



Dear Tribal Leader and Urban Indian Organization Leader:

I am writing to provide important information about upcoming changes to Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) designation scoring process. Some organizations have contacted the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to express concern that their HPSA scores may be lower following an upcoming HPSA score national update, which may affect their ability to recruit and retain high-quality clinicians.

The National Health Service Corps (NHSC) uses HPSA scores to make sure that we direct NHSC personnel to areas of greatest need. Certain facilities—including all Federal Indian Health Service Clinics, Tribal Health Clinics, Urban Indian Health Clinics, and dually funded Tribal Health Clinics/Community Health Centers—are automatically designated as HPSAs, and these designations are referred to as “Auto-HPSAs.” HRSA’s Nurse Corps and the Indian Health Service Loan Repayment Programs also use HPSA scores to prioritize resources.

HRSA is modernizing the HPSA designation process and tentatively plans to update all Auto-HPSAs this spring or summer. This modernization is part of a larger effort to promote consistency and uniformity across data sets, and reduce resource burdens associated with shortage designation. While HPSA scores may change as a result of the national update this spring/summer, Auto-HPSAs will not be de-designated. We plan to use these updated HPSA scores for the 2020 NHSC and Nurse Corps application cycles.

In advance of the national update, HRSA is providing health care facilities with a series of update preview reports containing projected Auto-HPSA scores for their facility and the data we used to generate the scores. The preview scores are for informational purposes and help sites identify provider data that may need to be updated; as such, scores are subject to change. The preview reports also allow you the opportunity to learn about additional facility-specific data points that you may submit after the HPSA score national update to further update your scores. As of the date of this letter, HRSA has emailed three update previews to the clinics for which we have contact information.

Some organizations’ projected scores in these reports are lower than their current Auto-HPSA scores. The most frequent reason for this drop in projected scores is that HRSA does not have current, facility-specific data.

We want to work with Indian Country and tribal leaders to ensure HRSA has the best possible information from which to calculate HPSA scores. Immediately following the national update, your clinics will be able to use our new online system to submit facility-specific information from Auto-HPSA facilities, including patient demographic data and data on access to fluoridated water and rates of substance abuse and alcohol misuse. We will use these data to rescore your clinics in a timely fashion.

If you have any questions on changes to Auto-HPSA scores, visit <https://bhw.hrsa.gov/sdmp> or contact us at SDMP@hrsa.gov.

HRSA is committed to assisting you in addressing the health workforce needs of your communities. We look forward to working with you in this important matter.

Sincerely,

/ s /

George Sigounas, MS, Ph.D.
Administrator