North Carolina Office of Rural Health

Placement Services Team

Guidelines:
Primary Care Physicians Initiative: Loan Repayment Program ONLY
Application Portal Will Open on April 21, 2025, at 8:00 a.m.

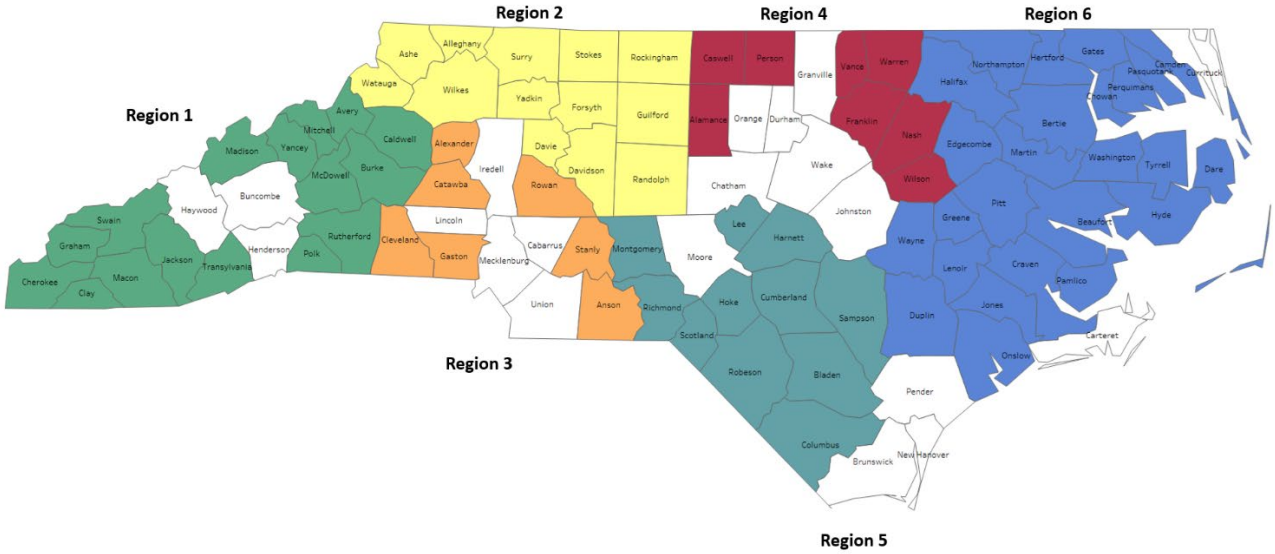
Revised: March 31, 2025

Placement Services Team
2009 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2009
Office: 919-527-6440
NC DHHS: Medical, Dental, and Psychiatric Recruitment Opportunities for Providers

The Office of Rural Health (ORH) offers qualifying physicians, with educational (student) loan debt, incentive payments to repay their loans tax-free through the Primary Care Physicians Initiative (NC PCPI). With the passage of Session Law 2023-134, incentive payments are awarded to eligible physicians in exchange for providing comprehensive primary care services in outpatient settings at eligible sites serving those with the highest need located within Tier 1 and Tier 2 of the North Carolina's County Distress Rankings (Tiers).

Funding is limited and the awards will be based on a first-come, first-served basis for eligible and complete applications. ORH anticipates up to 16 awards in each of the six Medicaid Regions. The application portal will not accept more than 20 applications per Medicaid Region.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to review these guidelines carefully and gather necessary documentation so that when the application portal opens on April 21, 2025, at 8:00 am, applicants will be prepared to complete the on-line application in its entirety.



The **NEW** **Primary Care Physicians Initiative (NC PCPI)** is state funded and modeled after the federal program, National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program (NHSC LRP) and the long-standing state funded North Carolina Loan Repayment Program (NC LRP).

The Primary Care Physicians Initiative (NC PCPI) is administered by the ORH Placement Services Team.

Prior to 2025, independent private practices located in rural, medically underserved areas of the State were not deemed *automatically* eligible practice sites for the state funded North Carolina Loan Repayment Program (NC LRP). In State Fiscal Year 2024, ORH received one-time funding to launch the Primary Care Physicians Initiative (NC PCPI). The Primary Care Physicians Initiative creates a loan repayment program that automatically qualifies independent private practices in Tier 1 and Tier 2 of the North Carolina's County Distress Rankings (Tiers) as eligible practice sites; provided that such independent private practices meet all of the following criteria:

a. Are wholly-owned and operated by physicians rather than by a hospital, health system, or other entity.
b. Have at least one provider enrolled in the North Carolina Medicaid program and accept patients who are Medicaid recipients.
c. Recruitment and retention of licensed allopathic or osteopathic primary care physicians in rural, underserved areas of the State who specialize in Family Medicine, General Internal Medicine, General Surgery (within critical access hospitals only), General Pediatrics, Obstetrics/Gynecology, or Psychiatry.

BOTH PHYSICIANS AND SITES MUST MEET ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS, PLEASE READ AND REVIEW THIS DOCUMENT IN ITS ENTIRETY.

Provider Eligibility, Awards and Commitments

Physicians	Incentive Awards (Based on Full-Time Employment)	Service Commitments
Primary Care Physician • **Allopathic (MD)** • **Osteopathic (DO)** **Serving within the following specialties:** • **Family Medicine** • **General Internal Medicine** • **General Surgery -FOR CRITICAL ACCESS HOSPITALS ONLY** • **Obstetrics/Gynecology (OB/GYN)** • **General Pediatrics** • **Psychiatry**	Up to $100,000	Up to 4 years
• Pro-rated awards are given for Part-Time employment. • All award amounts (whether full or part-time employment) are based on documented educational (student) loan debt or up to the maximum award amounts listed above. **For Example**: A provider with an educational loan debt of $45,000 could only receive an award amount up to $45,000 instead of the maximum award amount of $100,000 (allowed for a provider).		

Section A: Physician Eligibility Requirements

All physicians applying for Primary Care Physicians Initiative (NC PCPI) must meet the following program requirements:

1. Start date of employment: Must be **within 5 years of submitting a NC PCPI application**
   - Cannot be more than 5 years unless the applicant has completed a previous service commitment and is submitting an application within **5 years of completing another service commitment**.
2. Must have educational (student) loan debt
3. Unrestricted license to practice in the State of North Carolina
4. United States citizenship or permanent resident status
5. Not currently under **<u>any</u>** existing service commitment, however, physicians can apply for NC PCPI within 5 years after completing a previous service commitment

   Employment Contracts between physicians and sites are not considered service commitments for the purpose of Primary Care Physicians Initiative (NC PCPI)

   Some common examples of service commitments (list is not all inclusive)
   - Forgivable Education Loans for Service (FELS)
   - National Health Service Corps Scholar (NHSC Scholar)
   - National Health Service Corps Student to Service (NHSC S2S)
   - Community Practitioner Program (CPP)

   Note: Physicians who have service commitments that are <u>deferred</u> are only eligible to apply for Primary Care Physicians Initiative (NC PCPI) ***after*** they have completely satisfied the deferred service commitment
6. **Employment Status**
   a. **Full-Time Employment**
      - Work at least 32 hours/week providing direct patient care at an eligible on-site clinical practice (Refer to Eligible Sites Section) Hours spent performing research, conducting administrative duties, or traveling are not direct patient care hours.
      - **Extended leave** over 12 weeks (i.e., Maternity, Paternity, Adoption Leave or severe/extended illness leave) must be reviewed and approved by the Office of Rural Health (ORH). ORH may update contract terms based on the date the provider returns to work

   b. **Part-Time Employment**
      - Work between 20-31 hours/week providing direct patient care at an eligible on-site clinical practice (Refer to Eligible Sites Section) Hours spent performing research, conducting administrative duties, or traveling are not direct patient care hours.
      - Pro-rated awards are given for part-time employment
      - **Extended leave:** Same as full-time extended leave above
7. **Primary Care Physicians Initiative (NC PCPI) incentive awards should only be applied to educational student loan debt**

Section B: Site Eligibility Requirements

All physicians applying for Primary Care Physicians Initiative (NC PCPI) must work at sites meeting ALL the requirements listed below:

1. Must be an Independent Private Primary Care Practice that is wholly-owned and operated by physicians rather than by a hospital, health system, or other entity.
2. The site must be located in a Tier 1 or Tier 2 county of the North Carolina's County Distress Rankings (Tiers) County Distress Rankings (Tiers) | NC Commerce. The site's physical address is required to determine eligibility. Sites are defined as the **ACTUAL work location** of the provider (e.g., The address where the provider shows up to work every day to provide comprehensive primary care)
3. If physicians work at multiple sites within the same organization, all sites must meet the eligibility criteria. For purposes of the NC PCPI, all sites must be in a Tier 1 or Tier 2 county.
4. Sites must have at least one provider enrolled in the North Carolina Medicaid program and accepts patients who are Medicaid recipients.
5. For General Surgeons only, the site must be at a Critical Access Hospital
6. Sites must provide comprehensive outpatient primary care services in eligible sites serving those with high needs. Comprehensive outpatient primary care is defined as preventive, acute and chronic primary health services that provide a continuum of care not focused or limited to gender identity, age, organ system, a particular illness, or categorical population (i.e., developmentally disabled or those with cancer)

   Note: Urgent care centers, emergency room departments, or sites owned or operated by hospitals or other health systems are not eligible.
7. Sites that provide comprehensive primary care services via telehealth may be considered, when the patient and the provider are located at eligible sites.
8. Sites cannot use loan repayment incentives to reduce a provider's salary

Section C: Application Process

- Funding is limited and the awards will be based on a first-come, first-served basis for eligible and complete applications. ORH anticipates up to 16 awards in each of the six Medicaid Regions. The application portal will not accept more than 20 applications per Medicaid Region.
- Physicians should review the entire Primary Care Physicians Initiative (NC PCPI) guidelines to ensure they meet the provider and site eligibility criteria. This is important so physicians can be prepared to upload the required information and documentation during the electronic application process.
- Only electronic applications will be accepted. Paper applications will not be accepted or reviewed. The physician applying must electronically sign the Primary Care Physicians Initiative (NC PCPI) application.
- The on-line application requires that applicants attest that the information submitted on the application is true, accurate and complete.
- ORH reserves the right to request additional documentation not listed on the electronic application to determine eligibility.

How To Apply: There is a two-step application process.

Application Link: On April 21, 2025, at 8:00 a.m., the link to begin the application process will be added to these guidelines.

To apply, applicants will complete the following two steps:

- The application process starts with applicants completing an eligibility screening questionnaire (screening questionnaire link will be provided on April 21, 2025). Based on the responses to the eligibility screening questions, physicians will be emailed an individual link that will provide access to the official on-line NC PCPI application. ***If there are problems with the application link, please contact Lisa McKeithan, Placement Services Manager at lisa.mckeithan@dhhs.nc.gov and/or at 919-527-6481.***

- Physicians must submit an on-line NC PCPI application and upload all required documentation using the NC PCPI Application Link sent to be considered for an award.

Processing Applications: An automatic email confirming receipt of the application will be sent to the applicant.

Award Notification: Applicants will receive an email notification of their applicant status within 10 business days of the application submission date. Awards are contingent upon availability of funding, final departmental approval, and completion of the contract process.

Section D: Required Documentation for the Application

The information below will be required to complete the electronic application process.

*Applicants are strongly encouraged to review the required application documentation carefully and gather necessary documentation so that when the **application portal opens on April 21, 2025, at 8:00 am**, applicants will be prepared to complete the on-line application in its entirety.*

Applicants will **enter basic Information** such as (list is not all inclusive) in the on-line application portal: Full Name, Personal Email Address, Work Email Address, Mailing Address, Degree, Discipline, NPI Number, License Number, Whether Provider is Enrolled in the Medicaid Program, Personal Phone Number, Work Phone Number, the Provider's Direct Supervisor's Name, Phone Number and Email, the Employment Site's County Tier Designation (County Distress Rankings (Tiers) | NC Commerce)

Applicants will Upload: A **signed statement** from the **provider's employer** on **company letterhead** documenting:

- Start date of employment/first day on the job
- Site name
- Site address: If the provider is working at multiple sites, the letter must document the address of each site.
- Total hours worked per week by the provider
- Total hours devoted to direct patient care per week by the provider
- Direct Supervisor's Name, Phone Number and Email
- Attestation that the site is wholly owned and operated by physicians.
- Attestation that at least one provider is enrolled in the North Carolina Medicaid Program and accepts patients who are Medicaid recipients
    - Name of Provider(s) enrolled in the North Carolina Medicaid Program.

If the letter does not include all the items listed above, the application will be deemed incomplete.

Applicants will Upload: If applicable, Previous Service Commitment: **A signed statement** from the **provider** documenting details about the previous service commitment. The letter must include the service commitment (i.e. National Health

Service Corp, NC Loan Repayment Program, Medical Society Community Practitioner Program) and the start and completion date of the service commitment.

Applicants will Upload: **Written official verification** documenting any **outstanding educational (student) loan debt** obtained from an United States institution showing **recent date**, **current principal owed**, **lender's name** and **provider's name**.

The lender can be a private or public entity within the United States; however, the debt must be for educational (student) loans only. No statements with other expenses (i.e., credit card expenses) added to educational (student) debt will be accepted. The lender **cannot** be an individual (i.e., a parent). Refinanced educational student loans and loans transferred to various loan servicers are considered if documentation is submitted that shows a **recent date**, **current principal owed**, **lender's name** and **provider's name**.

Note: A screenshot of an educational student loan account or a PDF of an official document may be accepted if it includes all required information underlined and listed above. Any document which does not appear official or does not include all the requested information will not be accepted. Loan Documentation in NotePad format will not be accepted.

Section E: Contracts and Incentive Payments

A provider's signature on the electronic Primary Care Physicians Initiative (NC PCPI) application does not constitute a contractual agreement.

Contracting Process:

1. Physicians will receive an email stating their application has been approved.
2. Once the contract has been approved by NC DHHS, the physicians will receive the contract by email.
3. The contract requires an electronic signature attesting that the accuracy of the information and acceptance of the contractual terms.
4. The contract must be signed by both the provider and Director of the Office of Rural Health to be considered executed.

All contracts are subject to the availability of funds.

Physician responsibilities under the contract:

- Physicians must submit required reports and surveys as requested by ORH while under contract including the Statement of Service (SOS) forms attesting that they are still in practice at the approved site.
- **Physicians should inform ORH immediately if they have any changes in personal information (i.e., name changes, address changes, contact numbers), work location, work hours or work assignments while under contract. Any major changes may require a contract amendment and delay incentive payments. If physicians do not inform ORH, they may be in breach of contract resulting in possible immediate termination of contract.**

General Information:

- Documents will be sent by email from ORH to the Provider. (***Physicians should check junk/spam folders, for these documents).***

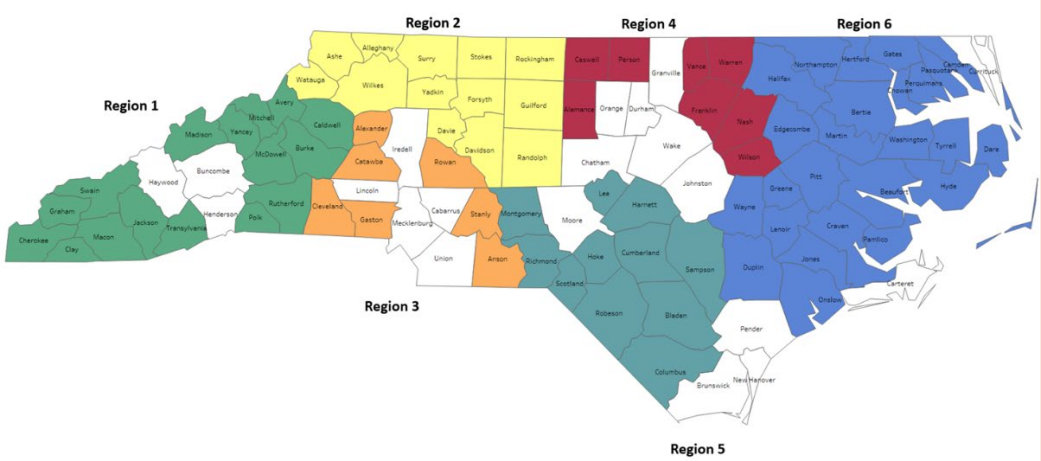
- NC PCPI incentive payments will be issued twice per year. Payments are disbursed upon the completion of six months of eligible service as confirmed on the required Statement of Service (SOS) forms. For example: If the executed contract is signed in July, the first incentive payment will occur 6-8 months after the contract execution date.

- ORH will send SOS forms to each provider approximately one month prior to their scheduled incentive payment. Physicians must complete and return the SOS forms no later than the documented due date associated with each SOS form. Payments will not be issued until the SOS forms are received and evaluated for completeness to document payment eligibility before any payment can be dispersed.

Placement Services Team Email Contact List

Program Manager: Lisa McKeithan

Recruiters are assigned by service areas across the state. The Medicaid regions are divided into service areas.



Recruiter	Counties Served			
Rachel Lane Rachel.Lane@dhhs.nc.gov Western Service Area for Medicaid Regions #1 and #2.	Ashe	Alleghany	Avery	Buncombe
	Burke	Caldwell	Cherokee	Clay
	Davidson	Davie	Forsyth	Guilford
	Graham	Haywood	Henderson	Jackson
	Macon	Madison	McDowell	Mitchell
	Polk	Randolph	Rockingham	Rutherford
	Stokes	Surry	Swain	Transylvania
	Watauga	Wilkes	Yadkin	Yancey
Karen Gliarmis karen.gliarmis@dhhs.nc.gov	Alamance	Beaufort	Bertie	Camden
	Carteret	Caswell	Chatham	Chowan

Eastern Service Area for Medicaid Regions #4 and #6.	Craven	Currituck	Dare	Duplin
	Durham	Edgecombe	Franklin	Gates
	Granville	Greene	Halifax	Hertford
	Hyde	Johnston	Jones	Lenoir
	Martin	Nash	Northampton	Onslow
	Orange	Pamlico	Pasquotank	Perquimans
	Person	Pitt	Tyrrell	Vance
	Wake	Warren	Washington	Wayne
	Wilson			
Maya Sanders maya.sanders@dhhs.nc.gov **South Central Service Area** for Medicaid Regions #3 and #5.	Alexander	Anson	Bladen	Brunswick
	Cabarrus	Catawba	Cleveland	Columbus
	Cumberland	Gaston	Harnett	Hoke
	Iredell	Lee	Lincoln	Mecklenburg
	Montgomery	Moore	New Hanover	Pender
	Richmond	Robeson	Rowan	Sampson
	Scotland	Stanly	Union	

At any time, questions or inquiries can be directed to:
Lisa McKeithan, Placement Services Manager
(919) 527-6481
Lisa.Mckeithan@dhhs.nc.gov