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Contact: Greg Wilkinson, 907-269-7285, Cell 907-382-7032 [gregory.wilkinson@alaska.gov](mailto:gregory.wilkinson@alaska.gov)  
Laura Carpenter, 907-269-4541, Cell 907-632-7682, [laura.carpenter@alaska.gov](mailto:laura.carpenter@alaska.gov)

## **SHARP II: Application period opens for health care practitioner school loan repayment and new incentive program**

ANCHORAGE — Alaska's health care student loan repayment program, SHARP, is once again accepting applications from health practitioners seeking school loan reimbursement. Applications for SHARP II must be received by March 18, 2013.

Qualified applicants can receive tax-free loan repayment benefits of up to \$47,000 per year, depending upon occupation and other factors. The payments will be made by the state directly to the lender.

Direct incentives are also available for the first time under the SHARP II program. The cash incentives are figured into the annual maximum amount each practitioner receives, and are taxed as income. For example, a practitioner who qualifies for \$35,000 per year in SHARP II benefits could receive half as a cash incentive and have the other half paid directly toward his student loans. Both the incentive and loan repayment are above and beyond the practitioner's regular salary.

A qualifying practitioner's employer is required to provide between 10 percent and 30 percent of the practitioner's support for service benefits — whether a loan repayment, direct incentive or combination — to the SHARP II program, which then distributes the entire amount accordingly.

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services' program helps recruit and retain health care clinicians in areas of Alaska that have a clinician shortage. Alaska has historically had a lower number of physicians per 1,000 residents than the national average.

Practitioners must work full-time or half-time (prorated) for at least three years for an organization designated by the department as serving an area or population with a health care shortage. There are some penalties for not fulfilling the required commitment.

Practitioners eligible to apply include: physicians (M.D. or D.O.); dentists; pharmacists; dental hygienists; physician assistants; nurse practitioners; psychologists; clinical social workers; nurses (RN); and physical therapists.

Application guidelines, forms and contract examples may be found on the program's website <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/HealthPlanning/Pages/sharp/default.aspx>. In brief, both individual health care practitioners and individual health care delivery sites must apply. Selected practitioners may begin SHARP service as early as April 1, 2013. For all the details, please read the [public notice](#).

For more information contact Robert Sewell, SHARP program manager, via email (preferred) at [robert.sewell@alaska.gov](mailto:robert.sewell@alaska.gov) or phone 907-465-4065.

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