

Healthcare Provider Incentive Loan Repayment FAQs

What is Healthcare Provider Incentive Loan Repayment?

Healthcare Provider Incentive Loan Repayment was established within the Oregon Health Authority and is administered by the Oregon Office of Rural Health. This subsidy supports Oregon's health system transformation efforts to ensure an adequate supply of primary care clinicians providing medical, dental, and behavioral health care in every Oregon community. To that end, this subsidy provides loan repayment assistance to primary care providers who commit to serving Medicaid and/or Medicare patients in rural and urban underserved areas of Oregon.

Can clinicians participate in any other loan repayment programs while serving in Healthcare Provider Incentive Loan Repayment?

No, clinicians can only be under one service obligation (program) at a time. Participating in two programs at once, also known as "double dipping, will put you in violation of your Healthcare Provider Incentive Loan Repayment contract. Other programs include, but are not limited to, the National Health Service Corps (NHSC), Nurse Corps, Oregon Partnership State Loan Repayment (SLRP), and employer sponsored funds and programs.

My employer requires me to pay back my bonus if I leave the practice, is that considered a service obligation?

Employer sponsored funds and programs including bonuses, relocation allowances, or other funds that must be paid back in full in the event that a provider leaves the site before a set date are considered service obligations. Bonuses, relocation allowances, and other employer sponsored funds that have a prorated payback clause are not considered service obligations.

I am employed at an approved practice site but I am in a probationary period, am I eligible to apply?

Healthcare Provider Incentive Loan Repayment requires that a provider be a regular status employee, free of any probationary periods. If you are in a probationary period you will be eligible to apply once you have fully completed your probationary period.

What happens if a participating clinician wants to transfer to a different site while fulfilling their obligation?

A participating clinician may, with prior approval, transfer his or her service obligation to another qualifying site. A written transfer request must be submitted documenting the need or reason for the transfer, the proposed new qualifying site, and the name of the director at the proposed new site. Other documentation related to the transfer may be required.

What happens if a participating clinician breaches their service obligation?

If a clinician willfully breaches obligations contained in the terms of their Healthcare Provider Incentive Loan Repayment contract a penalty will be imposed on the clinician in an amount up to the sum of:

- The total paid on behalf of the participant for loan repayments for any periods of obligated service not served;
- \$7,500 for each month of the minimum service period not completed according to the terms of the obligation; and
- Interest on the above amounts at the maximum prevailing rate, as determined by the Oregon Department of Revenue, calculated from the date of breach until full repayment has been made.

How does a practice site qualify?

To become a qualified practice site, a representative from the practice site must submit a Site Application to the Oregon Office of Rural Health. Applications can be found on the Oregon Office of Rural Health's website [here](#).

To qualify a practice site must:

- Be located in a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA), or have a Facility HSPA; **AND**
- Be serving Medicaid and Medicare patients in no less than the same proportion of such patients in the county; **AND**
- Have a Site Application on file with the Oregon Office of Rural Health and have received an email confirming site qualification (Site Applications are valid for one year).

What if my practice site only accepts Medicare or Medicaid, but not both?

If a majority of providers at your practice site are not eligible for reimbursement from both programs your practice site may qualify if it is located in a HPSA **AND** your practice site serves either Medicaid or Medicare patients in no less the same proportion of such patients in the county.

How does a practice site get a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) designation?

To be designated as a HPSA, communities or facilities must apply to the Health Resources & Service Administration (HRSA) Office of Shortage Designation and provide data indicating that a shortage exists in the area or for the population or facility. These applications are submitted through the [Oregon Primary Care Office](#) (PCO). An area or site interested in a HPSA designation should contact the Oregon PCO directly.

What is considered "full time" and "part time"?

Full time means working at least 40 hours per week, with a minimum of 32 hours per week spent providing direct patient care, for a minimum of 45 weeks per service year.

Part-time means working at least 20 hours per week, with a minimum of 16 hours per week spent providing direct patient care, for a minimum of 45 weeks per service year.

Patient charting is a component of offering direct patient care, but many other activities are not.

If chosen for an award, how much will I receive?

Awards are calculated based on the balance owed on qualifying loans upon program entry.

Full time service providers must commit to a 3 year minimum service obligation in exchange for a tax free award of 50% of their qualifying education loan debt balance at the time of application, up to \$35,000 per obligation year.

Part time service providers must commit to a 3 year minimum service obligation in exchange for a tax free award of 25% of their qualifying educational loan debt balance at the time of application, up to \$25,000 per obligation year.

My employer defines “full time” as working 38 hours per week with 32 hours of direct patient care.

Do I qualify for a full time award?

Your employer may define “full time” or “part time” differently than the program does (see above).

You must be meeting the required hours as defined by the program to be awarded at either full or part time.

What is a "qualifying educational loan"?

Qualifying educational loan means one or more government or commercial loans received solely to cover the cost of post-baccalaureate health professional training or, in the case of an expanded practice dental hygienist, undergraduate educational training. This does not include credit card loans, lines of credit, private loans, and personal loans.

What type of loan documentation is required when submitting my application?

Loan documentation must be in the form of lender statements dated within 30 days of submission, and clearly show your name, account number, the current balance, the loan’s date of origination and/or school to which funds were disbursed, and the address to which payment is submitted for each loan reported. Online printouts are acceptable as long as they include all of the required information. Monthly statements that you receive from your loan provider often lack the required level of detail. Most applicants report they are able to download detailed statements from their loan provider’s website. Some applicants have reported the need to call their loan provider to obtain proper documentation.

What if my educational loans have been consolidated?

Consolidated educational loans may be allowed, however, detailed documentation on your consolidation will be required. Documentation must include the original disbursement dates, to which institution(s) the original loans were disbursed, and details on what was included in the consolidation. Most applicants report they are able to easily find this information on their lender’s website.

Do I need to submit my loan documentation in the form of PDFs?

PDF is the preferred file type when submitting all documentation related to your application. ORH is able to accept .JPEG, .TIFF, or .PNG, files so long as they are attached to an email rather than

imbedded. Files imbedded in emails are blocked by ORH's email firewall. ORH is unable to accept files that can be altered (e.g. .doc & .TXT files), even if they are converted to a different file type before they are submitted.

What if I am unable to provide adequate documentation on my educational loans?

Loan documentation supplied by applicants must meet Healthcare Provider Incentive Loan Repayment requirements, and establish a clear link between current account balances and post-baccalaureate health professional training. A very small portion of applicants report they are unable to obtain documents with the required level of detail. This is usually due to loans being consolidated more than once, or loan providers selling loans and then deleting old account information. ORH is unable to accept loan documentation that does not meet the minimum requirements outlined by the program. Applications that do not meet the documentation requirements will not be reviewed for award consideration.

What if my educational loans are in deferment, forbearance, or default?

To qualify, educational loans must be in good standing and in "repayment" status. Loans that are in deferment, forbearance, or default are ineligible for this program.

How are awards determined?

The following factors may be taken into consideration when determining awards:

- Provider who applies from a qualifying site located in a higher scoring HPSA; **AND/OR**
- Provider who applies from a qualifying site located in a service area ranking below the median in the most recent [Areas of Unmet Health Care Need Report](#); **AND/OR**
- Provider who applies from a qualifying site certified to meet the requirements of the National Health Service Corps; **AND/OR**
- Provider who practices at, or in affiliation with, a [Patient Centered Primary Care Home](#); **AND/OR**
- Provider who meets specific needs identified by a community, including ethnicity, language spoken, specialty, or provider type; **AND/OR**
- Provider who applies from a qualifying site that is facilitating the integration of behavioral health and/or oral health services with primary care.

What are the eligible provider types?

- Dentists in general or pediatric practice;
- Expanded Practice Dental Hygienists;
- Pharmacists;
- Physicians (MD, DO or ND) who practice in the specialties of family medicine or general practice, general internal medicine, geriatrics, pediatrics, or obstetrics and gynecology;
- Nurse Practitioners who practice in the specialties of adult primary care, women's health care, geriatrics, pediatrics, psychiatric mental health, family practice, or nurse midwifery;
- Physician Assistants who practice in the specialties of family medicine or general practice, general internal medicine, geriatrics, pediatrics or obstetrics and gynecology;

- General, child and adolescent or geriatric Psychiatrists;
- Clinical Psychologists;
- Licensed Clinical Social Workers;
- Licensed Professional Counselors;
- Licensed Marriage and/or Family Therapists

I split my time between sites, am I eligible to apply?

Yes, as long as the sites you're splitting your time at qualify. However, travel time between sites does not count towards your required direct patient care hours.

Do all applicants receive a loan repayment award? How many awards will be given?

Applications will be reviewed and evaluated according to the aforementioned factors and availability of funding at the time the application is received. Applicants will be notified of the status of their completed applications within 90 days of application submission.

If chosen for an award, will funds be paid directly to my loan provider?

No, funds will be disbursed to you directly. Your first disbursement will be in the form of a check, then direct deposits to your bank account after that. You will be required to provide documentation that the full amount of that disbursement was applied to your qualified educational loans before your next disbursement is issued.

If funds are paid to me directly, will I be liable for taxes?

No. Loan repayment and forgiveness programs administered by the Oregon Office of Rural Health are tax free.

If awarded, can I still take advantage of the Rural Practitioner Tax Credit?

Yes, you may take advantage of [Rural Practitioner Tax Credit](#) as it is not considered a service commitment.

If awarded, can I still take advantage of the Rural Medical Practitioners Insurance Subsidy Program?

Yes, you may take advantage of the [Rural Medical Practitioners Insurance Subsidy Program](#) as it is not considered a service commitment.

If awarded, can I still take advantage of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program?

Yes, you may take advantage of the [Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program](#) is not considered a service commitment.

I work in an inpatient setting, am I eligible to apply?

Clinicians who are employed in an inpatient setting in a full-time capacity are not eligible for an award. Hospitalists do not qualify for an award unless they can consistently meet the required minimum number of direct patient care hours per week in an approved outpatient setting.

I am currently working at a qualified practice site. If awarded will I get “credit” for the time spent at my site before my Healthcare Provider Incentive Loan Repayment contract effective date?

No. Your Healthcare Provider Incentive Loan Repayment obligation beginning and end dates will be clearly listed on the contract. You will not receive “credit” for time served outside of those dates.

I am in the Reserves, am I eligible to apply?

Reservists and National Guard members are eligible to apply for funding. Awardees with a Reserve or National Guard obligation who are called to active duty while under their service obligation will not receive program service credit for the period of active duty.

I am in a management role, am I eligible to apply?

Time spent on management activities, including the duties of a Medical Director, is considered to be an administrative activity. Applicants serving in such a capacity should keep in mind that they cannot exceed more than 8 hours per week of administrative and/or management time (4 hours in the case of half-time participants).

How do I apply for Healthcare Provider Incentive Loan Repayment?

First, ensure that you are at a qualified site and are an eligible primary care provider type (see above). After you have established that you are eligible, visit the Office of Rural Health’s Healthcare Provider Incentive Loan Repayment [webpage](#) and scroll down to the “Application” section. There you will find a link to the application. Please be sure to follow all instructions listed on the application and provide all required documentation.

Must I be a U.S. citizen to apply for Healthcare Provider Incentive Loan Repayment?

Yes, you must be a U.S. to be eligible to apply for Healthcare Provider Incentive Loan Repayment.

Who should I contact if I have questions about Healthcare Provider Incentive Loan Repayment?

For additional information on Healthcare Provider Incentive Loan Repayment, please contact the Oregon Office of Rural Health at ruralworkforce@ohsu.edu, or 503-494-4450.