



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

Rural Communities Health Care Investment Program (RCHIP)

The Rural Communities Health Care Investment Program (RCHIP) is administered by the Texas State Office of Rural Health (SORH) at the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA). RCHIP utilizes funds from a permanent endowment established from the tobacco settlement for the State of Texas and authorized under TEX. GOV'T CODE Sec. 487.558. The authority for this program is provided in Texas Government Code Chapter 487, Subchapter M, and Texas Administrative Code Chapter 30, Subchapter B.

The SORH awards \$10,000 student loan repayment/stipends to eligible, non-physician, licensed healthcare providers in response to the recruitment and retention needs of medically underserved communities in Texas. Selected participants must agree to work, and complete, a 12-month service obligation in a qualifying community in order the student loan repayment/stipend.

Who is eligible to apply?

Licensed, non-physician healthcare providers practicing (or who agree to practice) in a Texas county with a total population of 50,000 or less may to apply. Licensed, non-physician healthcare providers are eligible if they meet the requirements below:

1. Hold a Texas license, permit, or other form of authorization required by state law or regulation to work in a health care profession (herein collectively referred to as a "license"); and
2. Either:
 - a. Received their license in the field under which this application is submitted within the last 24 months [2 years] prior to the application deadline date; or
 - b. Practiced in a county with more than 150,000 people and has moved or will move to practice in a qualifying community in the field under which this application is submitted (applicant may not have been residing or practicing in the qualifying community for more than 12 months [1 year] prior to the application deadline); and
3. Agree to work for a 12-month service period at the eligible healthcare facility.

Eligible health professionals include but are not limited to: physician assistants; nurses; physical and occupational therapists; pharmacists; optometrists; emergency medical technicians; speech pathologists; dentists; and licensed non-physician mental health practitioners.

NOTE: Healthcare providers currently fulfilling an obligation to provide health care services as part of a scholarship agreement, a student loan agreement, or another student loan repayment or reimbursement program cannot simultaneously receive funding from a state-funded loan repayment program for the same period of service. Additionally, a health professional who participates in a program under this subchapter may not use telecommunication technology, including telemedicine, as the sole or primary method of providing services and may not use telecommunication technology as a substitute for providing health care services in person.

What is a qualifying community?

To receive a RCHIP award, an eligible healthcare provider must provide care in an eligible community. An eligible community is in a Texas county with a population of 50,000 or less and has been designated under state or federal law as a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) or a Medically Underserved Area (MUA). For more information about HPSA and MUA designations, see: (<http://www.hrsa.gov/shortage/>)

How are participants selected?

Due to the limited amount of funding available, the RCHIP Program is competitive. Applications are scored and ranked using the following criteria:

- County HPSA score
- Student loan repayment vs stipend
- Applicant medical education from a Texas school
- Full-time employment

E-mail RCHIP inquiries to Erica.Lozano@TexasAgriculture.gov