

## Retention is on the Rise

Corps members choose to remain in underserved communities after their service commitment has ended.

# NHSC Clinician Retention:

## A STORY OF DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT

Established in 1970, the National Health Service Corps' (NHSC) scholarship and loan repayment programs help underserved communities across the nation receive critically needed primary medical, oral, and mental and behavioral health care. Through the National Health Service Corps, clinicians receive scholarships and loan repayment in return for committing to practice in underserved areas for a defined period of time. More than 40,000 NHSC primary care clinicians have participated in the Corps since its inception, including 5,483 since passage of the Affordable Care Act.

In addition to the recruitment of providers, the NHSC also works to retain primary care providers in underserved areas after their service commitment is completed to further leverage the Federal investment and to build more integrated and sustainable systems of care.

Retention in the Corps is defined as the percentage of NHSC clinicians who remain practicing in underserved areas after successfully completing their service commitment to the Corps. The NHSC does not provide Corps members with any additional financial incentives to remain in these underserved communities when promoting retention and in capturing retention rates.

### Retention

#### Short- and Long-Term Retention Rates

A 2012 retention assessment survey found that 82 percent of NHSC clinicians who completed their service commitment in the Corps continued to practice in underserved communities in the short-term, defined as up to one year after their service completion. Fifty-five percent of National Health Service Corps clinicians continue to practice in underserved areas 10 years after completing their service commitment.

Short-term retention increased by 28 percent when compared to the 2000 survey's rate of 64 percent. The 2012 long-term retention (10 years after service completion) of NHSC clinicians in underserved areas is 55 percent, a 6 percent increase when compared to the 2000 rate of 52 percent. Long-term retention rates are higher for those who serve in rural as opposed to urban communities.

#### SHORT- AND LONG-TERM RETENTION RATES

	2000	2012	retention increase
Short term	64%	82%	+ 28%
Long term	52%	55%	+ 6%

<sup>1</sup> Evaluating Retention in the BCRS Programs, Final Report, March 30, 2012

<sup>2</sup> Evaluating Retention of the National Health Service Corps, Final Report, May 31, 2000

*continued*

Four years after completing their NHSC service commitment, more than 60% of Primary Mental and Behavioral Health Care Corps Members still practiced in HPSAs.

### **Retention: Primary Medical Care Providers**

Physicians who completed their NHSC commitment more than 10 years ago had the highest retention rates as compared with physician assistants (PAs), nurse practitioners (NPs), and certified nurse midwives (CNMs). Ten years after their service commitment was completed, the retention rate for physicians was 60 percent. For nurse practitioners and certified nurse midwives, it was 59 percent; and for physician assistants it was 42 percent.

### **Retention: Primary Oral Health Care Providers**

48.1 percent of Corps members in the oral health discipline (dentists and registered dental hygienists) still practice in health professional shortage areas (HPSAs) 10 years after their service commitment was completed.

### **Retention: Primary Mental and Behavioral Health Care Providers**

Clinicians such as health service psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, psychiatric nurse specialists, marriage and family therapists, and licensed professional counselors are eligible to participate in the NHSC and are part of the primary mental and behavioral health care disciplines. Four years after completing their NHSC service commitment, 61.1 percent of these clinicians still practice in HPSAs.

## **Factors Affecting Retention**

Retention in the Corps is affected by a variety of factors. Survey results show that major factors affecting NHSC retention rates include the clinician's motivation and timing when joining the NHSC and their experience at the clinical practice site. Clinicians whose family's social, employment and educational needs are met in the community are more likely to remain. Continued non-financial engagement with the NHSC also affected an individual's decision to remain practicing in an underserved area.

In order to continue to improve retention rates, the NHSC has focused on program support in those areas known to impact clinician retention decisions.

## **Promoting Retention**

The NHSC's efforts to support clinicians and to encourage peer-to-peer connections and networking have helped retention of Corps members in underserved communities.

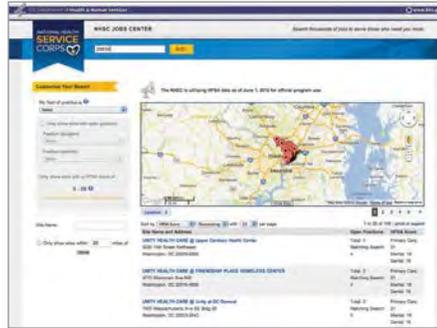
Strategies include a monthly electronic newsletter, *Corps Connections*, and a Facebook page to keep current Corps members and NHSC alumni apprised of program updates, events, and information of interest to primary care providers; NHSC ambassadors who volunteer their time and talents to promote awareness of opportunities available through the NHSC and serve as additional local resources for clinicians serving in underserved communities; and the establishment of Corps Community Day to celebrate the service and impact of NHSC members.

*continued*



The NHSC's efforts to deliver quality customer service and to encourage peer-to-peer connections and networking help support retention of Corps members in underserved communities.

The National Health Service Corps has also increased its focus on the tools available to clinical sites in underserved areas to help them attract and retain clinicians. These include the online NHSC Jobs Center, which serves as a resource for recruitment by allowing sites to post job opportunities targeted to primary care providers; and the site retention calculator, which assists individual sites in evaluating their own retention rates.



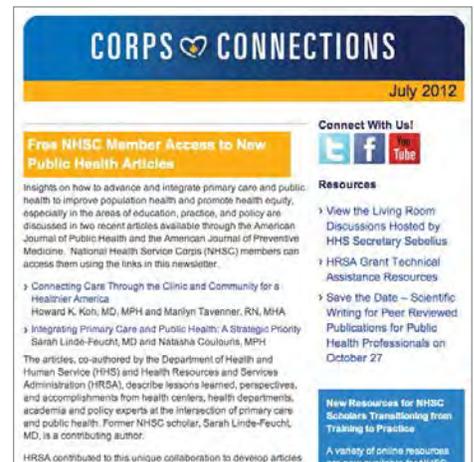
NHSC Jobs Center



NHSC Facebook Page



NHSC Site Retention Calculator



Corps Connections Newsletter

continued





The NHSC is a program of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

## National Health Service Corps Programs

The NHSC is a Federal government program administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

**The NHSC Scholarship Program** awards scholarships to students pursuing careers in primary care that pay for the students' health professional school tuition, required fees, and other educational costs. The scholarship also provides the student with a monthly living stipend. Upon completing their training, scholars are required to dedicate 2–4 years of service at an NHSC-approved site in a high-need HPSA, depending on the number of years of support provided to the individual.

**The NHSC Students to Service Loan Repayment Program** provides loan repayment awards of up to \$120,000 to medical students in their last year of school to help repay educational loans. In exchange, upon completion of residency, members of this program must provide 3 years of full-time service or 6 years of half-time service in an NHSC-approved site.

**The NHSC Loan Repayment Program** provides clinicians initial loan repayment awards of up to \$60,000 to help repay educational loans. In exchange, the clinicians commit to 2 years of service in an NHSC-approved site. After the initial 2 year commitment, NHSC loan repayers may continue to receive loan repayment of up to \$30,000 one year at a time in exchange for additional years of service. With continued service, clinicians may pay off all educational loans.

For additional information, please visit: <http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/>

