

Office of Primary Care and Rural Health
Utah Health Care Workforce Financial Assistance Program

Function

The Office of Primary Care and Rural Health continues to be a resource for Utah’s rural, multi-cultural, and underserved communities. The office works with communities that need assistance in conducting needs assessments, recruiting health care professionals, identifying sources of funding, and implementing other projects related to decreasing disparity and increasing access to primary health care.

The Legislature established the Utah Health Care Workforce Financial Assistance Program during the 2002 Legislative General Session by consolidating the Rural Physicians and Physician Assistants Grant and Scholarship Program, the Nurse Education Financial Assistance Program, and the Urban Special Population Health Care Provider Financial Assistance Program.

Program Description

The purpose of the Health Care Workforce Financial Assistance Program is to increase the number of health care professionals (physicians, physician assistants, nurses, dentists, mental health therapists, or other health care professionals) who provide primary health care services in medically underserved areas. This is done through educational loan repayment grants in return for providing primary health care services to medically underserved populations for an obligated period of time. Funding for this program is designated as nonlapsing and is appropriated as a separate line item, in accordance with UCA 26-46-102(4).statutory authority.

UCA 26-46 created the Utah Health Care Workforce Financial Assistance Program Advisory Committee and establishes the Department’s authority to administer the program.

Key Facts

Of those health care professions that have completed their service obligation, 83 percent have either remained in their original service areas or within the same county where their service obligation began. Placements have been made in 27 of Utah’s 29 counties, allowing those communities the opportunity for more comprehensive primary health care services. Over the course of its existence, the program has provided funding to secure the obligation of a total of 916 years of service. In 2008, thirty-five (35) employment sites met the eligibility criteria of a minimum score of “50”. Forty-six (46) health care professionals at those 35 employment sites met the criteria to be considered for funding awards, but only twenty-seven (27), or 59% of those qualified health care professionals could be given awards with existing resources. There were additional qualified health care professionals reviewed by the program for sites that were not deemed eligible for funding, i.e. were not of a high enough priority (score of 50 or above).

Appropriation

The Utah Health Care Workforce Financial Assistance Program's funding comes from the State General Fund, including non-lapsing State General Fund appropriations.

The table below details the number of grants awarded according to health profession.

UTAH HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM HISTORY						
	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	Cumulative
Dentist	1	2	3	1	2	9
Mental Health Therapist	6	6	4	2	3	21
Nurse	10	14	12	12	16	64
Physician	10	3	5	10	3	31
Physician Assistant	0	0	6	0	3	9
Total Awards	27	25	30	25	27	134
Funds	\$419,700	\$419,900	\$422,900	\$472,800	\$447,300	\$2,182,600

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