

Secretary Sebelius Makes Recovery Act Funding Available to Bolster Health Care in Needy Communities, Relieve Providers' Student Debt

HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius today announced the availability of nearly \$200 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to support student loan repayments for primary care medical, dental and mental health clinicians who want to work at National Health Service Corps (NHSC) sites. In exchange for the loan repayments, clinicians serve for two years with the Corps. The new funds are expected to double the number of Corps clinicians and make 3,300 awards to clinicians that serve in health centers, rural health clinics and other health care facilities that care for uninsured and underserved people. Secretary Sebelius made the announcement prior to touring the Tufts Floating Children's Hospital in Boston, Mass., where she was joined by members of the National Health Service Corps. Following the tour, Sebelius held a discussion with health care experts and Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick on the importance of health reform.

The funds announced today were made available by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which has made a down payment on the critical health reforms our country needs and protected health care and vital services for Americans across the country.

"The Recovery Act has laid the foundation for health reform and is supporting our effort to give more people access to the quality, affordable care they need," Secretary Sebelius said. "National Health Service Corps has helped protect the health and well-being of millions of Americans. Now, we are doubling the Corps and putting doctors and clinicians in the communities where they are desperately needed."

"As we await a national health care reform plan, a careful look at Massachusetts' historic efforts to obtain near-universal health insurance coverage offers valuable insights into what we can achieve as a nation," Governor Patrick said. "We thank President Obama and Secretary Sebelius for their strong commitment to ensuring that all Americans have access to quality, affordable care. Recovery Act funding for student loan repayments will further support our reform efforts by helping to deliver care to the communities where it's needed most."

"The health care professionals who heed this call to serve will join thousands of dedicated NHSC primary care clinicians already in the field," said Mary Wakefield, Ph.D., R.N., administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration which oversees the NHSC at HHS. "These funds will double both the number of Corps clinicians and the number of patients they care for, and spark economic growth in communities hit hard by the economic downturn."

Since its inception nearly 40 years ago, the NHSC has provided scholarships and loan repayments for more than 30,000 doctors, dentists and other health professionals who provide health care in the most geographically isolated and economically distressed regions of the country.

Sebelius encouraged fully trained health professionals who are dedicated to working with the underserved and have qualifying educational loans to apply for this opportunity. In addition to \$50,000 for loan repayment, each clinician receives a competitive salary and a chance to have a significant impact on a community. Primary care practitioners interested in applying for loan repayments should visit <http://nhsc.hrsa.gov>.

To see a list of opportunities available by state, go to <http://www.hhs.gov/recovery/programs/nhsc/vacancies.html>.

The activities described in this release are being funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). To track the progress of HHS activities funded through the ARRA, visit www.hhs.gov/recovery. To track all federal funds provided through the ARRA, visit www.recovery.gov.