- 4) Correctional or Detention Facilities;
 - a. Federal Prison
 - b. State Prison
 - c. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Health Service Corps
- 5) Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Certified Rural Health Clinics (RHC);
 - a. Provider-Based
 - b. Independent
- 6) Critical Access Hospitals (CAH);
- 7) Community Mental Health Centers (CMHC);
- 8) State or Local Health Departments;
- 9) Community Outpatient Facilities;
 - a. Hospital Affiliated
 - b. Non-Hospital Affiliated
- 10) Private Practices;
 - a. Solo Practice
 - b. Group Practice
- 11) School-Based Clinics;
- 12) Mobile Units;
- 13) Free Clinics; and
- 14) Substance Use Disorder Treatment Facilities
 - a. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)-certified OTPs
 - b. OBOTs
 - c. Non-opioid outpatient SUD treatment facilities

Ineligible Site Types for NHSC Approval

The following site types are not eligible to become NHSC-approved sites, even if they are located in, or serve, a HPSA:

- 1) Inpatient Hospitals (EXCEPT for Medicare-approved CAHs and some IHS Hospitals);
- 2) Clinics that limit care to veterans and active duty military personnel (including Veterans Health Administration Medical Centers, Hospitals, and Clinics; military bases, and civilian health care providers in the TRICARE Network);

- 3) Other types of Inpatient Facilities and Inpatient Rehabilitation Programs;
- 4) Residential Facilities;
- 5) Local/County/City Correctional Facilities;
- 6) Home-Based Health Care Settings of Patients or Clinicians; and
- 7) Specialty Clinics and/or service specific sites limited by gender identity, organ system, illness, categorical population or service (e.g., clinics that only provide STD/HIV/TB services).

Eligible Auto-Approved NHSC Site Types

Eligible auto-approved NHSC sites must apply online to the NHSC by taking the following steps:

- 1) Login to the [BHW Customer Service Portal](#);
- 2) If the site is already listed under “My Sites” click on the site name, and then click “Start a NHSC Site App”;
- 3) If the site is not already listed under “My Sites” click “Create a New Site” on the left-hand sidebar. Once the site is created, click “Start a NHSC Site App”;
- 4) Complete the Site Application. Refer to the [Submitting the NHSC Online Site Application](#) section for more information about completing applicable sections of the online application;
- 5) Review and sign the NHSC Site Agreement; and
- 6) Submit the Site Application for review and approval.

Eligible auto-approved NHSC sites may submit an application to the NHSC at any point in the year and are not required to submit an application during the NHSC Site Application cycles, nor are they required to submit a Recertification Application every three years.

The following may be eligible auto-approved NHSC sites: 1) FQHCs; 2) FQHC LALs; 3) ITUs; 4) Federal Prisons; and 5) ICE Health Service Corps sites.

If an eligible auto-approved NHSC site has multiple eligible sites located in HPSAs, the NHSC must approve each site individually. NHSC auto-approval is not guaranteed, and sites seeking auto-approval of a site location must submit an online NHSC Site Application in order to receive a final determination of their eligibility as an auto-approved site.

In general, sites must meet **all** applicable requirements listed in the NHSC Site Agreement to be qualified to participate as an NHSC-approved site. Requirements that are not applicable to auto-approved NHSC sites are noted in the NHSC Site Agreement. The complete NHSC Site Agreement is available in [Appendix A](#).

HPSA Designation Requirement

HPSAs are designated by HRSA. These designations indicate shortages of primary care health professionals (medical, dental, or mental health care), and may be shortages in geographic areas (e.g., county), population groups (e.g., low-income), or facilities. Additional information about shortage areas, including HPSA scoring, can be found at [HRSA's Shortage Designation webpage](#).