



November, 2013
Issue 3: Volume 5

Welcome to the Montana Primary Care Office (MT-PCO) News

Primary Care Awareness in 2013

National Primary Care Week 2013, highlighted the importance of primary care and the work of health care professionals and interdisciplinary health care teams to provide primary care, particularly to underserved populations. "Step Up to Primary Care" the 2013 theme, emphasized on the need to decrease disparities in health care access and outcomes pertaining to race, gender, and socio-economic status.

Primary care providers are often the first medical contact for persons with undiagnosed health issues. They provide continuing, comprehensive, and coordinated care to their patients.

A variety of studies have documented a relationship between primary care and improved health outcomes, increased quality of care and reduced health care costs.

Montana Retention Project Update

Montana's ARRA-funded National Health Service Corps (NHSC) providers were surveyed in the fall of 2012 to receive feedback on the most beneficial way to support their continued practice in Montana. The goal was to reach a minimum of 100 NHSC providers and MT received responses from 119. The majority of the responses were in favor of

educational webinars and stipends to attend Certified Medical Education (CME) courses, as continuing education budgets had been cut or drastically reduced due to the economy.



On the road to Helena after the MHA Conference 2013.

Based on these results, fifty-three clinicians were provided stipends to attend continuing education opportunities. Several providers shared their appreciation:

- "Thanks a ton for approving such a great opportunity. I'm excited to take what I've learned and apply it to my practice. If funding opportunities like this come available in the future please let me know."
- "I would really like to thank NHSC for the funding for this opportunity to learn more at this recent CME conference. It was a very worthwhile event!"

- “This will provide direct and immediate benefit to those I’m able to work with, most notably the elderly denture wearers that I care for.”
- “THANK YOU!!!! It was a wonderful opportunity! I really appreciated this assistance with obtaining my CEs!”
- “I would like to thank you for awarding the money necessary to attend the clinical supervision training. I am hoping I can take some of the knowledge I gained to benefit the NHSC. Even though, I have one more year of obligation, I always like to give back and I am hoping I can use the information from these trainings to continue to serve the NHSC into the future.”

Incumbent Worker Training

The Montana Incumbent Worker Training program is a **competitive grant program**, sponsored by the Montana Department of Labor that provides grant funding to help eligible Montana small businesses train their existing (incumbent) workers.

HOW TO APPLY

Contact your local [Job Service Office](#) to find more information on how to apply for this program.

COSTS THAT MAY QUALIFY FOR REIMBURSEMENT

Grant funding may reimburse all or part of the costs of training eligible employees, which may include health care providers. Reimbursable expenses include:

- Tuition, registration, fees, and required materials. Asset purchases are not eligible.
- Transportation required to attend training such as mileage or airfare.
- Lodging required to attend training.

The grant allows up to \$2,000 per year per full-time employee, and up to \$1,000 per year per permanent part-time employee.

Funding is allocated to the Department of Labor & Industry at the discretion of the Montana Legislature, and is not guaranteed. For more information please visit:

<http://www.wsd.dli.mt.gov/service/iwt.asp>

Recruitment Assistance in MT

There are a number of recruitment opportunities in Montana. Job seekers can search for positions by visiting the [3RNet.org](#) website or by searching Montana NHSC Job Vacancies at: nhscjobs.hrsa.gov In addition to these free job search sites, there are multiple Montana and National loan repayment programs available for primary care providers.

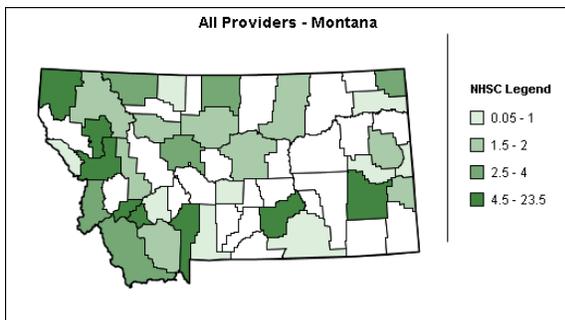
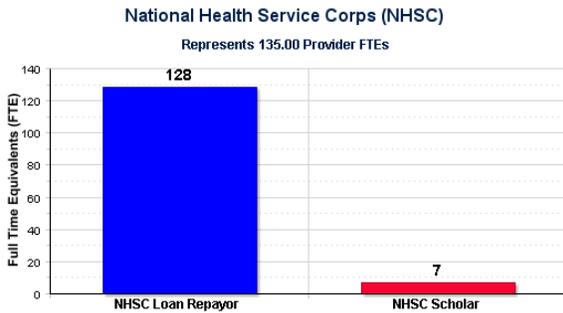
The largest program is the National Health Service Corps (NHSC), a federal program with the goal to improve access to health care for persons living in communities with a shortage of primary care providers. Currently, the following health care professionals can apply for loan repayment assistance: primary care doctors, dentists, dental hygienists, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental and behavioral health specialists. For more information about the NHSC visit the NHSC Website at: nhsc.hrsa.gov

The Montana State Loan Repayment Program is a Montana program funded with both federal and state funds. Information about this program can be found at: <http://www.scmtahec.org/loan-repayment-and-scholarships/>

Physicians practicing in Montana can also utilize the Montana Rural Physician Incentive Program. (MRPIP). More information can be found at: <http://mus.edu/Prepare/Pay/Loans/MRPIP.asp>

Current NHSC Statistics for Montana

As of October, 23, 2013 Montana had 366 approved NHSC sites across the state with 135 loan repayers and scholars working in Montana.



NHSC By Discipline in Montana October, 2013



Shortage Designations

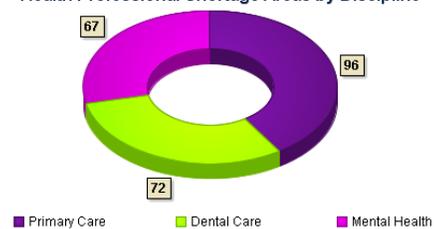
Health Professional Shortage Areas

All 56 counties in Montana have one or more federally designated Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs). Eligibility for resources from at least 37 federal programs is dependent on shortage designations, including the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) 10% bonus payments for providers working in geographic HPSA's.

In Montana, 25% of active physicians are age 60 or older and report they are likely to retire within 5 years. Nine counties are without any physician, 12 counties are without a primary care physician, and seven counties are without a hospital. An estimated 27,331 Montana residents live in counties without primary care physicians. In recent years there have been at least 19 openings for primary care physicians annually in Montana.

Current Number of Shortage Designations in MT October, 2013

Health Professional Shortage Areas by Discipline



Montana J-1 Visa Waiver Guidelines Update of Status

Montana has 29 of the 30 J-1 slots available for qualified applicants through September 30, 2014. J-1 slots are for eligible foreign medical school graduates.

PCO Contact Information

As always, if you need additional information about the NHSC, shortage designations, or how to apply for a J-1 slot, contact the Primary Care Office staff at the address or telephone numbers listed below:



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This newsletter is intended to communicate information to CHCs, RHCs, NHSC sites and other partners regarding shortage designation activities, NHSC, and J-1 activities and other matters of interest to partners. We welcome your input and recommendations regarding content.

