

NURSE Corps Loan Repayment Program

Fiscal Year 2017 Continuation Contract Application and Program Guidance

August 2016

This Application and Program Guidance applies **only** to current NURSE Corps LRP participants considering a Continuation Contract. Please read the entire document before starting the application process.

Authority: Section 846(a) of the Public Health Service Act (42 United States Code 297(n)(a)), as amended. Future changes in the governing statute, implementing regulations and Program Guidance may also be applicable to your participation in the NURSE Corps Loan Repayment Program.

CFDA Number 93.908



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PRIVACY ACT NOTIFICATION STATEMENT

General

This information is provided pursuant to the Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-579), as amended, for individuals supplying information for inclusion in a system of records.

Statutory Authority

Section 846(a) of the Public Health Service Act (42 United States Code 297(n)(a)), as amended.

Purposes and Uses

The purpose of the NURSE Corps Loan Repayment Program (NURSE Corps LRP) is to assist in the recruitment and retention of professional Registered Nurses (RNs), including advanced practice nurses (APRNs), dedicated to working at eligible health care facilities with a critical shortage of nurses or serving as nurse faculty in eligible schools of nursing. The aim of the NURSE Corps LRP is to decrease the economic barriers associated with pursuing careers at such Critical Shortage Facilities (CSFs) or in academic nursing. The information applicants provide will be used to evaluate their eligibility to participate in the NURSE Corps LRP. Additional information from other sources will also be considered (e.g., credit bureau and National Practitioner Data Bank reports).

An individual's NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract, application, supporting documents, correspondence and related data are maintained in a system of records to be used within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to monitor NURSE Corps LRP activities. The information may also be disclosed outside the Department, as permitted by the Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act, to the Congress, the National Archives, the Government Accountability Office, and pursuant to court order and various routine uses: (<http://www.hrsa.gov/about/privacyact/09150037.html>).

Effects of Nondisclosure

Disclosure of the information sought is voluntary. However, if all questions are not answered or all required supporting documentation is not submitted, an application will be considered incomplete, and the applicant will not be considered for an NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract award.

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT PUBLIC BURDEN STATEMENT

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a current OMB control number. The current OMB control number for information collected through this application process is 0915-0140 and expires on 4/30/2017. Public reporting burden for this collection is estimated to average 2.2 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Please send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to HRSA Reports Clearance Office, 5600 Fishers Lane, Room 14N39, Rockville, Maryland 20857.

DISCRIMINATION PROHIBITED

In accordance with applicable Federal laws and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services policy, the Department does not discriminate on the basis of any non-merit factor, including race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability (physical or mental), age, status as a parent, or genetic information.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Introduction

The United States (U.S.) continues to experience a professional nursing shortage. The impact differs across geographic regions. The factors that continue to affect the demand and supply of the nursing workforce include population growth, an aging population, an aging nursing workforce, economic conditions, the demand for health services within specific health care settings, and health care reimbursement. Further compounding this problem, the U.S. schools of nursing cannot adequately expand enrollment levels due to a shortage of nurse faculty (NF). As NF members near retirement, the shortage of NF will become even more pronounced. The goal of the NURSE Corps LRP is to assist in addressing these issues.

The NURSE Corps LRP is administered by the Bureau of Health Workforce in the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract offers RNs additional financial assistance to repay a portion of their qualifying educational loans in exchange for full-time service for one year at either an approved CSF or at an eligible school of nursing.

Critical Shortage Facility (CSF) – A health care facility located in, designated as, or serving a primary medical care or mental health, Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). The facility must be a public or private nonprofit entity.

Eligible School of Nursing – An accredited public or private nonprofit collegiate, associate degree or diploma school of nursing in a State that provides educational training to become an RN or advanced practice RN. The educational programs in the school of nursing must be accredited by a national nursing accrediting agency or state approval agency recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. See section 801 of the Public Health Service Act for a full and complete definition of all applicable terms.

Continuation Contract

The NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract is an obligation to serve full-time for one additional year at an eligible CSF or eligible school of nursing. It offers current participants who successfully complete their initial two-year service obligation, and who have applied all NURSE Corps LRP payments received under their initial two-year contract to reduce their approved qualifying educational loans an opportunity to provide a third optional year of service. In exchange for the third year of service, the NURSE Corps will pay an additional 25 percent of the participant's original qualifying educational loan balance. All NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contracts are subject to the availability of funds and are not guaranteed.

Under a NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract, participants must continue to provide service in the same capacity as agreed upon in the initial two-year contract. Participants applying for a NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract cannot request to switch to the other service option. If a participant is serving under an initial two-year contract, as an RN at a CSF, the individual will not be allowed to switch and serve as NF in an eligible school of nursing. Similarly, participants who are serving under the initial two-year contract as NF at an eligible school of nursing cannot switch and serve as an RN or an APRN at a CSF.

Program Highlights

- Please read the Application and Program Guidance (APG) in its entirety before proceeding with the application. The APG explains the contractual obligations of the Secretary of HHS and the NURSE Corps LRP participant as well as the financial consequences of defaulting on the obligation.
- All loans that were approved by the NURSE Corps LRP under the participant's initial two-year contract are listed on the Participant Award Worksheet (PAW) in the Program Portal. **Loans not previously approved for repayment, and new loans, will not be considered for the NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract.** NURSE Corps LRP funds applied to unapproved loans will not count towards eligibility. The NURSE Corps LRP will verify all loan balances against the participant's submitted payment history to ensure that funds received were used to repay the qualifying educational loans. If an applicant did not apply all the NURSE Corps LRP payments received to reduce the original qualifying nursing education loan balances, the applicant will be deemed ineligible.
- To apply for a Continuation Contract, a participant must be working full-time at an eligible CSF (i.e., at least 32 hours per week for a minimum of 45 weeks per service year) or in an eligible school of nursing (i.e., full-time as defined by the employer for a minimum of 9 months per service year) as approved under the initial two-year contract.
- If you are eligible to apply for a NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract, you will be notified by email via the Program Portal no less than 45 days before the end of the second year of service. You will be given access to the application link under the "I Need To..." section to apply and submit an application. A **pending transfer** request may delay the processing of the NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract application.
- Current participants in a non-payment status (e.g., in suspension or unemployed) may not be eligible to apply for a Continuation Contract until they have returned to an "active" program status.
- The NURSE Corps LRP will verify every six months that participants are in compliance with the service obligation. The In-Service Verification (ISV) must be completed by the Point of Contact (POC) at the approved CSF or eligible school of nursing and

submitted via the Program Portal. An overdue ISV for service under the initial two-year contract may affect a participant's eligibility for a Continuation Contract.

- The NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract will not be effective until (1) it has been signed by the participant and countersigned by the Secretary's designee, (2) the participant has completed service under the initial two-year contract, and (3) all the NURSE Corps LRP payments received under the initial contract have been applied to reduce the qualifying educational loan balances prior to the completion of service under that contract.
- Participants are responsible for updating and keeping current all pertinent contact and banking information in the Program Portal. It is critical that participants maintain a current email and mailing address, telephone number and updated banking information. In the case of a name change, participants must submit legal documentation, such as a copy of a marriage certificate. Please check the Program Portal for email correspondence; disable SPAM blockers and check SPAM folders.
- All program requests or concerns must be submitted by email via the Program Portal or by calling the **Customer Care Center at 1-800-221-9393**.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS AND AWARDS PROCESS

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for a NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract, **all applicants** must:

1. Be a current participant serving full-time at an eligible CSF or eligible school of nursing, approved by the NURSE Corps LRP under the initial two-year contract;

If a CSF loses its HPSA designation or changes to a for-profit status, or an eligible school of nursing loses its accreditation or changes to a for-profit status, a NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract will not be awarded. If a participant wants to continue in the NURSE Corps LRP, the individual must request and receive approval to transfer to another eligible CSF or eligible school of nursing prior to applying for a NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract. If you decide to relocate, please remember to update your forwarding contact information. Moving expenses will not be paid.

2. Have a current, full, permanent, unencumbered, unrestricted license to practice as an RN in the State in which employed or authorized to practice pursuant to the Nurse Licensure Compact. All NURSE Corps LRP participants must retain an RN license during the one-year NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract service obligation period;
3. Have applied all the NURSE Corps LRP payments received after federal tax withholding under the initial two-year contract, to reduce the original qualifying educational loan balances;

4. Have only one existing service obligation which is for the NURSE Corps LRP. Applicants cannot have any other existing service obligation owed under an agreement with a Federal, State, or local government, or any other entity. The **only exception** is for members of a reserve component of the Armed Forces, including the National Guard;
5. Continue to meet all other program eligibility requirements, be in full compliance with the existing NURSE Corps LRP service obligation, and must continue to work for the duration of the NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract at the same approved CSF or eligible school of nursing; and
6. Have not defaulted on any Federal payment obligations (e.g., Health Education Assistance Loans, Nursing Student Loans, FHA Loans, Federal income tax liabilities, etc.), or non-Federal payment obligations (e.g., court-ordered child support payments, mortgage payments, etc.).

The NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract service period must begin immediately following the completion of the service obligation under the initial two-year contract. Once the application is signed and submitted, if an applicant is unable to begin service, that individual must submit a request to the NURSE Corps LRP via the Program Portal to withdraw the application. All requests to withdraw the application from consideration for an award must be made before the NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract is countersigned by the Secretary's designee.

Eligible Service Sites

A NURSE Corps LRP participant applying for a Continuation award must continue to work at an eligible CSF located in, designated as, or serving a primary medical care or mental health HPSA in the same funding preference tier as was initially awarded or higher. NURSE Corps participants working at an eligible school of nursing must continue to work at an institution that reflects the funding tier of their initial award. A CSF and an eligible school of nursing must be a public or private nonprofit entity.

Eligible Health Care Facility Types

1. Hospitals

- a. **Critical Access Hospital (CAH)** - A facility certified by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) under section 1820 of the Social Security Act. In general, a CAH must be located in a rural area in a state that has a Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program, maintain no more than 25 inpatient beds and an average annual length of stay of 96 hours or less, furnish 24-hour emergency care services 7 days a week, and be located either more than a 35-mile drive from the nearest hospital or CAH, or more than a 15-mile drive in areas with mountainous terrain or only secondary roads." For more information, please visit: <http://www.hrsa.gov/healthit/toolbox/RuralHealthITtoolbox/Introduction/critical.html>.
- b. **Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH)** - A hospital that has a disproportionately large share of low-income patients and receives an augmented payment from the State under Medicaid or a payment adjustment from Medicare. Hospital-based

outpatient clinics are included under this definition. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.hrsa.gov/opa/eligibilityandregistration/hospitals/disproportionatesharehospitals/index.html>.

- c. **Public Hospital** - Any hospital that is owned by a government (Federal, State, or Local), receives government funding, and is primarily engaged in providing the following care, by or under the supervision of physicians, to inpatients: (a) diagnostic and therapeutic services for medical diagnosis, treatment, and care of injured, disabled, or sick persons; or (b) rehabilitation of injured, disabled, or sick persons. Hospital-based outpatient clinics are included under this definition.
- d. **Private Hospital** - A hospital in a State that is a private nonprofit entity and is primarily engaged in providing the following care, by or under the supervision of physicians, to inpatients: (a) diagnostic and therapeutic services for medical diagnosis, treatment, and care of injured, disabled, or sick persons, or (b) rehabilitation of injured, disabled, or sick persons. Hospital-based outpatient clinics and hospitals contracted with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs are included under this definition.

2. Outpatient Clinics

- a. **Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC)** - FQHCs include: (1) nonprofit entities that receive a grant, or funding from a grant, under section 330 of the Public Health Service Act to provide primary health services and other related services to a population that is medically underserved; (2) FQHC “Look-Alikes” which are nonprofit entities that are certified by the Secretary of HHS as meeting the requirements for receiving a grant under section 330 of the Public Health Service Act but are not grantees; and (3) outpatient health programs or facilities operated by a tribe or tribal organization under the Indian Self-Determination Act or by an urban Indian organization receiving funds under Title V of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act. FQHCs include Community Health Centers, Migrant Health Centers, Health Care for the Homeless Health Centers, and Public Housing Primary Care Health Centers. For more information, please visit: <http://www.hrsa.gov/healthit/toolbox/RuralHealthITtoolbox/Introduction/qualified.html>.
- b. **Indian Health Service Health Center** - A health care facility (whether operated directly by the Indian Health Service or by a tribe or tribal organization, contractor or grantee under the Indian Self-Determination Act, as described in 42 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 136, Subparts C and H, or by an urban Indian organization receiving funds under Title V of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act) that is physically separated from a hospital, and which provides clinical treatment services on an outpatient basis to persons of Indian or Alaskan Native descent as described in 42 CFR Section 136.12. For more information, please visit: <http://www.ihs.gov>.
- c. **Native Hawaiian Health Center** - An entity as defined in 42 U.S.C. § 11711(4): (a) which is organized under the laws of the State of Hawaii; (b) which provides or arranges for health care services through practitioners licensed by the State of Hawaii, where licensure requirements are applicable; (c) which is a public or nonprofit private entity; and, (d) in which Native Hawaiian health practitioners significantly participate in the planning, management, monitoring, and evaluation of health services. For more information, please see the Native Hawaiian Health Care Act of

1992, as amended, and

<http://www.hrsa.gov/opa/eligibilityandregistration/healthcenters/nativehawaiian/index.html>.

- d. **Rural Health Clinic** - An entity that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has certified as a rural health clinic under section 1861(aa)(2) of the Social Security Act. A rural health clinic provides outpatient services to a non-urban area with an insufficient number of health care practitioners. For more information, please visit: <http://www.hrsa.gov/healthit/toolbox/RuralHealthITtoolbox/Introduction/ruralclinics.html>
 - e. **State or Local Public Health or Human Services Department** - The State, county, parish, or district entity that is responsible for providing healthcare services which include health promotion, disease prevention, and intervention services in clinics or other health care facilities that are funded and operated by the Public Health or Human Services Department.
 - f. **Nurse Managed Health Clinic/Center** - An entity as defined in 42 U.S.C. § 254c-1a(a)(2) which is a nurse-practice arrangement, managed by advanced practice nurses, that provides primary care or wellness services to underserved or vulnerable populations and that is associated with a school, college, university or department of nursing, federally qualified health center, or independent nonprofit health or social services agency.
 - g. **Urgent Care Center** - Urgent Care centers provide acute episodic care on a walk-in basis to assist patients with an illness or injury that does not appear to be limb or life-threatening and is either beyond the scope or availability of the typical primary care practice.
 - h. **Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC)** - A clinic that is certified as a CCBHC by a State in accordance with criteria published by the Secretary of Health and Human Services and with the requirements of the Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014. The criteria include requirements for staffing, availability and accessibility of services, care coordination, scope of services, quality and other reporting, and organizational authority.
Certified Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) would also fall under this category. A CMHC is an entity that meets applicable licensing or certification requirements for CMHCs in the State in which it is located and provides (1) outpatient services, including specialized outpatient services for children, the elderly, individuals who are chronically mentally ill, and residents of its mental health service area who have been discharged from inpatient treatment at a mental health facility; (2) 24-hour-a-day emergency care services; (3) day treatment, or other partial hospitalization services, or psychosocial rehabilitation services; and (4) screening for patients being considered for admission to State mental health facilities to determine the appropriateness of such admission.
3. **End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Dialysis Centers** - An ESRD facility is an entity that provides outpatient maintenance dialysis services, or home dialysis training and support services, or both. ESRD facilities are classified in Section 1881 of the Social Security Act and codified in 42 CFR 413.174 as being either hospital-based or independent facilities.
 4. **Ambulatory Surgical Center** - An entity that operates exclusively for the purpose of furnishing surgical services to patients who do not require hospitalization and in which the

expected duration of services does not exceed 24 hours following admission.

5. **Residential Nursing Home** - An institution that is primarily engaged in providing, on a regular basis, health related care and service to individuals who because of their mental or physical condition require care and service (above the level of room and board) that can be made available to them only through institutional facilities. This category includes a “skilled nursing facility,” which is an institution (or distinct part of an institution), certified under section 1819(a) of the Social Security Act, that is primarily engaged in providing skilled nursing care and related services to residents requiring medical, rehabilitation, or nursing care and is not primarily for the care and treatment of mental diseases; transitional facilities; assisted living; and group homes.
6. **Home Health Agency** - An agency or organization, certified under section 1861(o) of the Social Security Act that is primarily engaged in providing skilled nursing care and other therapeutic services. For more information, please visit: <https://www.cms.gov/Center/Provider-Type/Home-Health-Agency-HHA-Center.html>.
7. **Hospice Program** - An agency or organization, certified under section 1861(dd)(2) of the Social Security Act, that provides 24-hour care and treatment services (as needed) to terminally ill individuals and bereavement counseling for their immediate family members. This care is provided in individuals’ homes, on an outpatient basis, and on a short-term inpatient basis, directly or under arrangements made by the agency or organization. For more information, please visit: <https://www.cms.gov/Center/Provider-Type/Hospice-Center.html>.

Ineligible facilities include, but are not limited to:

- Clinics in prisons and correctional facilities
- Private for-profit facilities

If an applicant is unsure whether a health care facility fits into one of the CSF categories listed above, please contact the facility’s business office or human resources department. Ultimately, the NURSE Corps LRP will determine if a health care facility qualifies as a NURSE Corps LRP service site.

Documents and Verification Needed When Applying

- **Payment History** – Applicants must account for all funds received under the initial two-year contract by submitting a history of payments made to the lenders or holders for all approved loans listed on the PAW. The history of payments must total the actual funds received from the NURSE Corps LRP from the service obligation start date to the date of the submission of the Continuation Contract application. The payment history must include the lender’s/holder’s name, the applicant’s name and account number, and may be obtained on-line from your loan servicer or lender. Please call your lender or loan servicer if you are having difficulty downloading the information.

- **Account Statements** – Applicants must submit an account statement that shows the principal and interest of their current loan balances. The account statement must include the lender’s name, applicant’s name and account number, and the current balance with the principal and interest.
- **Disbursement Report** – Applicants must submit a Disbursement Report to show all the loans that have been obtained. Each loan must have its original loan amount, the original loan date, type of loan, and the consolidation dates when applicable.
- **Employment Verification Form (EVF)** – Applicants are required to review and verify the name and address of the current CSF or eligible school of nursing, and initiate an electronic EVF. The EVF must be completed by an appropriate official or POC at the CSF or school of nursing. The POC should be the applicant’s immediate supervisor or an authorized agent from the human resources department at the service site. If the POC does not submit a completed EVF, or it is not completed by the appropriate official, the application will be considered incomplete resulting in the applicant not being able to submit the application.

Additional Loan Information

Loan Type	Account Statement	Disbursement Report
Individual Federal Loans	The most recent account statement for each loan showing the current balance (call or visit your lender’s website).	The main or landing page of your Aid Summary Report from the NSLDS website ONLY . If you have multiple federal loans, only one report is required for submission .
Consolidated Federal Loans	The most recent account statement for each consolidation loan that has a current balance (call or visit your lender’s website).	An Aid Summary Report from the NSLDS website. Only one report is required for submission, provided that it clearly shows <u>all</u> loans in the consolidation.
Individual Private Loans	The most recent account statement for each loan that has a current balance (call or visit your lender’s website).	A disbursement report(s) from the lender, showing the loan type, original loan amount and original loan date. You may need to submit more than one type of disbursement report per loan to meet the requirements.
Consolidated Private Loans	The most recent account statement for each consolidation loan that has a current balance (call or visit your lender’s website).	A disbursement report(s) clearly showing <u>all</u> the loans in the consolidation. Each loan must have its original loan amount and the original loan date indicated. You may need to submit more than one type

		of disbursement report per loan to meet the requirements.
Any loans that are subject to cancellation	The most recent account statement for each loan with a current balance (call or visit your lender's website).	A disbursement report(s) from the lender, showing the loan type, original loan amount and original loan date. You may need to submit more than one type of disbursement report per loan to meet the requirements.
	Documentation from the school showing that the loans are not subject to cancellation under 34 CFR Part 674. <p style="text-align: center;"><i>OR</i></p> Documentation from the current lender indicating that the loans were consolidated and paid off.	

Award Process

1. If a participant is selected for a NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract, the individual's signed Contract is then countersigned by the Secretary of HHS or the designee. Once the participant has completed the service obligation under the initial two-year contract as determined by the NURSE Corps LRP, the Continuation Contract service obligation will begin, and the individual will begin to accrue service credit under the Continuation Contract.
2. If a participant exceeds the amount of allowable leave (35 workdays) per service year during the initial two-year NURSE Corps LRP contract, the individual's service end date will be extended as determined by the NURSE Corps LRP to account for additional days of approved absence. Scheduled payments may also be adjusted.
3. Award payments will be made monthly over 12 months through an electronic funds transfer to the participant's checking or savings account as identified on the banking information submitted by the participant. The participant will receive the first direct deposit **within 60 days** after the NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract service obligation begins. All banking information must be kept updated and current.
4. Participants must use all NURSE Corps LRP payments received under the Continuation Contract to pay the lenders or holders of their qualifying

educational loans. The NURSE Corps LRP may contact the participant's lenders or holders to verify that award payments have been applied to reduce the NURSE Corps LRP-approved loans.

5. If for any reason a participant does not receive a scheduled payment, please contact the NURSE Corps LRP through the Program Portal or Customer Care Center at 1-800-221-9393. If the NURSE Corps LRP has any questions concerning a participant's eligibility for continued payments, the NURSE Corps LRP will delay payments pending the verification of the participant's compliance with the service obligation. It is important to immediately notify the NURSE Corps LRP of any changes in your service site or employment status.

SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

1. Specific Requirements for RNs, APRNs, NPs serving at a CSF:

RNs, APRNs, and NPs must provide full-time service for a period of one year beginning the day following completion of service under the initial two-year contract at the CSF identified in the individual's NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract application. Full-time service is defined as working as an RN at the approved CSF for at least 32 hours per week, for a minimum of 45 weeks, during the service year.

2. Specific Requirements for NF serving at school of nursing:

NF must provide full-time service, which is working full-time (as defined by the employer) as NF for a minimum of nine months per service year for a period of one year, beginning on the day following completion of service under the initial two-year contract at the NURSE Corps LRP – approved school of nursing identified in the individual's NURSE Corps LRP Contract Continuation application.

3. General Requirements for All NURSE Corps LRP participants:

- a. No more than 7 weeks (35 workdays) per service year may be spent away from the CSF or school of nursing for vacation, holidays, continuing education, illness, maternity/paternity/adoption leave, or any other reason. Any periods of NURSE Corps LRP-approved absence in excess of 7 weeks (35 workdays) of leave away from the CSF or school of nursing will extend a participant's service obligation end date as determined by the NURSE Corps LRP;
- b. Participants must retain a current, full, permanent, unencumbered, unrestricted license to practice as an RN in the State in which they are employed during the one-year service obligation to receive service credit under the NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract;
- c. Participants must continue to work under the employer's verified scope of practice as an RN or NF member for the duration of the one-year contract to receive service credit under the NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract;
- d. Service credit will begin to accrue after the participant has completed the

service obligation under the initial two-year contract and has begun full-time service under the Continuation Contract, as determined by the NURSE Corps LRP;

- e. If an individual fails to commence full-time service on the effective date of the contract at the CSF or eligible school of nursing identified in the application, the individual may be placed in default;
- f. Once an individual applies and is awarded a Continuation Contract for a particular service option at a CSF or school of nursing, the individual cannot switch to the other type of service option during the one-year continuation service period.

NF members are encouraged to promote health care careers in underserved areas. This may be accomplished via presentations to students, student or other community based organizations by providing information about nursing and other health care professions.

Salary and Benefits

NURSE Corps LRP participants will receive a salary and benefits from the employing CSF, professional group, or school of nursing. Employment compensation packages may be negotiated between the nurse and the employer. The employing entity cannot guarantee a NURSE Corps LRP award. Therefore, the NURSE Corps LRP loan repayments should not be a part of the salary negotiations between the nurse and the employer.

Service Credit

Service credit will accrue when a participant has completed the two-year service obligation under the initial NURSE Corps LRP contract (after accounting for any additional approved absences in excess of the allowable 7 weeks (35 workdays) of leave per service year) and has begun serving under the NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract. No more than 7 weeks (35 workdays) per service year under the Continuation Contract may be spent away from the CSF or eligible school of nursing. Any approved absences totaling greater than 7 weeks (35 workdays) in a service year will extend the Continuation Contract end date. During that time, a participant will not accrue service credit.

In-Service Verification (ISV)

The NURSE Corps LRP verifies every six months that participants are meeting program requirements and fulfilling their service obligation. The ISV must be completed by both the participant and the POC at the CSF or school of nursing through the Program Portal. By completing and signing the ISV, the participant and the POC are certifying the participant's compliance or noncompliance with the full-time service requirements during the identified period. The ISV records the total number of full-time workdays that a participant was absent, for any reason, from the CSF or school of nursing during the reporting period. Please be aware that an ISV is different from an Employment Verification Form (EVF) that is submitted with the application. However, both forms must be completed by an authorized official and submitted via

the Program Portal.

Participants and their service site must complete the ISV within 30 days of notification that the service verification is due, and submit it through the Program Portal. An overdue ISV may jeopardize a participant from receiving service credit, delay or stop monthly payments, and lead to a recommendation for default. An overdue ISV for a reporting period under the initial two-year contract may also impact eligibility for a NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract.

APRNs, such as NPs, CRNAs, CNMs, CNSs employed by a professional group must have the ISV completed by the POC at the CSF and not by a POC from the professional group.

Transfers

NURSE Corps LRP expects that participants will fulfill their service obligation at the initial CSF or eligible school of nursing. The NURSE Corps LRP understands that circumstances may arise resulting in a participant’s need to leave the initial CSF or eligible school of nursing, and complete the service obligation at another approved site. If a participant can no longer continue working at the initial CSF or eligible school of nursing, the participant should immediately contact the NURSE Corps LRP through the Program Portal or Customer Care Center. Participants must transfer to another eligible CSF or school of nursing that falls in the same funding preference tier the participant was initially awarded or higher. Participants must continue to provide service in the same capacity as agreed upon in the initial two-year contract and cannot request to switch to the other service option.

If a participant leaves the service site without prior written approval of the NURSE Corps LRP, the individual may be placed in default of the NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract.

Requesting a Transfer

If a participant needs to transfer, an email request must be sent via the Program Portal stating the reason for the transfer. The participant must then submit written documentation from the prospective site verifying that it is an eligible CSF or eligible school of nursing. If a participant leaves the approved service site without prior NURSE Corps LRP approval to transfer to another site, this will result in an immediate suspension of the participant’s payments until a written transfer request is received via the Program Portal. Once the request is approved, the participant resumes full-time service. The official decision from the NURSE Corps LRP will be conveyed through the Program Portal regarding the approval or denial of the transfer request. If the prospective site or school of nursing is private for-profit entity, the transfer request will not be approved. Please note that a pending transfer request may delay the processing of a NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract application.

Please note that detailed instructions on how to complete a “Change My Site Request” is provided in the Program Portal.

Additional Transfer Requirements:

1. Participants who sign a contract to serve at a CSF must transfer to an eligible CSF that falls in the same funding preference tier that the participant was initially awarded in, or higher. For example, if a participant was awarded in Tier 3 (i.e., site HPSA score 9-0), then the participant may transfer to a site that meets the Tier 3 (or higher) HPSA requirements (i.e., site HPSA score 9-0 or 25-14). Alternatively, if a participant was awarded in Tier 1 (i.e., HPSA score 25-14), then the participant may only transfer to a CSF with a HPSA score in the 25-14 range. Participants should contact NURSE Corps LRP to ensure that the CSF or school of nursing they are interested in transferring to is an approvable transfer site. Participants who transfer must remain in compliance with the service requirements of their one-year contract. For example, participants who receive a contract to serve at a CSF as an RN may not transfer to a school of nursing to serve as NF.
2. Participants who sign a contract to serve as NF at an eligible school of nursing must transfer to another eligible school of nursing that falls in the same tier the participant was initially awarded in, or higher. For example, if a participant was awarded in Tier 1 at a school with 50% or more enrollments of students from a disadvantaged background, the participant must transfer to another school with 50% or more enrollments of students from a disadvantaged background.
3. An EVF will be electronically transmitted by the NURSE Corps Program to the POC at the new approved site to be completed via the Program Portal.
4. If there is a less than a 30 day break in service between the stop work date at the initial/former service site and the start date at the approved transfer site, the NURSE Corps LRP payments will not be interrupted. However, if the participant fails to resume service **within 30 days** of the stop work date at the initial/former CSF or school of nursing, the NURSE Corps LRP will stop all payments. Once the participant begins full-time service at another approved CSF or eligible school of nursing, the NURSE Corps LRP service end date will be extended as determined by the NURSE Corps LRP, and the loan repayments will resume.
5. If a participant ceases full-time employment at the initial/former site and does not resume service at an eligible approved CSF or school of nursing **within 60 days**, the participant will be considered in breach of the contract and recommended for default.

BREACH OF CONTRACT

Participants are encouraged to immediately contact the NURSE Corps LRP if a situation arises in which they are potentially unable to fulfill the service obligation. A participant who enters into a one-year NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract but fails to begin or complete the service obligation is liable to repay all the NURSE Corps LRP payments received for the third year of service. This includes the amounts withheld for Federal taxes plus interest at the maximum legal prevailing rate, from the date of the breach of the NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract. Breach of the Contract will permanently disqualify an individual from receiving future awards under the NURSE Corps LRP and some other HRSA and Federal programs.

Any indebtedness owed to the Federal government is due within three years of the participant's breach of the contract. The debt amount will be subject to interest at the maximum legal prevailing rate from the date of breach until paid in full. Other charges and penalties for delinquent or past due debts may be assessed.

Suspension and Waiver

The Secretary of HHS may, under certain circumstances, suspend (put on "hold") or waive (excuse) the NURSE Corps LRP service or payment obligation. A written request for a suspension or waiver must be submitted through the Program Portal. Additional supporting documentation will be required in order to process a request.

1. **Suspension** - A mechanism that provides temporary relief to a NURSE Corps LRP participant who has a short-term (not permanent) circumstance that currently makes compliance with the obligation impossible or would involve an extreme hardship such that enforcement of the obligation would be unconscionable. Periods of approved suspension will extend a participant's NURSE Corps LRP service obligation end date. If the total time away from the site, including the period of suspension, exceeds 7 weeks (35 workdays) per service year, the service obligation end date will be extended. Listed below are the major categories of service suspensions:
 - a. **Medical or Personal Reasons** – A suspension may be granted for up to one year. The participant must provide independent medical documentation of a physical or mental health disability or personal circumstances, including a terminal illness of an immediate family member resulting in the participant's temporary inability to perform the NURSE Corps LRP obligation. Upon receipt of the written suspension request, the NURSE Corps LRP will notify the participant of the instructions for submitting the supporting documentation.
 - b. **Maternity/Paternity/Adoption Leave** – Maternity/paternity/adoption leave of 12 weeks or fewer will be automatically approved by the NURSE Corps LRP if documented in the NURSE Corps LRP Customer Service Portal. If participants plan to be away from their site for maternity/paternity/adoption leave, they are required to inform the NURSE Corps before taking the leave. NURSE Corps LRP will allow participants to be away from their service site within the timeframes established by

APPLY NOW

Facts to Know Before Applying

- Individuals are strongly encouraged to print and retain a copy of this APG for future reference. Applicants should request all required documents early and ahead of time for timely submission of the application.
- Please note that the NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract is not effective (1) until it has been countersigned by the Secretary's designee, (2) until the participant has completed the initial NURSE Corps LRP two-year service obligation, and (3) unless the participant has applied all loan repayment funds received under the initial Contract to repay the qualifying educational loan balances prior to the completion of service under that contract.
- **Payment histories** must show all payments made to the lender from the date the participant began service under the initial two-year NURSE Corps LRP Contract to the date of the submission of the Continuation Contract application. The NURSE Corps LRP will calculate all payments disbursed to verify that funds received were applied to the qualifying educational loans. It is critical that applicants request payment histories early during the cycle as it may take up to 30 days or more to receive them by mail. **Bank statements will not be accepted as a substitute for payment histories.**
- Applicants must submit an **account statement** to show the principal and interest of the current loan balances. The account statement must include the lender's name, applicant's name, account number and the current loan balance with principal and interest.
- Applicants must submit a **disbursement report** that shows the approved educational loans listed on the PAW. Each loan must have its original loan amount, the original loan date, type of loan, and the consolidation dates if applicable. For Federal loans, the Aid Summary Report on the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS) website, <http://www.nsls.ed.gov> is considered a disbursement report.
- Applicants are required to review and verify their current service site's name and address and initiate an electronic **Employment Verification Form (EVF)**. The EVF must be completed by an appropriate official, the POC, at the approved CSF or eligible school of nursing. This may be the applicant's immediate supervisor or an authorized agent in the human resources department at the service site. If the POC does not submit a completed EVF, or the EVF is not completed by the appropriate official, the application is considered incomplete and the applicant will not be able to submit the application. If your authorized POC is not listed, applicants may enter the correct POC's email address in the "Other POC email" section of the

application.

- Participants applying for a NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract cannot request to switch to the other contract service option at any time during the one-year service obligation.
- Loans not previously approved for repayment, and new loans will not be considered for the NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract. NURSE Corps LRP funds applied to unapproved loans will not count towards eligibility and will be subject to verification to ensure that NURSE Corps LRP funds were not used to repay them.
- Current participants in a non-payment status such as in suspension or unemployed will not be eligible to apply for a Continuation Contract application until they have returned to an “active” program status. A pending transfer request may also delay the processing of the NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract application.
- Prior to the submission of the application, the participant must certify that all information is accurate as stated in the Continuation Application and electronically sign the contract.

Application Deadline

The NURSE Corps LRP Continuation electronic application must be submitted, and all required supporting documents must be uploaded, by the application deadline.

All decisions regarding the FY 2017 NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract awards will be made no later than September 30, 2017.

Uploading Application Documents

Applicants are strongly encouraged to upload all supporting documents in a PDF format to expedite processing of the application. It is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure that the information uploaded is accurate and viewable. PDF format allows applicants to view all documents prior to submission. When uploading documents to your online application, please ensure that each document does not exceed 5MB. Multi-page documents can be uploaded; however, documents with more than one page should be consolidated by scanning, saving into one document, and then uploading. Also, when inputting numbers and dates in the file name, please do not use any special characters such as commas (,), dollar signs (\$), spaces (), or dashes (-) as this will cause an error in the system.

Withdrawing an Application

An applicant may withdraw the application (via the Program Portal) at any time prior to the Secretary signing the NURSE Corps LRP Continuation Contract. Once the contract is signed by the Secretary or designee, the applicant is obligated to provide one year of full-time service at the CSF or eligible school of nursing identified in the application immediately following completion of the service obligation under the initial two-year contract. If an applicant fails to commence service on the effective date of the contract, the applicant will be

in breach of the contract and will be placed in default and become permanently disqualified from receiving future awards under the NURSE Corps LRP and some other Federal programs.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Need Help

The NURSE Corps LRP Customer Care Center may be contacted, Monday through Friday (except Federal holidays), from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm EST.

- 1-800-221-9393
- TTY – 1-877-897-9910

Definitions

Basic Registered Nurse (RN) Education – A nursing education that qualifies an individual to take the NCLEX-RN licensing examination.

Continuation Contract – An optional, one-year extension of an initial two-year NURSE Corps LRP Contract.

Critical Shortage Facility (CSF) – A public or private nonprofit health care facility located in, designated as, or serving a primary medical care or mental health Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA).

Default of payment obligation – An individual is more than 120 days past due on the payment of a financial obligation.

Default of service obligation – Failure to begin or complete a contractual service commitment.

Disadvantaged Background – An individual from a disadvantaged background is defined as someone who:

- (1) Comes from an environment that has inhibited the individual from obtaining the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to enroll in and graduate from a health professions or nursing school (**Environmentally Disadvantaged**).

The following are provided as examples of “Environmentally Disadvantaged” for guidance only and are not intended to be all-inclusive:

- The individual graduated from (or last attended) a high school with low SAT score based on most recent data available.
- The individual graduated from (or last attended) a high school from which based on most recent data available has a:
 - low percentage of seniors receive a high school diploma; or
 - low percentage of graduates go to college during the first year after graduation.

- The individual graduated from (or last attended) a high school with low per capita funding.
- The individual graduated from (or last attended) a high school where, based on most recent data available, many of the enrolled students are eligible for free or reduced price lunches.
- The individual comes from a family that receives public assistance (e.g., Aid to Families with Dependent Children, food stamps, Medicaid, public housing).
- First generation in family to attend college

-- OR --

- (2) Comes from a family with an annual income below a level based on low-income thresholds according to family size established by the U.S. Census Bureau, adjusted annually for changes in the Consumer Price Index, and adjusted by the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) for adaptation to this program (**Economically Disadvantaged**).

The Secretary defines a ‘‘low income family/household’’ for various health professions and nursing programs included in Titles III, VII, and VIII of the Public Health Service Act as having an annual income that does not exceed 200 percent of the Department’s poverty guidelines (see table below).

2016 Poverty Guidelines			
Persons in Family	48 Contiguous States and D.C.	Alaska	Hawaii
1	\$11,880	\$14,840	\$13,670
2	\$16,020	\$20,020	\$18,430
3	\$20,160	\$25,200	\$23,190
4	\$24,300	\$30,380	\$27,950
5	\$28,440	\$35,560	\$32,710
6	\$32,580	\$40,740	\$37,470
7	\$36,730	\$45,920	\$42,230
8	\$40,890	\$51,120	\$47,010
For each additional person, add	\$4,160	\$5,200	\$4,780

SOURCE: Federal Register, Vol. 81, No. 15, January 25, 2016, pp. 4036-4037.

Eligible School of Nursing - An accredited, public or private nonprofit, collegiate, associate degree or diploma school of nursing in a State where graduates are: 1) authorized to sit for

the NCLEX-RN or 2) licensed RNs who will receive a graduate or equivalent degree or training to become an advanced education nurse. The educational programs in the school of nursing must be accredited by a national nursing accrediting agency or a State agency recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. See section 801 of the Public Health Service Act for a full and complete definition of all applicable terms.

Existing Service Obligation – An obligation to work as a RN or as a nurse faculty member owed under an agreement with a Federal, State, or local government, or any other entity. Examples are the National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment or Scholarship Programs, NURSE Corps Scholarship Program, State Loan Repayment Program, Bureau of Health Workforce Nurse Faculty Loan Program, Faculty Loan Repayment Program, any State-sponsored loan repayment/forgiveness program, any employer-sponsored scholarship or recruitment/retention incentive programs, or Active Duty military obligation).

Family and Family Member - For the purposes of the NURSE Corps LRP, “family member” include spouses, as well as unmarried partners (both same-sex and opposite-sex).

Federal Judgment Lien – A lien that is placed against an individual’s home or property when a court ordered judgment is entered against the individual for an unpaid Federal debt (e.g., a Federal student loan or Federally insured home mortgage). An IRS tax lien that is not created pursuant to a court ordered judgment is not a Federal judgment lien.

Fiscal Year (FY) – The Federal FY is October 1 through September 30.

Full-Time Service – Working as an RN or advanced practice RN at a public or private nonprofit Critical Shortage Facility for a minimum of 32 hours per week, or working full-time (as defined by the employer) as a nurse faculty member for a minimum of 9 months per service year at an accredited public or private nonprofit eligible school of nursing, for the time period specified in the participant’s contract, with no more than 35 workdays per service year spent away from the service site for vacation, holidays, continuing education, illness, maternity/paternity/adoption leave, or any other reason.

Government Loans – Loans made by Federal, State, county or city agencies authorized by law to make such loans.

Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) - A HPSA is a geographic area, population group, public or nonprofit private medical facility or other public facility for the delivery of health services (including a Federal or State correctional institution), which has been determined by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to have a shortage of health professionals. HPSAs may be identified on the basis of agency or individual requests for designation. HPSAs are designated by the Division of Policy and Shortage Designation within HRSA’s Bureau of Health Workforce, pursuant to Section 332 of the PHS Act (Title 42, U.S. Code, Section 254e) and implementing regulations (Title 42, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 5).

Initial two-year contract – A written contract pursuant to Section 846(a) of the Public Health Service Act, as amended, under which (1) the participant agrees to engage in a period of continuous full-time service for 2 consecutive years as an RN at an eligible Critical Shortage Facility or as nurse faculty in an accredited eligible school of nursing and (2) the Secretary agrees to repay, in consideration of such service, a percentage of the amount which is outstanding on the participant's qualifying educational loans on the effective date of the initial two-year contract.

Lender – The private commercial or Government institution that initially made the qualifying educational loan (e.g., Department of Education). As used in this Guidance, the term “lender” also includes “holder,” which is the private commercial or Government institution that currently holds the promissory note for the qualifying educational loan (e.g., Sallie Mae, PHEAA, etc.).

National Practitioner Data Bank (NPDB) – A confidential, electronic repository of information related to the professional conduct and competence of physicians, nurses, dentists, and other health care practitioners. The NPDB collects information about malpractice payments paid on behalf of a health care provider and any adverse actions taken against a health care provider's license, clinical privileges or professional memberships.

NURSE Corps Loan Repayment Program (NURSE Corps LRP) – The NURSE Corps LRP is authorized by Section 846 of the Public Health Service Act, as amended. Under the NURSE Corps LRP, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides financial assistance to qualified applicants to repay a portion of their qualifying educational loans, in exchange for their full-time service as an RN at an eligible Critical Shortage Facility or as nurse faculty in an accredited eligible school of nursing.

Nurse Faculty – A licensed registered nurse (RN) who is a full-time (as defined by his or her employer) academic staff member engaged in nursing instruction or related educational activities in an eligible school of nursing.

Nurse Licensure Compact – The mutual recognition model of nurse licensure that allows a nurse to have a license in one State and to practice in other States subject to each State's practice law and regulation. Under mutual recognition, an RN may practice in several States unless otherwise restricted.

Participant Award Worksheet (PAW) – A detailed payment disbursement report reflecting all the participant's eligible loans that qualify for repayment under the NURSE Corps LRP award. Monthly payments received by a participant can only be applied to the loans listed on this document.

Point of Contact (POC) – An official at a CSF or eligible school of nursing who is the applicant's immediate supervisor or an authorized agent in the human resources department at the service site.

Private (Commercial) Loans – Loans made by banks, credit unions, savings and loan

associations, insurance companies, schools, and other financial or credit institutions which are subject to examination and supervision in their capacity as lenders by an agency of the United States or of the State in which the lender has its principal place of business.

Qualified Applicant – A person who meets all of the NURSE Corps LRP eligibility requirements.

Qualifying Educational Loans – Government and private (commercial) loans for actual costs paid for tuition and reasonable educational and living expenses incurred (1) while attending a school of nursing where the applicant obtained his/her qualifying nursing education, and (2) while taking only nursing prerequisite courses at schools other than the school(s) of nursing where the applicant obtained the qualifying nursing education, provided that the applicant received academic credit for those courses from the school of nursing where the applicant obtained the qualifying nursing education. Participants will receive funds for repayment of qualifying educational loans that are still owed. If the applicant has consolidated qualifying educational loans with any other debt or consolidated the loans with loans of another individual, the consolidated loan is ineligible.

Qualifying Nursing Education – The completed undergraduate basic RN education and completed graduate nursing education (including post-master's nursing certificate programs) resulting in a baccalaureate or associate degree in nursing (or an equivalent degree), a diploma in nursing or a graduate degree in nursing from an accredited school of nursing in a State.

Registered Nurse (RN) – a nurse who has graduated from an accredited school of nursing, passed the NCLEX- RN, and is licensed to practice as a registered nurse or an advanced practice registered nurse in a State.

Spouse and Marriage - For the purposes of the NURSE Corps LRP, “spouse” includes same-sex married couples as well as opposite-sex married couples. In accordance with the Supreme Court decisions in *United States v. Windsor* and in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the Department of Health and Human Services will treat as valid marriages of same-sex couples. The term “spouse” does not include individuals in registered domestic partnerships, civil unions or similar formal relationships recognized under state law as something other than a marriage.

State – Includes the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Territory of American Samoa, Territory of Guam, Republic of Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Federated States of Micronesia.

Transfer - Upon a written request and written approval, participants may transfer to another eligible CSF or school of nursing that falls in the same funding preference tier that the individual was initially awarded in, or higher.

Tribal Health Program – An Indian tribe or tribal organization that operates any health

program, service, function, activity, or facility funded, in whole or part, by the Indian Health Service (IHS) through, or provided for in, a contract or compact with the IHS under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 450 *et seq.*).

Unencumbered License – Is a license that is not revoked, suspended, or made probationary or conditional by a State licensing board or a registering authority as the result of any disciplinary action.