

Workforce Development: Health Care Professionals

HOUSE HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE ON FEBRUARY 20, 2020



THE VERMONT AHEC NETWORK

AHEC's Health Workforce Development Strategy: A Continuum—Outreach, Awareness, Education, Activities, and Tools

VT AHEC works across the healthcare workforce pipeline from middle school to practicing health professionals (e.g., medical, nursing, dental, social work, public health), on programs such as:

- ✓ Health careers awareness and exploration
- ✓ Preceptor recruitment for student clinical rotations
- ✓ Interprofessional and community-based projects
- ✓ Workforce recruitment and retention (e.g., educational loan repayment programs, physician recruitment)
- ✓ Quality improvement projects
- ✓ Continuing education for health professionals

Funding History

AHEC Program

- \$500,000 (source: state, GC)—FY21 Governor's Budget Proposal includes level funding
- Level funding FY06 to FY20
- No indirect fee taken
- In December 2017, AHEC reduced from 3 to 2 regional centers (cut 5 staff positions) for efficiency and as a necessary strategy to sustain VT AHEC Network programs statewide

Educational Loan Repayment (ELR) Program for Health Care Professionals

- \$667,111 (source: state, GC)—FY21 Governor's Budget Proposal includes level funding
- Level funding since FY16
- 100% of funds used for awards, no indirect or direct administrative fee taken
- \$970,000 funding in FY15, funding peaked at \$1,460,000 in FY09
- New Act 72 (FY21) Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Workforce funding--TBD

State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) for Health Care Professionals

- \$215,500 (source: federal HRSA grant)
- 100% of funds used for awards, no indirect or direct administrative fee taken
- New in FY15 (via federal grant), funding peaked at \$250,000 in FY15-FY17

VT Academic Detailing and Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes)

- \$450,000 (source: special fund—Pharmaceutical Manufacturer Fee, Act 80)—FY21 Governor's Budget Proposal includes level funding
- FY18 funding increased to: expand (doubled the # of academic detailing sessions delivered), add opioid-related curricula, and implement Project ECHO tele-education program
- \$200,000 level funding from FY06 to FY17

MD Placement Program

- \$62,000 (source: \$50,000 state, \$12,000 federal HRSA grant)—FY21 Governor's Budget Proposal includes level funding
- Level funding since FY15

Vermont Educational Loan Repayment (ELR and SLP) for Health Care Professionals

Loan repayment is a recruitment and retention tool; it can be used to strategically respond to state workforce needs. Loan repayment is most effective when part of a comprehensive workforce development strategy. Understanding impact requires longitudinal tracking of the workforce.

ELR Funding Summary (state appropriation)

FY20

\$392,111 primary care, geriatrics, psychiatry (MDs/DOs, APRNs, PAs, CNMs) + required match funds

\$125,000 dentists (DDS/DMD) + required match funds

\$150,000 nurses (LPNs and RNs) + optional/voluntary match funds

\$667,111 total + match funds

Adding new eligible disciplines, specialties, or programs requires additional funding for direct awards and administration. "Unmet need" remains in existing programs.

SLP Funding Summary (federal HRSA grant, new grant period started FY19)

FY20

\$212,500 (+ required match funds) primary care, geriatrics, psychiatry (MDs/DOs, APRNs, PAs, CNMs), dentists (DDS/DMD) working at federally designated FQHCs or RHCs or in a federally designated health professions shortage area (HPSA) or Medical Underserved Community (MUC).

Vermont's Educational Loan Repayment Program for Health Care Professionals

Medical Practitioners (MD, DO, APRN, PA, CNM)*

- ✓ Primary Care: Family Medicine
 - ✓ Primary Care: Internal Medicine/Adult Primary Care
 - ✓ Primary Care: Pediatrics
 - ✓ Primary Care: Obstetrics/Gynecology
- And
- ✓ Psychiatry
 - ✓ Geriatrics

Dentists (DDS, DMD)

- ✓ All specialties, including oral surgeons

Nurses (LPN, RN)*

- ✓ Psychiatric
- ✓ Nursing Homes
- ✓ Home Health
- ✓ Public Health/State of Vermont
- ✓ Primary Care/FQHCs

* High priority applicants include those providing substance use disorder treatment.

ACT 72 (FY20)

Sec. E.301.2 MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER WORKFORCE

(a) The \$1,500,000 allocated to the Agency of Human Services for fiscal year 2019 pursuant to 2018 (Sp. Sess.) Acts and Resolves No. 11, Sec. C.106.1(b)(1) shall be carried forward to fiscal year 2020 and be used for loan repayment and tuition assistance to promote the recruitment and retention of high-quality providers of mental health and substance use disorder treatment services in Vermont. The funds shall be made available to individuals employed by a designated or specialized service agency in Vermont based on a three-year contractual obligation to provide mental health services or substance use disorder treatment services, or both, at a designated or specialized service agency in Vermont, for the following uses:

(1) loan repayment **for master's-level clinicians, bachelor's-level direct-service staff, and nurses**; and

(2) tuition assistance for individuals pursuing degrees to become master's-level clinicians, bachelor's-level direct-service staff, and nurses.

(b)(1) Loan repayment and tuition assistance funds shall be available to employees of designated and specialized service agencies as set forth in subsection (a) of this section for bachelor's-and master's-level degree programs offered through accredited institutions of higher education, including online programs.

(2) The Agency may contract with Area Health Education Centers or the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation or both to administer these programs.

(c) The fiscal year 2020 appropriation pursuant to 2018 (Sp. Sess.) Acts and Resolves No. 11, Sec. C.106.1(b)(2) shall be reserved to be addressed in the fiscal year 2020 budget adjustment or fiscal year 2021 budget processes.

It can also be viewed here: [https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2020/Docs/ACTS/ACT072/ACT072 As Enacted.pdf#page= 145](https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2020/Docs/ACTS/ACT072/ACT072%20As%20Enacted.pdf#page=145)

Educational Loan Repayment and Competing Nationally

This program is critical for recruitment and retention of primary care physicians, psychiatrists, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, and dentists. We currently face workforce challenges and shortages.

Most states have loan repayment programs for health professionals. Without the Educational Loan Repayment Program, Vermont would be placed at a disadvantage competing nationally for the same highly trained workforce.

Educational Loan Repayment and Competing Nationally

But it's not that simple...

- Arms race between states, and organizations
- Data evidence versus conventional wisdom
- Which professions to focus on for loan repayment and other incentive programs?

Healthcare professionals, physicians, nurses, personal care attendants, licensed nursing assistants, EMTs, mental health and substance use disorder counselors, social workers, child care providers, teachers, dentists, school bus drivers, fire fighters, police officers, dairy and farm workers, truck drivers, funeral directors, hotel workers, resort workers, restaurant workers, cashiers and retail workers, construction workers, ski patrol members, lawyers, high school sport officials/referees, bank workers, temporary census bureau workers, etc.

- Education financing policies
- Strategic priorities of programs
- Leverage federal programs:

<https://nhsc.hrsa.gov/loan-repayment/nhsc-loan-repayment-program.html>

<https://nhsc.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/NHSC/downloads/Loan-Repayment/nhsc-sud-workforce-lrp-fact-sheet.pdf>

<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/repay-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service>

Educational Loan Repayment Program

(visit www.vtahec.org to review program overview, flyers, and application materials)

- A strategic approach--this program's administration and award priorities are adjusted annually based on data, information, and prior year(s) experience and results
- 100% of funds are used for direct awards, to reduce educational debt
- Educational debt is verified (not self-reported)
- Awards are in exchange for a contractual service obligation (e.g., 12-months service/award; 24-months for SLRP)
 - The recipient and the employer are co-signers of the contractual service obligation
 - Breach of contract has serious financial consequences
- AHEC raises 1:1 match funds from community organizations and employers
- State/federal and match funds are bundled into one award
 - The bundled funds are sent directly to lenders to reduce educational debt
- The federal Affordable Care Act passed on March 23, 2010 treats debt repayment under state-sanctioned Educational Loan Repayment Program for Healthcare Professionals as exempt for income tax purposes
 - This income tax exclusion provides an even greater incentive for health care professionals to work in areas that need it most
 - Programs operated separately from the state program result in taxable income transactions (i.e., employee or non-employee compensation)

2020 Loan Repayment (ELR/SLRP) Program in Progress

2020 Program Type (1/13/20 data)	Number of Applications (1)	Total Debt (2)	Median Debt	Range of Debt (lowest)	Range of Debt (highest)	Difference between lowest and highest	Range of Monthly Payment Lowest (3)	Range of Monthly Payment Highest (4)	Median Monthly Payment (4)
Primary Care	84	\$11,344,180	\$101,873	\$19,666	\$671,358	\$651,692	\$86	\$2,700	\$730
Dental	18	\$4,646,834	\$179,507	\$33,997	\$553,999	\$520,002	\$0	\$6,851	\$931
Nursing	63	\$2,573,084	\$29,694	\$6,351	\$165,537	\$159,186	\$0	\$1,500	\$257
Total	165	\$18,564,098	\$67,539	\$6,351	\$671,358	\$665,007	\$0	\$6,851	\$482

(1) The above table does not include 10 recruitment applications since the person/debt information is unknown. 2020 total applications received is 175 (165 +10).

(2) Debt is verified via documentation from educational lending institutions across the country.

(3) \$0 monthly payment—still in deferment, payment amount TBD.

(4) Most educational loan repayment funds are sent to out-of-state lenders and centralized processing centers; supports broader workforce infrastructure and economy out-of-state. When these loans are repaid, dollars are freed up to be invested locally. Education debt is one of many considerations that influence employment decisions. Education, specialty choice and employment decisions are complex.

2020 Program Type (2/18/20 data)	Number of Awards in Process (5)
Primary Care	39+8 = 47
Dental	12+4=16
Nursing	TBD
Total	

(5) TBD (2/18/20)--Awards in process (contract may not be fully executed, or funds disbursed), includes recruitment applicants.

Community and Employer “Match” Funds Raised by AHEC

FY 2020

In progress

FY2015-2019

Actual match funds raised by AHEC and disbursed	\$3,600,380
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Match funds include employer and private match funds raised specifically for loan repayment.

The significant work that AHEC does to raise and administer these funds is a crucial part of the VT Educational Loan Repayment Program’s success. It is by instilling a shared commitment, and by leveraging pooled resources, that AHEC and this program are making a difference in health workforce recruitment and retention, and educational debt reduction.

2019 National Medical School Graduation Questionnaire (AAMC data)
<https://www.aamc.org/system/files/2019-08/2019-gq-all-schools-summary-report.pdf>

Those expected to graduate between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019. Surveyed between Feb and June 2019. 16,657 responded (of 19,993 graduates)

How influential were the following in helping you choose your specialty?

Fit with personality, interest, skills	Strong 87.2	No Influence 0.4
Content of specialty	Strong 83.4	No Influence 0.5
Role model influence	Strong 50.9	No Influence 7.6
Work/life balance	Strong 43.1	No Influence 6.3
Income expectations	Strong 14.8	No Influence 21.3
Level of educational debt	Strong 6.5	No Influence 54.9

2019 National Medical School Graduation Questionnaire (AAMC data)

Those expected to graduate between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019. Surveyed between Feb and June 2019. 16,657 responded (of 19,993 graduates)

How useful were the following resources in learning about specialty choice and career planning?

Top Two:

Advising and Mentoring	Very useful 47.4	Not useful 5.9
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Participation in in-house and extramural

Electives	Very useful 44	Not useful 4.4
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VT AHEC Network: Experienced Leaders in Health Workforce Development

- The VT AHEC Network is committed to investing its resources in health workforce development.
- The VT AHEC Network has limited and decreasing capacity due to insufficient funding. Increased state investment in VT AHEC is recommended.
- Investment in early pipeline development work is critical to growing the next generation of health professionals.
- We need tools, committed partners, and teamwork.
- Educational Loan Repayment is one tool. It is an important tool, but not a standalone solution. Exploration of additional, complementary and innovative programs and tools is recommended.
- Longitudinal tracking of students, program participants, and workforce trends is necessary for program evaluation and understanding broader impact and outcomes; it is also challenging, labor intensive, and requires robust data systems.

Discussion

More information is available at:

www.vtahec.org

Information about AHEC Workforce Recruitment and Retention Programs:

<http://www.med.uvm.edu/ahec/healthprofessionssstudentsandresidents/workforce-recruitment-retention>

Educational Loan Repayment Program Overview and Eligibility:

<http://www.med.uvm.edu/ahec/forms/educational-loan-repayment>

AHEC Primary Care Workforce Snapshot and Nursing Workforce Reports:

<http://www.med.uvm.edu/ahec/workforceresearchdevelopment/reports>

Contact Information

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AHEC's Purpose: Healthcare Workforce Development

For information about the Vermont Educational Loan Repayment Programs and other health workforce development initiatives, contact Liz Cote at elizabeth.cote@uvm.edu or 802-656-0030.

- ✓ *Workforce Diversity, Distribution, and Practice Transformation*
- ✓ *Connecting students to careers, professionals to communities, and communities to better health*