

CORPS CONNECTIONS

IN SERVICE
November 2010

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Members of the Corps:

Welcome to the first edition of “Corps Connections,” the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) quarterly newsletter. This newsletter is a result of feedback from you – Corps clinicians, scholars and sites – about the desire for improved communication. It is designed to provide periodic updates on what is happening with the Corps and connections to other sources of information.

As many of you have heard me say, this is an exciting time to be a member of the Corps. We are able to provide primary health care to more Americans than at any time in our history. As of September 30, 2010, the NHSC included more than 7,000 practicing clinicians and more than 10,000 sites.

In addition to our growing numbers, we are working hard to find better ways to support you, the members of the Corps. I hope you view this newsletter as one step in doing that. We are in awe of the work you do every day and thank you for your service.

With greatest admiration,



New Program Guidance Includes Benefits for In-Service Clinicians

Increased Funds and More Flexible Options Now Available

The Loan Repayment Program (LRP) Application and Program Guidance for FY 2011 was released on November 22, 2010. The new guidelines increase the amount of money you can receive if you choose to continue your current contract.

Contract continuations (previously referred to as “contract amendments”) allow you to stay in your community beyond your initial service commitment while receiving additional loan repayment assistance from the Corps. If you are interested in extending your contract, you need to apply no later than 120 days prior to the end of your current service commitment. As always, the site where you currently practice must be approved by the NHSC and continue to be located in and serving a federally designated health professional shortage area (HPSA). The site must also approve your continued service. Maximum contract extension award levels are:

- 1 additional year - \$40,000 for full-time; \$20,000 for half-time
- 2 additional years - \$40,000 for full-time; \$20,000 for half-time
- 3 additional years - \$30,000 for full-time; \$15,000 for half-time
- 4 additional years - \$30,000 for full-time; \$15,000 for half-time
- 5 additional years - \$20,000 for full-time; \$10,000 for half-time

Additional Changes of Note

Provisions in the Affordable Care Act allow the Corps to offer additional flexibility in fulfilling your service commitment by adding a half-time option. Your NHSC service site must approve the change from a full-time to half-time schedule. Clinicians who choose to move to a half-time schedule are required to fulfill their service commitment as a half-time clinician.

Additional changes that apply to new clinicians entering the Corps include: 1) The program will now begin with an initial award of up to \$60,000 for two years of service and up to \$170,000 for a five-year service commitment and; 2) The service obligation for new awards will include a 20 percent credit for teaching and 50 percent credit for teaching at a Teaching Health Center. For additional information, view the application and program guidance at:

<http://nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov/loanrepayment/pdf/2011Guidance.pdf>.

“So many people need health care. And I believe that if we can continue a program like [the NHSC], where we are now inspiring more clinicians to go into these areas and practice, I think that you will see a tremendous improvement in quality of life.”

Emem Ekpenyong, Physician Assistant, Fillmore, CA

Happenings at Headquarters

- **Morehouse Initiative.** The NHSC has signed a cooperative agreement with Morehouse School of Medicine National Center for Primary Care to develop on-line training with content and format uniquely adapted to NHSC clinicians serving the underserved in isolated settings. The portal will include on-line training and resources, best-practice examples, tools, and templates, plus chat rooms, forums, and file-sharing to create a virtual community for clinicians serving the underserved. Portions of the portal are expected to be available this winter.
- **Flu Vaccinations for Clinicians.** NHSC is working with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to encourage all clinicians to get their flu shots this season. CDC and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommend that all health care workers get an annual flu vaccine. Unfortunately, fewer than half of health care workers report getting an annual flu vaccine. As a health care worker, by getting vaccinated you can help protect your family at home as well as your patients at work from getting sick. Visit www.flu.gov for more information.
- **Affordable Care Act Resource for You and Your Patients.** Information on coverage, benefits and changes under the Affordable Care Act is available at www.healthcare.gov. Run by the Department of Health and Human Services, the site offers easy to understand information helpful for both clinicians and the public.
- **Health Information Technology (IT) Toolbox.** HRSA's HealthIT Toolbox (<http://www.hrsa.gov/toolbox>) offers assistance, tips and training sessions to assist you in the implementation of health information technology. The Web site also includes specific information for adoption in rural communities.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **December 9-11, 2010.** NHSC Awardee Conference in San Francisco, CA.
- **January 16-22, 2011.** National Healthy Weight Week. Encourage your patients to get out and exercise.
- **February 5, 2011.** American Dental Association's Give Kids A Smile day. Sign up to participate at: <http://www.ada.org/3452.aspx>
- **March 17-20, 2011.** National Hispanic Medical Association Meeting in Washington, DC
- **March 24-28, 2011.** Osteopathic Family Physician Convention in San Antonio, TX.
- **April 4-April 7, 2011.** American College of Physicians in San Diego, CA.



Contact NHSC

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