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News Releases[HHS Secretary](#)[News](#)[Jobs](#)[Grants/Funding](#)[Families](#)[Prevention](#)[Diseases](#)[Regulations](#)[Preparedness](#)[Speeches & Op-eds](#)[Testimony](#)[Reports](#)[Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\)](#)[Audio / Video / Photo](#)[E-mail Updates/RSS Feeds](#)[New Media](#)[Contacts](#)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, November 22, 2010Contact: HRSA Press Office
(301) 443-3376**Affordable Care Act bolsters the primary care workforce in medically underserved communities****\$290 Million in new funding for the National Health Service Corps will help primary care clinicians repay student loans while serving communities**

HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius today announced the launch of the new application cycle for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) [Loan Repayment Program](#), during a visit to Total Health Care, a community health center in Baltimore. The NHSC offers primary care medical, dental and mental health clinicians up to \$60,000 to repay student loans in exchange for two years of service at health care facilities in medically underserved areas. This year's investment in the program, which includes \$290 million from the Affordable Care Act, seeks to address shortages in the primary health care workforce and translates into greater access to healthcare for those who might otherwise go without.

"As we continue to seek ways to impact both the primary care workforce shortage and the increasing debt burden on new providers, NHSC serves as a model for addressing both challenges simultaneously," said Secretary Sebelius. "Increasing access to primary care physicians who can support the physical and mental well-being of individuals can help prevent disease and illness, and ensure everyone – regardless of where they live – has access to comprehensive, high quality care."

The Affordable Care Act also provides more flexibility in how the Corps administers the loan repayment program. In addition to monetary awards that are higher than previous years, the Corps will give members the option of working half-time to fulfill their service obligation and provide credit for some teaching hours.

"The NHSC sites are located in some of the most geographically isolated and economically distressed areas of the country," said HRSA Administrator Mary K. Wakefield, PhD., RN. "The health care professionals who answer this call to serve in the NHSC will join thousands of dedicated primary care clinicians who bring quality health care to underserved communities and vulnerable populations."

"By the end of FY2011, we expect that over 10,800 clinicians will be caring for more than 11 million people, more than tripling the National Health Service Corps since 2008," said NHSC Director Rebecca Spitzgo. "By 2015, with the historic funding opportunities offered by ARRA and the Affordable Care Act, the Corps will support more than 15,000 new primary care professionals."

For the first time, providers may apply to the NHSC loan repayment program online where they will find tutorials and additional information to assist in the application process.

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