



FEATURED MEMBER



The National Health Service Corps (NHSC) builds healthy communities by supporting qualified health care providers dedicated to working in areas of the United States with limited access to care. More than 40,000 primary care medical, dental, and mental and behavioral health professionals have served in the NHSC since its inception. Today, there are more than 10,000 NHSC members providing culturally competent care to more than 10.5 million people. We provide this care at more than 14,000 NHSC-approved health care sites in urban, rural, and frontier areas. The following story demonstrates the impact our members are having every day.

## Ashley Landers, MFT — Marriage and Family Therapist, Central Minnesota Mental Health Center, Buffalo, MN

**MY STORY:** Ashley Landers, a Marriage and Family Therapist and recent National Health Service Corps (NHSC) Loan Repayment Program alum, lives to help others. In college, she participated in service-based internships. In her early twenties, she directed day programs for youth at her local YMCA. When it came time to choose her career, she chose to work with the underserved. Ashley eschewed private practice to counsel those involved in sexual abuse cases in rural Mankato, Minnesota. She was working for Core Professional Services, which catered to the underserved and uninsured, but it was not yet an NHSC-approved site.

“I had heard about NHSC from some people participating in the Loan Repayment Program, and my licensure supervisor suggested I apply. Well, I needed to get my site approved first, so I did my research and submitted the application. Ultimately, Core Professional Services and the majority of its satellite sites were approved by NHSC – and so was I!”

Ashley has since moved on to another NHSC site – Central Minnesota Mental Health Center in Buffalo, Minnesota – to fulfill her service commitment – which she just completed last month! Central Minnesota Mental Health Center serves a rural community nestled between Minneapolis and St. Cloud. The center takes a multidisciplinary approach to treatment, which means that Ashley wears a couple of different hats. She is an outpatient therapist, medical services contractor, and clinical supervisor for Central Minnesota Mental Health Center’s adult day treatment program, which is an intensive program where patients spend up to three hours per day receiving help in the form of psychotherapy as well as social skills and psychoeducation. But Ashley’s real expertise is in working with families, and she demonstrates her skill through her reunification work.

“I have the opportunity to provide healing to families that have been torn apart by abuse, mental illness, and substance abuse. I work on getting them to reconnect and stay connected,” Ashley said. “I have treated families where the parents have lost custody and have needed help getting back on their feet – they received treatment, established a safe home for their children, and the whole family got better. I have worked with children and victims of abuse who were separated after being removed from the home. The goal is to get the family back together and back at home, and we are usually pretty successful.”

Ashley loves her work, and she attributes the loan repayment she received from the NHSC with allowing her to do it. “I cannot even put words to how grateful I am for the loan repayment,” she said. “I think I would have been more likely to do private practice without it, but I want to be in a place where I am needed. There are a lot of providers out there, all doing great work, but I want to be with the people who need me the most,” Ashley says. She intends to stay at Central Minnesota Mental Health Center now that her service commitment ended in April. “There is no place else I want to be.”