



# National Health Service Corps Site Reference Guide

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United States Department of Health and Human Services  
Health Resources and Services Administration  
Bureau of Health Workforce  
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Rockville, Maryland 20857

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PURPOSE .....	4
PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT PUBLIC BURDEN STATEMENT .....	4
PROGRAM OVERVIEW.....	5
INTRODUCTION .....	5
ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS AND QUALIFICATION FACTORS .....	6
PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS, REQUIRED DOCUMENTS, AND EXEMPTIONS .....	8
HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SHORTAGE AREAS .....	8
SLIDING FEE DISCOUNT PROGRAM .....	10
CLINICIAN RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PLAN .....	14
COMPREHENSIVE PRIMARY CARE.....	14
COMPREHENSIVE PRIMARY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES .....	15
SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER SERVICES .....	16
OPT-IN PROCESS .....	18
DATA REPORTING .....	18
NEW SITE APPLICATION AND RECERTIFICATION PROCESS .....	19
SITE POINT OF CONTACT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES .....	23
RECRUITING AND RETAINING A NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE CORPS CLINICIAN .....	29
SITE VISITS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.....	31
APPENDIX A: SITE AGREEMENT .....	34

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### A Letter from Candice Chen, MD

Dear National Health Service Corps Site Applicant,

Thank you for your consideration and time in applying to the National Health Service Corps as a new or recertifying site. For over 50 years, the National Health Service Corps has fulfilled its mission to connect a highly qualified group of health care professionals to people with limited access to care. As we move forward, we need sites like yours that are committed to providing care in high-need communities.

If your site is approved by the National Health Service Corps, we can assist you in recruiting, hiring, and retaining clinicians. Specifically, we:

- Provide recruitment and retention incentives through our loan repayment and scholarship programs for primary care clinicians who want to provide care to communities that are underserved.
- Offer opportunities to recruit and retain qualified and dedicated primary care providers, such as our Virtual Job Fairs, where you can meet and talk with job candidates.
- Help you promote your site and post job openings using the Health Workforce Connector, our online job board.
- Provide you with direct access to state and territorial Primary Care Offices that help increase access to primary health care services in your site's community.
- Offer networking opportunities with more than 22,000 sites that provide care in high-need communities.

We encourage you to read the National Health Service Corps Site Reference Guide and consider applying to become a new or recertified site.

Sincerely,

/Candice Chen, MD, MPH/  
Candice Chen, MD, MPH  
Associate Administrator for Health Workforce  
Health Resources and Services Administration  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the National Health Service Corps Site Reference Guide is to provide clarity on site eligibility requirements, qualification factors, compliance, roles, and responsibilities associated with being a National Health Service Corps-approved site. This guide supplements the information contained in the online National Health Service Corps Site Application.

The Health Resources and Services Administration expects sites to thoroughly review this document prior to completing a Site Application or Recertification, and to allow ample time for collection of required documents and application submission prior to the application cycle closing. The Health Resources and Services Administration will update the National Health Service Corps Site Reference Guide periodically with updated web links, changes to the governing National Health Service Corps statute and regulations and revised National Health Service Corps policies and procedures.

The requirements outlined in this document apply to sites that submit a National Health Service Corps Site Application in calendar year 2025, and all approved National Health Service Corps sites, including those required to recertify in calendar year 2025. Additional information and program changes applicable to National Health Service Corps sites, both current and those eligible to participate, are available on the [National Health Service Corps website](#) and in the [online application](#).

## PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT PUBLIC BURDEN STATEMENT

The purpose of this information collection is to obtain information for National Health Service Corps site applicants. Health care facilities must submit a National Health Service Corps Site Application or Site Recertification Application to determine the eligibility of sites to participate in the National Health Service Corps as an approved service site. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget control number. The Office of Management and Budget control number for this information collection is 0915-0127 and it is valid until 5/31/2027. This information collection is required to obtain or retain a benefit (Section 333(a)(1) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. § 254f(a)(1))). The information is protected by the Privacy Act, but it may be disclosed outside the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, as permitted by the Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act, to Congress, the National Archives, and the Government Accountability Office, and pursuant to court order and various routine uses as described in the System of Record Notice 09-15-0037. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 0.5 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the Health Resources and Services Administration Reports Clearance Officer, 5600 Fishers Lane, Room 14NWH04, Rockville, Maryland 20857.

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

The National Health Service Corps is a federal government program administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Workforce, and created to address a growing primary care workforce shortage. Since 1972, the National Health Service Corps has been building healthy communities, ensuring access to health care, preventing disease and illness, and caring for the most vulnerable populations who may otherwise go without care. National Health Service Corps programs provide scholarships and student loan repayment to health care professionals in exchange for a service commitment to practice in designated [Health Professional Shortage Areas](#). Eligible sites providing comprehensive primary care must become National Health Service Corps-approved **BEFORE** recruiting National Health Service Corps participants or supporting National Health Service Corps loan repayment applications from their existing clinician staff.

[The Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Workforce, Division of Regional Operations](#) is responsible for reviewing and evaluating National Health Service Corps site applications and recertifications to determine if sites meet program requirements and renders the final approval or disapproval decision.

### **BENEFITS OF BEING A NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE CORPS-APPROVED SITE**

National Health Service Corps-approved sites can use National Health Service Corps Scholarship and Loan Repayment Programs as incentives to help recruit and retain clinicians in eligible primary health, oral health, and behavioral health care disciplines. Additionally, many sites have benefitted from National Health Service Corps clinicians who have remained in their communities well beyond their original service obligation. Depending on eligibility, National Health Service Corps-approved sites may be able to recruit individuals participating in one of several different programs, including:

- [National Health Service Corps Scholarship Program](#)
- [National Health Service Corps Students to Service Loan Repayment Program](#)
- [National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program](#)
- [National Health Service Corps Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Program](#)
- [National Health Service Corps Rural Community Loan Repayment Program](#)

All National Health Service Corps-approved sites receive the benefits of interactive access to the [Health Workforce Connector](#), an online platform that allows you to:

- Create, manage, and advertise new job vacancies and training positions to recruit National Health Service Corps clinicians;
- Search candidate profiles where you can learn about the qualification factors, experience, and other relevant information that highlight a candidate's competencies; and

- View a comprehensive list of job seekers and students who have expressed interest in a position you advertised on the Health Workforce Connector.

For more information on creating and managing the site profile, refer to the [Site Point of Contact User Guide](#). Additionally, review the Health Workforce Connector [instructions](#).

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS AND QUALIFICATION FACTORS

### ELIGIBLE SITE TYPES FOR NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE CORPS APPROVAL

The following types of sites may be eligible to become a National Health Service Corps-approved site (refer to the online [Glossary](#) for complete descriptions of site types).

Auto-Approved Sites	Other Eligible Sites
<p>These sites are not required to apply for approval as a National Health Service Corps site during the Site Application cycles, or to recertify every three (3) years. New sites must submit a site application once they have become operational, but may apply at any point during the year*</p>	<p>These site types must submit a site application during the New Site Application cycles and recertify every three (3) years.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Federal prisons</li> <li>2) Federally Qualified Health Centers</li> <li>3) Federally Qualified Health Center Look-Alikes</li> <li>4) Immigration and Customs Enforcement Health Service Corps facilities</li> <li>5) American Indian Health facilities, including Indian Health Service facilities, Tribally Operated 638 outpatient clinics and hospitals with an affiliated outpatient clinic, Dual-Funded facilities, and Urban Indian Health Programs.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Centers for Medicare &amp; Medicaid Services Certified Rural Health Clinics</li> <li>2) Community outpatient facilities</li> <li>3) Critical Access Hospitals (with an affiliated outpatient clinic)</li> <li>4) Free clinics as <a href="#">defined</a> by the National Health Service Corps</li> <li>5) Mobile units (<i>that are not affiliated with a Federally Qualified Health Center or Look-Alike</i>)</li> <li>6) Private practices</li> <li>7) Rural Emergency Hospitals (with an affiliated outpatient clinic)</li> <li>8) School-based clinics (<i>that are not affiliated with a Federally Qualified Health Center or Look-Alike</i>)</li> <li>9) State or local health departments</li> <li>10) State prisons</li> <li>11) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers</li> <li>12) Substance use disorder treatment facilities (<i>that provide medication for opioid use disorder</i>).</li> </ol>

\* National Health Service Corps auto-approval is not guaranteed, and comprehensive primary care sites seeking auto-approval must submit a Site Application to determine eligibility and participate in the National Health Service Corps as an approved service site. "Operational"

implies that the site has completed its construction or setup phase and is now actively providing services.

### **INELIGIBLE SITE TYPES FOR NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE CORPS APPROVAL**

The following site types are not eligible to become National Health Service Corps-approved sites, even if they are located in, or serve, a Health Professional Shortage Area.

<b>Ineligible Site Types</b>
1) Inpatient hospitals (except Critical Access Hospitals, Rural Emergency Hospitals, 638 hospitals, and Indian Health Service hospitals, so long as these hospitals have an affiliated outpatient clinic)
2) Clinics that limit care to veterans and active-duty military personnel (for example, Veterans Health Administration medical centers, hospitals and clinics, and military treatment facilities)
3) Other types of inpatient facilities and inpatient rehabilitation programs
4) Residential facilities
5) Local/county/city/private correctional facilities
6) Home-based health care settings of patients or clinicians
7) Specialty clinics and/or service-specific sites limited by, organ system, illness, categorical population, or service (for example, clinics that only provide sexually transmitted diseases/human immunodeficiency virus/tuberculosis services)
8) Facilities that provide 100 percent telehealth services
9) Facilities that provide only general substance use disorder treatment services—such as addiction counseling—without integrated medication for opioid use disorder or comprehensive primary medical, oral health or mental health care services on-site.

### **TELEHEALTH, HOME HEALTH, AND ALTERNATIVE SETTINGS**

Only National Health Service Corps clinicians under a Federal or Private Practice Assignment can count telehealth toward their weekly service hour requirement, as long as both the patient’s location (**originating site**) and the clinician’s location (**distant site**) are National Health Service Corps-approved sites in a Health Professional Shortage Area.

Private Practice Option providers are not eligible to earn National Health Service Corps service credit for telehealth services.

Currently, National Health Service Corps clinicians can spend no more than 75 percent of their weekly patient-care hours providing telehealth services, and those telehealth services must be conducted from one eligible National Health Service Corps-approved site to another.

**Sites that provide 100 percent telehealth services are ineligible for approval as National Health Service Corps sites.**

National Health Service Corps participants who are performing telehealth are encouraged to utilize the [Health Resources and Services Administration’s Telehealth Resource Centers](#). These centers offer comprehensive technical assistance, training, and resources to help providers

implement and enhance telehealth services, with a focus on improving care delivery in underserved areas.

The National Health Service Corps does not recognize the homes of patients or providers as National Health Service Corps-approved service sites. As such, home visits, including telehealth to patients' homes, may only be conducted at the direction of the National Health Service Corps-approved service site and will only count toward the clinician's [approved alternative setting](#) allotment for patient care established in the [Application and Program Guidance](#) for the clinician's National Health Service Corps program.

## PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS, REQUIRED DOCUMENTS, AND EXEMPTIONS

The following sections outline the program requirements for National Health Service Corps-approved sites, including required documents and exceptions by site type. Depending on the site type, the required documents must be submitted at the time of a New Site Application, site recertification, site visit, or upon request to determine site eligibility.

### HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SHORTAGE AREAS

The Health Resources and Services Administration designates primary medical care, dental (oral health), and behavioral/mental Health Professional Shortage Areas with scores to indicate shortages of primary care health professionals in geographic areas (for example, county), population groups (for example, low-income), and facilities (for example, correctional facilities). The National Health Service Corps uses these scores to determine priorities for the assignment of clinicians.

National Health Service Corps-approved sites must:

- Be located in and treat patients from a federally designated Health Professional Shortage Area.
- Have a designated Health Professional Shortage Area for the specific category a National Health Service Corps clinician would serve.
  - For example, a National Health Service Corps-approved site would need to have a primary care shortage designation to recruit an internal medicine physician, a behavioral/mental health shortage designation to recruit a psychiatrist, and a dental shortage designation to recruit a dentist.
  - Sites providing substance use disorder services may use either a primary care or mental health professional shortage designation for the purpose of recruiting National Health Service Corps Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Program and National Health Service Corps Rural Community Loan Repayment Program participants, even if the sites do not provide primary medical care.

Contact your [state/territorial Primary Care Office](#) when applying for, or inquiring about, a Health Professional Shortage Area designation. For more information about shortage areas, including scoring, visit the [Health Resources and Services Administration Shortage Designation](#) web pages.



## Required Documents and Exceptions

Most site types are not required to submit documentation to demonstrate they are located in a Health Professional Shortage Area, as this is determined by existing data located in the Bureau of Health Workforce Shortage Designation and Management System. However, mobile units that are not part of a Federally Qualified Health Center and/or a health center must submit documentation. Please find more information under the “Mobile Units” section of this document.

### *Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services-Certified Rural Health Clinics*

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services-Certified Rural Health Clinics are not required to be in geographic or population Health Professional Shortage Areas to apply for site approval. For your clinic to receive a facility Health Professional Shortage Area score:

- You should submit an application, and under the section “Confirm Site Details,” include your Certification Number, so we can apply the facility shortage-area designation score. Please use the [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services directory](#) to verify your Certification Number. Ensure the address you enter in the site application matches the address connected to the Certification Number provided by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.
- If we approve your application, we calculate your facility Health Professional Shortage Area score and notify your site and the state/territorial Primary Care Office.
- If the National Health Service Corps approves your site application, but your site is not in a geographic or population Health Professional Shortage Area, the site will remain inactive until we calculate the facility Health Professional Shortage Area score. After the shortage designation scores are confirmed, the site will convert to an active site and will be able to participate in the applicable National Health Service Corps programs.

### *Correctional or Detention Facilities*

An eligible correctional facility can only use facility Health Professional Shortage Areas designated for that site. Correctional facilities do not serve patients of the general population, so they cannot use geographic or population designations for National Health Service Corps site approval. To qualify for a facility designation, a site must be a medium or maximum-security facility with at least 250 inmates. You must contact your [state/territorial Primary Care Office](#) to apply and obtain your correctional facility designation **before** applying to become a National Health Service Corps-approved site.

### *American Indian Health facilities*

Any American Indian Health facility located in a geographic, population, or other facility Health Professional Shortage Area may apply to the National Health Service Corps at any time, even if they do not qualify for a facility Health Professional Shortage Area designation.

If your American Indian Health facility is not located in a geographic, population, or other facility Health Professional Shortage Area, and qualifies for a facility Health Professional Shortage Area designation, you must obtain your facility designation **before** submitting the site application. This process can take up to 90 calendar days.

To receive a facility designation, your American Indian Health facility must have an “Area, Service Unit, Facility Code” number. However, the Indian Health Service may assign these numbers to a variety of administrative offices or facilities that do not meet National Health Service Corps site eligibility requirements. For example, American Indian Health facilities that are substance use disorder-only sites do not qualify as facility Health Professional Shortage Areas but may still apply to the National Health Service Corps using geographic, population, or other facility Health Professional Shortage Areas.

If your site qualifies for a facility designation:

- Contact the [Bureau of Health Workforce Division of Policy and Shortage Designation Branch](#) to apply for and obtain your facility designation.
- Include your “Area, Service Unit, Facility Code” number under the “Confirm Site Details” section of your application so the system can attach your site’s facility scores.

### *Mobile Units*

The National Health Service Corps recognizes mobile units (or clinics that are not part of a Federally Qualified Health Center and/or a Health Center) as medical vehicles—for example, mobile health vans—that travel to underserved rural and urban communities, providing a majority (>50 percent) of primary care services to individuals located in a Health Professional Shortage Area. To demonstrate that your mobile unit provides a majority (>50 percent) of primary care services to individuals located in Health Professional Shortage Areas, you must provide the following when applying, recertifying, during a site visit, or upon request:

- A list of the locations where the mobile unit stops; or
- An attestation letter stating that at least 50 percent of your mobile unit stops are in Health Professional Shortage Areas.

### **SLIDING FEE DISCOUNT PROGRAM**

Your site must use a Sliding Fee Discount Program to ensure patients have access to all primary care services regardless of their ability to pay. Eligibility for your Sliding Fee Discount Program must be:

- Based solely on family size and income; and
- At a minimum, applicable to all individuals and families with annual incomes at or below 200 percent of the most current [Federal Poverty Guidelines](#).

The implementation of a Sliding Fee Discount Program is intended to minimize financial barriers to care for patients at or below 200 percent of the current Federal Poverty Guidelines. Therefore, the required fees and the process of assessing patient eligibility and collecting payments must not create barriers to care.

Your site’s Sliding Fee Discount Program must include a policy, a patient application, a sliding fee schedule, a posted sign, and an online statement.

**Your site must have a Sliding Fee Discount Program in place for at least six consecutive months before applying** to become a National Health Service Corps-approved site and must maintain the Sliding Fee Discount Program continuously thereafter.

National Health Service Corps-approved sites must apply the Sliding Fee Discount Program for eligible patients with third party insurance coverage unless the third-party insurance contract prohibits the application of the Sliding Fee Discount Program. These patients may also be eligible for the Sliding Fee Discount Program based on income and family size. For example, the Medicare law requires clinicians to charge Medicare beneficiaries the same as they charge other patients. Medicare will accept Sliding Fee Discount Program discounts as long as the Sliding Fee Discount Program discount policy is uniformly applied to all patients.

### **Sliding Fee Discount Program Policy**

All aspects of your Sliding Fee Discount Program should be based on written policies, applied uniformly to all patients (including both uninsured and underinsured), and supported by operating procedures. At a minimum, your policy must address the following areas:

- Patient eligibility, including:
  - Frequency of patient eligibility re-evaluation
  - Income definition
  - Family size definition.
- Documentation and verification requirements to determine patient eligibility.
- How your site advertises the Sliding Fee Discount Program to the patient population to increase access to care.
- An explanation and amount of nominal charges, including the site's policies on how it establishes and collects nominal charges (for example, what constitutes "refusal to pay").  
Description of its collection policies for outstanding debt (if applicable to Sliding Fee Discount Program patients).

### **Sliding Fee Discount Program Patient Application**

Your Sliding Fee Discount Program patient application should be limited to family size and income questions.

Additional questions that should not be included in the Sliding Fee Discount Program patient application include those related to a patient's Social Security number, citizenship status, housing status, or marital status. Sites also must not use credit checks, payment history, **Medicaid denial letters, asset tests, or "net worth" (combining assets and income)** tests when determining eligibility for individuals and families with annual incomes at or below 200 percent of the most current Federal Poverty Guidelines.

Sites may inform patients about public insurance and assist interested patients with the application process. However, a site must not require patients to apply for public insurance as a condition for qualifying for or taking part in the Sliding Fee Discount Program.

## Sliding Fee Schedule

Your site must use a schedule of fees or payments for services consistent with locally prevailing rates or charges designed to cover your site's reasonable cost of operation. Once your site has established its fee schedule, it must develop, offer, and use a corresponding Sliding Fee Schedule to ensure that uniform and reasonable fees and discounts are applied to all eligible patients. You must base your Sliding Fee Schedule on income and family size, and at a minimum, you should revise it annually to reflect updates to the [Federal Poverty Guidelines](#). The Sliding Fee Schedule should cover all primary care services for the site type.

Specifically, your site's Sliding Fee Schedule must:

- Provide a **full discount (no charge)** for individuals and families with annual incomes at or below 100 percent of the most current Federal Poverty Guidelines, with allowance for a nominal charge only, consistent with your site's Sliding Fee Discount Program policy. The nominal charge must be less than the fee paid by a patient in the first "sliding fee discount pay class" beginning above 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines;
- Provide services at a nominal charge, which can be in the form of a sliding fee, or schedule of discount, to individuals and families with incomes above 100 percent and at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines; and  
Use nominal charges at a financial level that does not reflect the service's true value and does not create a barrier to care for patients. The nominal charge must not be a threshold for receiving care and, thus, must not be a minimum fee or co-payment.

You have discretion regarding how you structure your Sliding Fee Schedule, including the number of discount pay classes and the types of discounts (percentage of fee or fixed/flat fee for each discount pay class). However, when developing your Sliding Fee Schedule, you should consider the unique characteristics of your Health Professional Shortage Area populations (for example, individuals with low-income or experiencing homelessness) to ensure it does not present a barrier to care.

Your site must make every reasonable effort to secure payment in accordance with the schedule of fees or schedule of discounts from the patient and/or any other third party. Your site must accept assignments for Medicare beneficiaries and enter into an appropriate agreement with the applicable state agency for Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program beneficiaries, but your site **cannot require Medicare, Medicaid, or Children's Health Insurance Program application or proof of denial before allowing a patient to apply and be eligible for the Sliding Fee Discount Program.**

## Posted Signage

Your site must prominently display a statement in common areas and on its official website (if one exists) that explicitly states that:

- No one will be denied access to services due to inability to pay, and  
There is a discounted/sliding fee schedule available based on family size and income.

When applicable, you should translate this statement into the most prevalent languages/dialects spoken by your patients.

If your organization includes both National Health Service Corps-approved and non-approved sites and opts not to display this statement on the main landing page, you must ensure it is still prominently posted elsewhere on your website. For instance, you could create a dedicated National Health Service Corps section on your financial assistance page or provide the information on the specific National Health Corps-approved site's landing page.

### **Required Documents and Exceptions**

To demonstrate that your site is using a Sliding Fee Discount Program, you must provide the following for National Health Service Corps site approval:

- Copy of your site's Sliding Fee Discount Program policy;
- Copy of your site's Sliding Fee Discount Program patient application;
- Copy of your site's Sliding Fee Schedule;
- Two clear photos of your site's posted signage;
  - The first photo should show the common area, and the sign prominently displayed to ensure it is visible to patients;
  - The second photo should be a close-up of the posted signage showing the legible text;
- A document with a website screenshot of the published online statement and link to the URL of the web page where the statement can be found.

**Please visit our website for sample documents related to the Sliding Fee Discount Program.**

#### *Free Clinics*

Free clinics as defined by the National Health Service Corps are exempt from providing the required Sliding Fee Discount Program documentation. However, at the point of application, recertification, site visit, or upon request these sites must provide documentation that no one is charged or billed for services.

#### *Federally Qualified Health Centers and Federally Qualified Health Centers Look-Alikes*

Federally Qualified Health Centers and Federally Qualified Health Centers Look-Alikes are exempt from providing the required Sliding Fee Discount Program documentation at the point of application but must provide it during a site visit or upon request.

#### *American Indian Health facilities, federal prisons, Immigration and Customs Enforcement Health Service Corps sites, and state prisons*

American Indian Health facilities, federal prisons, Immigration and Customs Enforcement Health Service Corps sites, and state prisons are exempt from providing the required Sliding Fee Discount Program documentation at the point of application. However, during site visits, if applicable, or upon request, these sites must provide documentation that no one is charged or billed for services. If a small fee is applied, they must also demonstrate that services are not denied to individuals unable to pay it.

### *Critical Access Hospitals/Rural Emergency Hospitals*

These hospitals must utilize the National Health Service Corps-approved Sliding Fee Discount Program, at a minimum, for low-income patients receiving primary care services in both the emergency room and the affiliated outpatient clinic. The Sliding Fee Discount Program requirements do not extend to the hospital inpatient fee structure (that is, the in-house discounted fee schedule or charity care program for other settings) or for requirements necessary to meet Medicare certification requirements. These hospitals must submit all the Sliding Fee Discount Program required documents at the point of application, recertification, site visit, or upon request.

### **CLINICIAN RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PLAN**

Your site must maintain a clinician recruitment and retention plan with the policies and processes your site will use to recruit and maintain clinical staffing levels needed to serve the community appropriately. As a best practice, you should include specific strategies to promote clinician resiliency and reduce burnout.

*As mandated by the National Health Service Corps statute, Section 333 of the Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C. 254f, National Health Service Corps sites must make appropriate and efficient use of assigned National Health Service Corps clinicians. A National Health Service Corps determination that the National Health Service Corps site has not made appropriate and efficient use of National Health Service Corps clinicians may be grounds for National Health Service Corps site disapproval and/or deactivation.*

A solo Private Practice's Clinician Recruitment and Retention Plan must include recruitment and retention strategies for any potential expansion to meet community needs.

### **Required Documents and Exceptions**

To demonstrate that your site maintains a clinician recruitment and retention plan, you must provide a copy of your site's clinician recruitment and retention plan for site approval. Refer to our website for a sample document.

The following sites are not required to submit the clinician recruitment and retention plan at the point of application, but must provide it during a site visit, if applicable, or upon request:

- Federally Qualified Health Centers
- Federally Qualified Health Centers Look-Alikes
- American Indian Health facilities
- Federal prisons
- Immigration and Customs Enforcement Health Service Corps sites
- State prisons.

### **COMPREHENSIVE PRIMARY CARE**

Your site must provide comprehensive primary care (medical, oral, or behavioral health), which corresponds to its designated Health Professional Shortage Area type. The National Health Service Corps defines comprehensive primary care as a continuum of care not limited to, organ system, a particular illness, or categorical population (for example, those with a developmental

disability or those with cancer). Your site must also function as part of a system of care that either offers or ensures access to ancillary, inpatient, and specialty referrals.

With the exception of substance use disorder treatment facilities, if your site does not offer all primary care services, it must provide an appropriate set of primary care services necessary for the community or populations you serve. For example, a site serving a senior population must provide geriatric primary care services

### **Required Documents and Exceptions**

To demonstrate that your site is providing [comprehensive care](#), you must upload proof of referral arrangements for ancillary, inpatient, and specialty care that are not available on-site. Acceptable documents include current and signed Memorandums of Understanding, signed Memorandums of Agreement, or signed contracts with ancillary, inpatient, and specialty facilities. If formal referral arrangements do not exist, the site must provide a dated and signed description of how it ensures patient access to ancillary, inpatient, and specialty care.

The following sites are not required to submit proof of referral arrangements for ancillary, inpatient, and specialty care that are not available on-site at the point of application, but must provide it during a site visit, if applicable, or upon request:

- Federally Qualified Health Centers
- Federally Qualified Health Centers Look-Alikes
- American Indian Health facilities
- Federal prisons
- Immigration and Customs Enforcement Health Service Corps sites
- State prisons.

### **COMPREHENSIVE PRIMARY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES**

Facilities offering comprehensive primary behavioral health services must be located in and serve their mental health-designated Health Professional Shortage Area.

Your mental health service site should:

- Provide core comprehensive behavioral health services *on-site*, which include:
  - Screening and assessment
  - Treatment plan
  - Care coordination.
- Offer non-core comprehensive behavioral health services either on-site, in-network, or off-site, through referral, affiliation, or contract, which include:
  - Diagnosis
  - Therapeutic services
  - Crisis/emergency services
  - Consultative services
  - Case management.

## Required Documents and Exceptions

To demonstrate that your site provides comprehensive behavioral health services, you must provide the following for site approval:

- A completed [National Health Service Corps Comprehensive Behavioral Health Services Checklist](#). During application cycles, you will directly enter this data in the Behavioral Health section of the electronic application; and
- Documentation demonstrating the provision of core and non-core comprehensive mental health services. Acceptable documentation varies depending on where the service is provided:

Your site must provide at least one of the following for services provided on-site (Core and Non-Core):	Your site must provide at least one of the following for each service provided off-site or out-of-network (Non-Core):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operating certificate issued by the state, territory, county, etc.</li> <li>• Site brochure listing the behavioral health services</li> <li>• Site policy that outlines the behavioral health services</li> <li>• Document that includes the website link and screenshot of available behavioral health services</li> <li>• Other documentation that outlines behavioral health services provided on-site.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affiliation agreements</li> <li>• Memorandums of understanding/agreement</li> <li>• Contracts</li> <li>• Letters of referral</li> <li>• Letters of support/commitment</li> <li>• Referral and follow-up policy and procedures</li> </ul>

Primary care sites that do not provide behavioral health services are exempt from this program requirement. In addition, the following sites are not required to submit behavioral health documentation at the point of application or during a site visit, if applicable, but must provide it upon request:

- Federally Qualified Health Centers
- Federally Qualified Health Centers Look-Alikes
- American Indian Health facilities
- Federal prisons
- Immigration and Customs Enforcement Health Service Corps sites
- State prisons
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration-Certified Opioid Treatment Programs.

## SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER SERVICES

Your site must first be approved for substance use disorder services for your clinicians to apply to the National Health Service Corps substance use disorder-specific loan repayment programs,



including the [National Health Service Corps Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Program](#) and the [National Health Service Corps Rural Community Loan Repayment Program](#).

### **Required Documents and Exceptions**

To demonstrate your site provides substance use disorder services on-site, you must provide the following at the point of application, site visit, or upon request:

- Documentation demonstrating the provision of on-site substance use disorder services. Acceptable documentation, depending on the service type, includes:
  - **Substance Use or Addiction Counseling/Psychotherapy Services** – Submit one of the following:
    - Substance use disorder operating certificate issued by the state, territory, county, etc.
    - Site brochure listing the on-site substance use disorder services
    - Site policy outlining on-site substance use disorder services
    - Document including the website link and screenshot of available on-site substance use disorder services
    - Other documentation outlining substance use disorder services provided on-site.
  - **Medications for Opioid Use Disorder Services** – Submit an attestation letter from the site Chief Executive Officer or Medical Director stating:
    - That the site offers medications for opioid use disorder on-site,
    - The days and hours when the site offers medications for opioid use disorder services, and
    - The size of the patient panel receiving medications for opioid use disorder services for the most recent six-month period within the last 12 months. The size of the patient panel must be greater than zero (0).

For an attestation letter template, please refer to our website.

If your site is a primary care medical facility, you should also complete the [National Health Service Corps Comprehensive Mental Health Services Checklist](#) and supporting documentation.

Primary care medical sites that do not provide substance use disorder services are exempt from this program requirement.

The following sites are not required to submit the required substance use disorder documentation at the point of application, but must provide it during a site visit, if applicable, or upon request:

- Federally Qualified Health Centers
- Federally Qualified Health Centers Look-Alikes
- American Indian Health facilities
- Federal prisons

- Immigration and Customs Enforcement Health Service Corps sites,
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration-Certified Opioid Treatment Programs

### **Rural Designation**

Only clinicians working at a rural National Health Service Corps-approved site that provides comprehensive substance use disorder services are eligible to apply for the [National Health Service Corps Rural Community Loan Repayment Program](#). Rural National Health Service Corps-approved sites are in a Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) Census Tract designated by the Health Resources and Services Administration. To determine if your site is considered “rural” for purposes of the National Health Service Corps Rural Community Loan Repayment Program, use the [Rural Health Grants Eligibility Analyzer](#).

### **OPT-IN PROCESS**

If your site is already National Health Service Corps-approved and you later add primary medical care, oral health, behavioral health, or substance use disorder services, you can opt-in for these services at any time by following the process below.

#### **General Opt-In Steps:**

1. Log in to [My BHW](#).
2. Scroll down and click “Ask a question about NHSC, STAR, Pediatric Specialty, Nurse Corps, or about a participant at my site.”
3. Choose the appropriate category and subject:
  - **Primary Care/Oral Health:** Category "General," Subject "Primary Care/Oral Health Opt-In." (No documentation is required)
  - **Behavioral Health:** Category "Behavioral Health Policy Certification," Subject "Mental Health Opt-In." (Upload [checklist](#) and [required documentation](#))
  - **Substance Use Disorder:** Category "Substance Use Disorder Documentation," Subject "Opt-in SUD Expansion." (Upload [checklist](#) and [required documentation](#))
4. Enter a description specifying the services offered and the start date for patient access.

### **DATA REPORTING**

You must include **site-specific data** in the “Services and Staffing” and “Payments and Insurance” sections of the National Health Service Corps site application. We evaluate this data to determine your site’s adherence to sound fiscal management policies, access to care for the most vulnerable populations, and ability to support the clinical practice of potential National Health Service Corps clinicians.

### **Required Documents and Exceptions**

- For site approval, you must submit site-specific data with up-to-date information for the preceding six (6) months. You must enter this data directly in the “Services and Staffing” and “Payments and Insurance” sections of the application.

- During site visits or upon request, you must submit this data [using the National Health Service Corps Site Data Tables](#).

The following sites are not required to submit the Site Data Tables at the point of application, but may be required to provide them during a site visit, if applicable, or upon request:

- American Indian Health facilities
- Federal prisons
- Immigration and Customs Enforcement Health Service Corps sites
- State prisons.

Federally Qualified Health Centers, and Federally Qualified Health Centers Look-Alikes are exempt from providing Site Data Tables for this program requirement at the point of application, but we may require a copy of the latest standard Health Resources and Services Administration/Bureau of Primary Health Care Uniform Data System (UDS) report during a site visit or upon request.

## NEW SITE APPLICATION AND RECERTIFICATION PROCESS

### NEW SITE APPLICATION CYCLE

The National Health Service Corps New Site Application Cycle is open to non-auto-approved sites that have never been approved for the National Health Service Corps and sites that were previously approved but are now “inactive” or “terminated,” as indicated on the [My BHW](#) Site Dashboard. You can also check the status of these sites in the [Health Workforce Connector](#); inactive or terminated sites will not display “NHSC Active Site” under Site Status.

The National Health Service Corps generally opens one New Site Application Cycle annually, which remains open for approximately six to eight weeks. [Subscribe](#) to be notified when the next New Site Application Cycle opens. Cycle dates and submission deadlines are subject to change. Check the [National Health Service Corps website](#) for updates.

### SITE RECERTIFICATION CYCLE AND EXPIRATION

The Recertification Cycle applies only to non-auto-approved sites that display “active” under program on the [My BHW](#) Site Dashboard and have an expiration date. Also, these sites display “NHSC Active Site” under Site Status on the [Health Workforce Connector](#). Auto-approved sites do not have to recertify and do not have an expiration date.

For non-auto-approved sites, their National Health Service Corps site approval is valid for three (3) years as long as the site remains compliant with all program requirements. Sites with an approval expiration date **on or before December 31, 2025**, are required to submit a Recertification Application during the 2025 Site Recertification Application Cycle. As the site Point of Contact, you will receive a reminder under the “Messages” tab in your [My BHW](#) account to recertify your site during the Recertification Cycle that ends **several months prior** to the December 31 expiration date. You should monitor the expiration dates for each approved site to ensure they do not expire and become inactive.

The National Health Service Corps generally opens one Recertification Cycle annually, which remains open for approximately six to eight weeks. Cycle dates and submission deadlines are subject to change. Check the [National Health Service Corps website](#) for updates.

### **SITE APPROVAL PROCESS**

The approval of a National Health Service Corps New Site or Recertification Application is based on the ability of a site to demonstrate it meets the eligibility criteria set forth in the National Health Service Corps Site Reference Guide (this document) and the National Health Service Corps [Site Agreement](#), and as determined by the Health Resources and Services Administration. As the point of contact who will be submitting an application, you are responsible for ensuring that the information reported is true and accurate, and that your answers on the application are confirmed and supported by the required documents. An application that is submitted without all required and legible documents or is missing required language, data or information will be deemed incomplete and may be disapproved. An application may not be altered after submission, unless the Division of Regional Operations requests remediation.

### **APPLICATION REVIEW, EVALUATION, AND FINAL DECISION**

Within 30 days of the date you submitted your application, your [state/territorial Primary Care Office](#) will review it to determine if your site is eligible for the National Health Service Corps and meets all requirements. They will enter comments and recommendations to approve or disapprove your application. Next, your [Division of Regional Operations analyst](#) will review it and render the final decision.

The approval of a network's main/administrative site does not indicate or guarantee the approval of affiliated satellite sites. The application review process can take longer than six to eight weeks to complete due to application volume, and the quality of submitted documents. The final decision on a New Site Application or a Recertification Application is communicated to the site point of contact through [My BHW](#).

### **APPLICATION PROCESS**

Before submitting a New Site Application or a Recertification Application, we encourage you to contact your [state/territorial Primary Care Office](#) or [Division of Regional Operations analyst](#) for assistance. We offer several tools and resources to guide you through the application process and answer your questions:

- [State/territorial Primary Care Offices](#)
- [Division of Regional Operations Analysts](#)
- [My BHW](#)
- [National Health Service Corps Website](#)
- [Site Point of Contact User Guide](#)
- [Health Professional Shortage Area \(HPSA\) Find](#)
- [Bureau of Health Workforce Customer Care Center](#) (1-800-221-9393) - TTY (877-897-9910)
- [New Site Application webinar](#)
- [New Site Application Question and Answer Session](#)

Once you determine that your site meets all National Health Service Corps eligibility criteria and requirements, including having enrollment numbers for Medicare, Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program, when applicable, begin to:

1. **Gather the required documents:** Review the “Program Requirements, Required Documents, and Exceptions” section of this guide to confirm your knowledge of the documents required *for your specific site type*. You may upload documents with all required language to your application in your [My BHW](#) account at any time BEFORE you submit the application and prior to the closing of the application cycle period.
2. **Collect the required data:** Download the [National Health Service Corps Site Data Tables](#) to collect the data early in the application process. However, you must enter the data directly in the application (in the “Services and Staff” and “Payments and Insurance” sections).
3. **Create a [My BHW](#) account:** Follow the instructions provided in the [Site Point of Contact User Guide](#) to create an account.
4. **Assign yourself the role of “Administrator,”** at a minimum, which allows you to submit an application. The administrator must be able to answer questions about site policies and operating procedures.

### **Submitting a National Health Service Corps New Site Application and Recertification Application**

The following guidance, along with instructions provided in the Site Point of Contact User Guide, will assist you with completing and submitting your site application(s).

Complete all sections of the application and upload all required documents for your site type. Once you submit your application, you can no longer add information or upload documents.

- 1) Log into your [My BHW](#) account.
- 2) If you will be submitting a New Site Application, select “Create a New Site” from the left margin of your “Home” page.
- 3) To submit a New Site Application for a *newly created site*, go to the “Site Dashboard” and click “Start a NHSC Application” to begin.
- 4) To submit a Recertification Application for an existing site, go to the Site Dashboard, and under “My Sites,” click on the name of the site that is in “Active” Program Status and has a recertification alert. Next, click “Start a NHSC Recert.”

#### *Organizations with Multiple Sites, Co-located Sites, or Multiple Services*

Organizations seeking site approval for multiple sites must submit separate, individual applications for the main/administrative site and each of its eligible affiliated satellite sites. However, a site that provides multiple service types (for example, primary care, behavioral health, and oral health) within the same clinic should only submit one application.

In addition, each satellite site must use a unique name to differentiate it from other sites of the same organization (for example, “ABC Organization – Clinic XYZ”). Co-located sites should each have a unique identifier in the address, such as a suite/room/office number.

*Critical Access Hospitals, Rural Emergency Hospitals, 638 Hospitals, and Indian Health Service Hospitals*

National Health Service Corps participants serving at any of these hospitals must provide weekly patient care at an affiliated outpatient clinic. Therefore, you must apply for site approval in conjunction with an affiliated outpatient clinic by submitting separate site applications during the same application cycle or by demonstrating an affiliation with a National Health Service Corps-approved outpatient clinic. Even if the affiliated outpatient clinic and qualifying hospital are co-located in the same building and have the same address, you must submit separate applications for both sites, one for the outpatient clinic and the other for the hospital. **In the hospital application, you must enter the affiliated outpatient clinic name and address in the "Check Eligibility" section exactly as shown on [My BHW](#).**

**The National Health Service Corps Online Site Application**

Each item listed in this section follows the order of the online application and provides an overview of the content of each section. Only sections of the application that apply to your site type will appear in the course of the application. We provide detailed instructions for completing a site application in the [Site Point of Contact User Guide](#):

***Auto-Approved Sites - New Site Application*** (See pg. 43 of the [Site Point of Contact User Guide](#))

***All other Site-Types – New Site Application and Recertification Application*** (See pg. 56 of the [Site Point of Contact User Guide](#))

- 1. Check Eligibility** - The site eligibility pre-screening section serves to collect information about your site to determine if it is eligible for National Health Service Corps site approval. If your site is ineligible, you will not be able to proceed with the application.
- 2. Confirm Site Details** - Confirm general information such as the site name, location, mailing and email addresses, and other contact information. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services-Certified Rural Health Clinics must insert the Certification Number where indicated.
- 3. Check for Existing Sites** - Sites that appear to be similar or duplicates of the site for which you are applying and have an existing site record will appear in this section. If your site appears on the list, do not create a duplicate site; instead, use the previously established site record. If needed, contact your [Division of Regional Operations analyst](#) to be added as a point of contact for an old record.
- 4. Services and Staffing** - Indicate all applicable comprehensive primary care medical, behavioral, and oral health services provided on-site. Include substance use disorder services, if applicable. Enter full-time employee equivalents for all indicated services.
- 5. Behavioral Health** - If you indicate that your site provides behavioral, mental health and/or substance use disorder services, you must complete the "Comprehensive Behavioral Health Services Elements" sections of the application and submit the required documents.

6. **Payments and Insurance** - Enter the requested data totals for patient visits, insurance payments, and charges, including data applicable to your Sliding Fee Schedule. Have on hand the site's Identification numbers for Medicaid, Medicare, and the state Children's Health Insurance Program.
7. **Telehealth** - Respond to questions about the use of telehealth services. Sites that provide 100 percent telehealth services do not qualify for the National Health Service Corps.
8. **Identify POCs** - Review the lists of current and proposed points of contact to verify the accuracy of the information. There must be two active points of contact for each site, except for solo private practices. If needed, add points of contact.
9. **Review HPSAs** - Use the Health Professional Shortage Area tool, [HPSA Find](#), to verify your site's shortage designations. Next, review the shortage designations associated with your site, as shown in the application. If you do not see a shortage designation displayed in the application, you may recommend additional shortage designations. Contact your [state/territorial Primary Care Office](#) if you have questions about your shortage designations.
10. **Upload Documents** - Upload all remaining required documents for your site type.
11. **Review and Submit** - Review the National Health Service Corps Site Agreement, confirm your site's compliance with National Health Service Corps requirements, electronically sign the application, and submit the New Site Application or Recertification Application by clicking on the "Submit" tab.

## SITE POINT OF CONTACT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### RESPONSIBILITIES OF NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE CORPS-APPROVED SITE POINTS OF CONTACT

All National Health Service Corps-approved sites must have at least two (2) active points of contact at all times, except for *solo* private practices. The assigned points of contact must cover the following roles: Administrator, Personnel Verifier, and Recruiter. One point of contact can have multiple roles, and sites may have more than two points of contact. Except for solo private practices, **National Health Service Corps participants are highly discouraged from being a point of contact**, as it may present a conflict of interest.

All points of contact must activate and maintain a [My BHW](#) account. The account creation is a two-step process that includes confirming the email address associated with each account.

- 1) **Administrator**. Administrators must own, oversee, or manage a significant portion of their organization. As a site administrator, you should have the ability to answer questions about organization policies and operating procedures. Specifically, you must have express authority to act on behalf of the organization. You will also be required to complete the National Health Service Corps Site Application and electronically sign the [National Health Service Corps Site Agreement](#). As the administrator, you must:
  - a. Manage the appointed site points of contact. You are required to identify at least one (1) additional site point of contact other than yourself and ensure that all

three roles are covered. To add a new point of contact, have them create and activate a [My BHW](#) account.

Next, log into your [My BHW](#) account and click on the site's name. Under "Self-Service," click on "Manage Points of Contact" and then "Add Another Site Point of Contact (POC)."

- b. Update your roles as needed by clicking "Update My Program Portal Profile" under the "Need Assistance?" section at the bottom of the home screen.
- c. Ensure that your site meets all applicable National Health Service Corps site requirements before and during participation as a National Health Service Corps site. **You should not delegate these activities to a National Health Service Corps clinician or a consultant.**
- d. Support and appropriately use National Health Service Corps participants as specified [in this section](#).
- e. Timely respond to requests for and actively participate in site visits from the [Division of Regional Operations](#).
- f. Submit a National Health Service Corps Site Recertification Application every three (3) years, except for auto-approved sites.
- g. Contact the National Health Service Corps through [My BHW](#) if there are any changes to the site, including the site location, ownership, or to the employment of a National Health Service Corps clinician. To notify the National Health Service Corps, log in to your [My BHW](#) account, click the name of the site under "Need Assistance," and then click "Ask a question about NHSC, STAR, Pediatric Specialty, Nurse Corps, or about a participant at my site."

#### *Supporting National Health Service Corps Participants*

If there are National Health Service Corps participants assigned to your site, we expect you to support them in fulfilling their service obligation. National Health Service Corps participants are responsible for meeting all program requirements as a result of receiving their National Health Service Corps Scholarship Program or Loan Repayment Program award contract. The [National Health Service Corps Scholarship Program](#), the [National Health Service Corps Students to Service Loan Repayment Program](#), the [National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program](#), the [National Health Service Corps Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Program](#), the [National Health Service Corps Rural Community Loan Repayment Program](#), and the corresponding Application and Program Guidance, respectively, provide the details of the participant commitment. National Health Service Corps participants enter into a contractual agreement with the National Health Service Corps; thus, it is required that National Health Service Corps-approved sites not impede National Health Service Corps participants from fulfilling their service obligation. As the designated National Health Service Corps site administrator, you **must**:

- a. Ensure National Health Service Corps participants work at National Health Service Corps-approved sites with an appropriately designated Health Professional Shortage Area.
- b. Ensure each National Health Service Corps site is approved **before** permitting a National Health Service Corps participant's assignment to that site.



- c. Ensure each National Health Service Corps participant understands the minimum shortage designation requirement associated with their specific service obligation.
  - d. Ensure National Health Service Corps participants follow the National Health Service Corps minimum hourly and weekly clinical service requirements.
  - e. Not reduce the salary of National Health Service Corps clinicians because they receive or have received benefits under the National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment or Scholarship Programs.
  - f. Allow National Health Service Corps participants to participate in National Health Service Corps continuing education, webinars, and conferences.
  - g. Provide National Health Service Corps participants appropriate supervision, orientation, training, and mentorship regarding the site's processes and procedures, client population, and primary care practice.
  - h. If applicable, facilitate a National Health Service Corps participant site transfer request by ensuring that the Personnel Verifier completes an online Employment Verification Form (EVF) through [My BHW](#). *Before leaving a site, National Health Service Corps participants must submit a transfer request via their [My BHW](#) account to change their current site to another approved site.* To ensure that National Health Service Corps-approved sites can continue to meet the needs of patients, we strongly encourage participants to discuss their plans with the approved site first. As part of the transfer process, the participant's current approved service site may submit an email that includes:
    - i. Any clinical competency issues related to the National Health Service Corps participant while employed at the approved site;
    - ii. Any disciplinary action related to the National Health Service Corps participant while employed at the approved site; and
    - iii. Confirmation of the National Health Service Corps participant's last employment date at the approved site.
 

\*\*\*Upon approval of the transfer request, the personnel verifier is responsible for reviewing the National Health Service Corps Employment Verification Forms and confirming the participant's reported leave for the period of time that the participant has been employed at the approved site.
  - i. Make available a participant's personnel documents, communications, and practice-related documents as needed so that the National Health Service Corps can monitor a National Health Service Corps participant's compliance with National Health Service Corps service requirements. Such records should be made available to the National Health Service Corps both during a National Health Service Corps participant's service obligation and after their obligation has ended.
- 2) **Personnel Verifiers.** Personnel verifiers verify the employment and service of National Health Service Corps participants. As a personnel verifier, you will:
- a. Complete Employment Verification Forms through [My BHW](#). Additional information on completing the Employment Verification Form is available in the Site Point of Contact User Guide.

- For any National Health Service Corps applicants interested in the supplemental Spanish Language Award Enhancement, you must verify on the employment verification form that the applicant directly provides Spanish-speaking services to patients with limited English proficiency. The applicant will also be required to exhibit Spanish language proficiency to receive the supplemental Spanish Language Award Enhancement.
- b. Report a participant's time away from the site (for example, vacation, holidays, continuing professional education, illness, or any other reason) on the online In-Service Verification form (ISV) every six months. National Health Service Corps participants are allowed to spend, at most, seven (7) weeks a year (35 full-time or 35 half-time workdays, depending on their National Health Service Corps service commitment) away from clinical practice.
- 3) **Recruiters.** Recruiters hire or recruit new employees for the organization. Recruiters will have their contact information listed on the site's profile on the [Health Workforce Connector](#). As a recruiter, you will:
- a. Post all National Health Service Corps-eligible clinical vacancies on the [Health Workforce Connector](#). To post a vacancy, log into your [My BHW](#) account, click on the site's name, and then under "Self Service," click "Manage Current Job Openings." Under "Relevant Links," consider adding LinkedIn, your public website career page, etc.
  - b. Complete and periodically update the online site profile using [My BHW](#). The site profile is a recruiting tool, providing prospective clinicians with a site-specific overview while they search for jobs at qualifying sites.

### **Notifying the National Health Service Corps of Changes to a Participant's Employment or to Site Information**

All National Health Service Corps-approved sites are expected to maintain current, active status as a comprehensive primary care medical, oral, or behavioral health service delivery site by continually meeting the National Health Service Corps requirements outlined in this guide and the National Health Service Corps Site Agreement ([Appendix A](#)).

As a site point of contact, you are required to notify the program if there are any changes to the National Health Service Corps participant's employment status before or immediately following the termination, resignation, or change in work hours of a participant. In addition, you will be required to verify the participant's last employment date seeing patients.

Participants who work at a clinic that is not listed in the participant's [My BHW](#) account must immediately notify the National Health Service Corps through their [My BHW](#) account. Time spent at unapproved clinics will not count towards the participant's service commitment.

As indicated in the "[Application and Recertification Process](#)" section, site administrators must contact the National Health Service Corps through [My BHW](#) for any changes to the site's

location, services, or ownership. The [Division of Regional Operations](#) can provide technical assistance for your specific scenario.

If an established site changes ownership:

The site must submit a new application to verify that it meets the National Health Service Corps program requirements. In addition, if a site changes its name, you may be required to provide documentation of the name change. You are encouraged to contact your [Division of Regional Operations analyst](#) for additional assistance.

If there is a change in site information:

Generally, a New Site Application is not necessary when a site moves locations.

However, your [Division of Regional Operations analyst](#) must update the address and verify the site is located in and services a Health Professional Shortage Area. If the site adds or changes the scope of services, you should report such changes in your [My BHW](#) account. Your [Division of Regional Operations analyst](#) will verify and update site records as necessary.

If a site moves to a new location and your [Division of Regional Operations analyst](#) determines the previous shortage designation no longer applies, the site's approval status may be affected. Therefore, you should be aware that a change in designation status or score due to the site's new location could mean that National Health Service Corps participants currently serving at the site will not be eligible for a [National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program Continuation Contract](#) award.

### **Inactivating or Terminating a National Health Service Corps-approved Site**

Inactivation of a National Health Service Corps-approved site can occur under the following situations:

- 1) When a site no longer meets the site eligibility requirements;
- 2) When a site elects not to continue as a National Health Service Corps-approved site; and
- 3) When a site misses the recertification deadline.

If a National Health Service Corps-approved site no longer meets established eligibility requirements, the site administrator will be given formal notice of the reasons for inactivation and an opportunity to address the eligibility concerns, if applicable. Inactivated sites may reapply during an open [New Site Application cycle](#).

If your site is no longer operational, the National Health Service Corps status will be changed to terminated. You should report such changes through [My BHW](#) so that the [Division of Regional Operations](#) can make changes to the site record. If the terminated site reopens under new ownership, the new organization will be required to apply as a new site during an open New Site Application cycle.

Participants assigned to an inactivated or terminated site will be referred to the Health Resources and Services Administration's Division of Participant Support and Compliance to determine the impact on their National Health Service Corps service contract. Participants may be required to transfer to another National Health Service Corps-approved site, and if so, they

must request a transfer through [My BHW](#). The site change must be approved and processed by the National Health Service Corps before the participant begins work at the new site. If a participant begins employment at a site before obtaining National Health Service Corps approval, they may not receive service credit for time served at the new site before National Health Service Corps approval. If the National Health Service Corps disapproves the transfer and the participant refuses assignment to another National Health Service Corps-approved service site, the participant may be placed in default.

### **National Health Service Corps Participants' Clinical Service Requirements for Full-time and Half-time Service**

To maintain a successful partnership, National Health Service Corps participants and points of contact should possess a firm understanding of the National Health Service Corps clinical service requirements of each assigned National Health Service Corps clinician. For a more detailed explanation of the full-time and half-time clinical practice requirements, including requirements for participants working at eligible hospitals, refer to the [National Health Service Corps website](#), and review the respective Application and Program Guidance documents for the [National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program](#), [National Health Service Corps Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Program](#), [National Health Service Corps Rural Community Loan Repayment Program](#), [National Health Service Corps Students to Service Loan Repayment Program](#), and/or [National Health Service Corps Scholarship Program](#).

National Health Service Corps participants exercising the Private Practice Option (PPO) are not eligible for half-time service. Clinical time spent "on call" will not be counted towards the service commitment, except to the extent the provider directly treats patients during that period.

### **Hospital Considerations**

National Health Service Corps participants serving at Critical Access Hospitals, Rural Emergency Hospitals, 638 tribal hospitals, or Indian Health Service hospitals must abide by the associated outpatient clinical hours identified in their respective National Health Service Corps contract.

- The National Health Service Corps allows the following disciplines to serve in the full-time or half-time clinical practice at eligible hospitals with an affiliated outpatient clinic:
  - Physicians (including psychiatrists)
  - Physician Assistants (including those with a behavioral health specialization)
  - Nurse Practitioners (including those with a behavioral health specialization)
  - Certified Nurse Midwives.

### **School-Based Clinic Considerations**

National Health Service Corps participants working at school-based clinics that are not open for at least 45 weeks per year can work at additional National Health Service Corps-approved site(s) to meet the National Health Service Corps' clinical practice requirements. The additional National Health Service Corps-approved site(s) must satisfy the participant's program shortage designation requirements. If National Health Service Corps participants do not have an alternate National Health Service Corps-approved site to fulfill their clinical practice

requirement, we will extend their service obligation to account for the time when the school is closed.

## RECRUITING AND RETAINING A NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE CORPS CLINICIAN

### **CLINICIAN RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PLAN**

Recruiting and retaining clinicians is critical for your site's financial sustainability and ensuring that patients from underserved communities have access to needed care. Therefore, your recruitment and retention plan should contain strategies to promote clinician resiliency and reduce burnout so your site can maintain optimal patient care, improve patient satisfaction, and prevent unnecessary expenses related to repeated recruitment. If you need technical assistance, please contact your [Division of Regional Operations analyst](#) or refer to our website for a sample Clinician Recruitment and Retention Plan.

### **NATIONAL PRACTITIONER DATA BANK (NPDB)**

As part of its mission to improve health care quality, protect the public, and reduce health care fraud and abuse in the United States, the Health Resources and Services Administration maintains the [National Practitioner Data Bank](#).

In accordance with the National Health Service Corps Site Agreement item #4, the **National Health Service Corps requires that all National Health Service Corps-approved sites use, at a minimum, a clinician credentialing process including reference review, licensure verification, and a query of the National Practitioner Data Bank of those clinicians for whom the National Practitioner Data Bank maintains data.** This is especially important during the employment verification of a new National Health Service Corps participant or applicant.

The National Practitioner Data Bank is a flagging system that serves to alert a National Health Service Corps-approved site about medical malpractice payments and certain adverse actions regarding a participant. When the National Health Service Corps-approved site receives a report from the National Practitioner Data Bank, it is prudent that you use this alert to complete a more comprehensive review of the qualifications and background of the clinician. The National Health Service Corps strongly encourages National Health Service Corps-approved sites to utilize the National Practitioner Data Bank information in combination with other sources in making determinations on employment, affiliation, clinical privileges, certification, licensure, or other decisions.

### **HIRING A NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE CORPS PARTICIPANT**

Once your site is approved, you can hire a National Health Service Corps participant. If a participant begins employment at your site before it is National Health Service Corps approved, the time served will NOT count toward the participant's service obligation. For the National Health Service Corps clinician to receive service credit, the site must be an approved National Health Service Corps site, and the clinician must receive approval to start the service obligation at the site.

It is important to remember that National Health Service Corps site approval does not automatically guarantee your staff member's eligibility for an award. Your National Health

Service Corps site approval is separate and independent from the participant's National Health Service Corps award eligibility requirements, selection factors, and funding priorities.

To hire a clinician from the National Health Service Corps Scholarship Program or Students to Service Loan Repayment Program, your site must meet the published Health Professional Shortage Area score threshold for the applicable **program, discipline, and placement year**. The National Health Service Corps will publish the minimum designation score required to recruit a participant each year. Refer to the National Health Service Corps website's [scholar](#) and [Students to Service participant](#) sections for more information.

#### **HIRING LIMITATIONS OF NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE CORPS SCHOLARS OR NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE CORPS STUDENTS TO SERVICE LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS**

- The number of National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program participants at your National Health Service Corps-approved site, including participants in the National Health Service Corps Substance Use Disorder Workforce and Rural Community Loan Repayment Programs, is not limited.
- The National Health Service Corps Scholarship Program allows **one (1) scholar per discipline** to serve at a given National Health Service Corps-approved site within a yearly placement cycle. National Health Service Corps Students to Service Loan Repayment Program participants do not count against the number of National Health Service Corps scholars allowed at your site.
- The National Health Service Corps Students to Service Loan Repayment Program allows **one (1) participant** to serve at a given National Health Service Corps-approved site within a yearly placement cycle. National Health Service Corps scholars do not count against the number of allowed National Health Service Corps Students to Service Loan Repayment Program participants at your site.
- For more information and to request an exception to this limitation policy, visit the [National Health Service Corps Sites webpage](#) and submit the [Additional Clinician Request Form](#).

#### **JOB OFFER**

If you offer a position to a National Health Service Corps Scholar or National Health Service Corps Students to Service Loan Repayment Program participant, you must fill out an "Offer and Acceptance Employment Form" as part of the employment verification electronic process. You submit this form through the [My BHW](#) account, and must ensure it includes:

- 1) Clinician name, discipline, and specialty;
- 2) Organization name;
- 3) Full-time or half-time employment;
- 4) Name and address of the National Health Service Corps site(s) where the clinician will be working, including the number of hours the clinician will work per week at each site
- 5) Anticipated employment start date;
- 6) Whether your site will pay for the clinician's malpractice insurance and tail coverage for the duration of employment; and

Your site representative's contact information, title, and signature.

## SITE VISITS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

### **NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE CORPS SITE VISIT**

We conduct site visits in collaboration with the [state/territorial Primary Care Office](#) to provide technical assistance, meet with National Health Service Corps participants, promote Bureau of Health Workforce and Health Resources and Services Administration programs, and ensure National Health Service Corps program integrity.

**Before** the visit, your [Division of Regional Operations analyst](#) will contact you to request documentation to ensure your site meets the eligibility criteria set forth in this National Health Service Corps Site Reference Guide and the National Health Service Corps Site Agreement ([Appendix A](#)). Documentation requirements will be based on your site type and the guidance provided in this Site Reference Guide. We reserve the right to request access to (or copies of) additional documents during the site visit.

### **EXPECTATIONS DURING A SITE VISIT**

Along with an evaluation of the site's understanding and implementation of the National Health Service Corps site and participant requirements, the site visit also provides us with an opportunity to:

- Provide site-specific technical assistance on program requirements;
- Share National Health Service Corps recruitment and retention resources; and
- Meet with program participants to assess any technical assistance needs and receive feedback about the National Health Service Corps program.

You can find more information to prepare for a site visit on the [National Health Service Corps Sites webpage](#).

### **FREQUENCY OF NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE CORPS SITE VISITS**

Existing approved sites should anticipate periodic site visits while participating in the National Health Service Corps program to confirm adherence to all site requirements. We will reach out to you to schedule your site for either a virtual or on-site site visit anytime while your site is an active National Health Service Corps site.

### **ADDRESSING NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE CORPS SITE ELIGIBILITY CONCERNS**

Site eligibility concerns may arise at any time during the National Health Service Corps site certification period, including, but not limited to, during the submission of a New Site Application, the Recertification process, or a site visit. There are two separate processes to address site eligibility concerns, depending on whether the site is an applicant site or an existing site. The term "applicant site" includes both new and recertifying sites.

1. ***Process for Addressing National Health Service Corps Site Eligibility for New and Recertifying Applicant Sites during Application Cycles.***

The Division of Regional Operations renders the final decision for National Health Service Corps site approval and may disapprove your application if: 1) the documents and information included in your application indicate that your site does not meet the National Health Service Corps site eligibility requirements outlined in the most current National Health Service Corps Site Reference Guide and National Health Service Corps Site Agreement, or 2) your site application is incomplete or contains illegible or non-compliant documents. You will receive an email notification from [My BHW](#) of the final decision. A copy will also be sent to the [state/territorial Primary Care Office](#). If disapproved, you are encouraged to discuss your site application with your [Division of Regional Operations analyst](#) and may request technical assistance to reapply during the next open application cycle.

2. ***Process for Addressing Site Eligibility in Existing National Health Service Corps-Approved Sites.***

If the Division of Regional Operations determines that an **existing** National Health Service Corps-approved site does not meet the National Health Service Corps site eligibility requirements outlined in the National Health Service Corps Site Reference Guide and National Health Service Corps Site Agreement, *outside of application cycles*, the following steps will take place:

1. The Division of Regional Operations will email you to identify the specific violation of the National Health Service Corps Site Reference Guide or National Health Service Corps Site Agreement, the requested remedy to that violation, and a thirty (30) calendar day timeframe for submitting sufficient documentation demonstrating that you addressed and fulfilled the requested remedy.
2. A “flag” may be placed in your site record to alert the Bureau of Health Workforce staff that there is an eligibility concern. The “flag” may be considered by the Bureau of Health Workforce staff in relation to placing additional National Health Service Corps participants at the existing site.
3. The Division of Regional Operations will provide all necessary technical assistance to the existing site to assist with the remedy. The technical assistance may include a site visit or phone audit by the Division of Regional Operations.
4. If your site fails to provide an acceptable response to the Division of Regional Operations within thirty (30) calendar days, your site will be inactivated. Your [Division of Regional Operations analyst](#) will email you the decision letter and send a copy to the state/territorial Primary Care Office. Your site status will be updated to “inactive.” A site inquiry will be sent to the Division of Participant Support and Compliance to notify them of the site inactivation in the event there are National Health Service Corps participants present at the site. *(NOTE: On rare occasions, and as deemed necessary by the Division of Regional Operations, your site may be granted a thirty (30) day extension if you demonstrated due diligence in trying to meet National Health Service Corps site eligibility requirements.)*
5. If your site provides an acceptable response to the Division of Regional Operations within the initial or final thirty (30) calendar days, your site will



remain active in the Bureau of Health Workforce Management Information System Solution, and the “flag” will be removed from the site record.

**ADDRESSING SITE CONCERNS UNRELATED TO THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE CORPS**

Occasionally, the Health Resources and Services Administration’s Bureau of Health Workforce will receive concerns about National Health Service Corps-approved sites that are outside of its program authority and the terms of the National Health Service Corps Site Agreement (for example, contractual disputes with the site, or allegations of Medicaid fraud). In these situations, the Health Resources and Services Administration’s Bureau of Health Workforce may refer complainants to the appropriate contact (for example, the site’s Board of Directors, or the Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Inspector General) to address the concerns.

## APPENDIX A: SITE AGREEMENT



### National Health Service Corps Site Agreement

**National Health Service Corps approved sites must meet the following requirements at the time of application and must continue to meet the requirements in order to maintain status as a National Health Service Corps-approved site.**

1. Is an eligible site type for National Health Service Corps approval, and is located in and treats patients from a federally designated [Health Professional Shortage Area \(HPSA\)](#).
2. Does not deny requested health care services or discriminate in the provision of services to an individual (i) because the individual is unable to pay; or (ii) because payment for those services would be made under Medicare, Medicaid, or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). *[May or may not be applicable to American Indian Health facilities, free clinics, or correctional facilities].*
  - a. Uses a schedule of fees or payments for services consistent with locally prevailing rates or charges and designed to cover the site's reasonable costs of operation. *(May or may not be applicable to American Indian Health facilities, free clinics, or correctional facilities.)*
  - b. Uses a [discounted/sliding fee schedule](#) to ensure that no one who is unable to pay will be denied access to services, and the discount must be applicable to all individuals and families with annual incomes at or below 200 percent of the most current [Federal Poverty Guidelines](#). The sliding fee schedule must also provide a full discount for individuals and families with annual incomes at or below 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, with allowance for a nominal charge only, consistent with site's policy; Must adjust fees (partial sliding fee discount), reflecting nominal charges, based solely on family size and income and no other factors for individuals and families with incomes above 100 percent and at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. *(May or may not be applicable to American Indian Health facilities, free clinics, or correctional facilities.)*
  - c. Makes every reasonable effort to secure payment in accordance with the schedule of fees or schedule of discounts from the patient and/or any other third party. *(May or may not be applicable to American Indian Health facilities, free clinics, or correctional facilities.)*

- d. Accepts assignment for Medicare beneficiaries and has entered into an appropriate agreement with the applicable state agency for Medicaid and CHIP beneficiaries. *(May or may not be applicable to American Indian Health facilities, free clinics, or correctional facilities.)*
- e. Prominently displays a statement in common areas and on site's official website that explicitly states that (i) no one will be denied access to services due to inability to pay; and (ii) there is a discounted/sliding fee schedule available based on family size and income. When applicable, this statement should be translated into the appropriate language/dialect. *(May or may not be applicable to free clinics, or correctional facilities.)*
3. Provides comprehensive primary care services (medical, oral, and/or behavioral/mental), which correspond to the designated Health Professional Shortage Area type.
4. Uses a credentialing process that, at a minimum, includes reference review, licensure verification, and a query of the [National Practitioner Data Bank \(NPDB\)](#) of those clinicians for whom the National Practitioner Data Bank maintains data.
5. Functions as part of a system of care that either offers or ensures access to ancillary, inpatient, and specialty referrals.
6. Adheres to sound fiscal management policies and adopts clinician recruitment and retention policies to help the patient population, the site, and the community obtain maximum benefits.
7. Maintains a clinician recruitment and retention plan, keeps a current copy of the plan on-site for review, and adopts recruitment policies to maintain appropriate clinical staffing levels needed to serve the community.
8. Does not reduce the salary of National Health Service Corps clinicians because they receive or have received benefits under the National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment or Scholarship programs.
9. Allows National Health Service Corps clinicians to maintain a primary care clinical practice (full-time or half-time) as indicated in their contract with the National Health Service Corps. **The site administrator must review and know the clinician's specific National Health Service Corps service requirements.** Time spent on call will not count toward a clinician's service obligation, except to the extent the provider is providing direct clinical care during that period. Participants do not receive service credit for hours worked over the required hours per week, and excess hours cannot be applied to any other work week. Clinicians must apply for a suspension of their service obligation if their absences per year are greater than those allowed by the National Health Service Corps. If a suspension is requested and approved, the participant's service obligation end date will be extended accordingly. For a more detailed explanation of the full-time and half-time clinical practice requirements, including requirements for participants working in Critical Access Hospitals, Rural Emergency Hospitals, 638 tribal hospitals, and Indian Health Service hospitals, refer to the [National Health Service Corps website](#) and review the respective Application and Program Guidance for the National Health Service Corps loan repayment programs (Loan Repayment Program, Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan

Repayment Program, Rural Community Loan Repayment Program), Students to Service Loan Repayment Program and/or Scholarship Program.

10. Communicates to the National Health Service Corps any change in site or clinician employment status for full-time and half-time, including moving a National Health Service Corps clinician to a satellite site for any or all of their weekly work hours, termination, etc.
11. Supports clinicians with funding and arrangements, including clinical coverage, for their time away from the site to attend National Health Service Corps-sponsored meetings, webinars, and other continuing education programs
12. Maintains and makes available for review by National Health Service Corps representatives all personnel and practice records associated with a National Health Service Corps clinician including documentation that contains such information that the Department may need to determine if the individual and/or site has complied with National Health Service Corps requirements.
13. Completes and submits [National Health Service Corps Site Data Tables](#) (requires up-to-date data for the preceding six months) to National Health Service Corps at the time of the site application, recertification, and National Health Service Corps site visits. The following eligible auto-approved National Health Service Corps sites ARE NOT required to submit the National Health Service Corps Site Data Tables: 1) Federally Qualified Health Centers, and 2) Federally Qualified Health Center Look-Alikes. The standard Health Resources and Services Administration/Bureau of Primary Health Care Uniform Data System (UDS) report will be reviewed in place of the data tables. The following eligible National Health Service Corps sites must provide National Health Service Corps Site Data Tables upon request if the Health Resources and Services Administration needs them to determine National Health Service Corps site eligibility: 1) American Indian Health facilities, 2) federal prisons, 3) state prisons, and 4) Immigration and Customs Enforcement Health Service Corps sites. All other eligible National Health Service Corps site types must submit National Health Service Corps Site Data Tables at the time of site application, recertification, and National Health Service Corps Site Visit.
14. Complies with requests for a site visit from the National Health Service Corps or the state Primary Care Office with adherence to all National Health Service Corps requirements.

By signing below, you hereby affirm your compliance with the National Health Service Corps Site Agreement, and that the information submitted is true and accurate. You further understand that this information is subject to verification by the National Health Service Corps.

Name of Site (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Site Official's Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Site Official's Name (Signature): \_\_\_\_\_

Site Official's Title (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_