



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Guidance to NHSC clinicians on fulfilling service obligations when a mandatory furlough or reduction-in-force has taken place

**Question:** What happens if my site has a mandatory furlough or a reduction-in-force that results in me being unable to fulfill my service commitment?

**Answer:** The NHSC will work with participants to ensure that their service commitment can be fulfilled when they are faced with a mandatory furlough or a reduction-in-force at their service site. Please contact the NHSC through the Customer Service Portal if you have been affected by one of these circumstances and need assistance.

While the NHSC cannot waive the minimum clinical practice requirements or the maximum allowable absences (35 work days per service year) in cases of a mandatory furlough or a reduction-in-force, the NHSC will work with program participants to identify solutions. An NHSC participant is required to engage in the full-time clinical practice of the profession for which he/she was provided an NHSC Loan Repayment or Scholarship award, unless he/she has been approved to complete that obligation in half-time clinical practice.

Full-time clinical practice is defined as a minimum of 40 hours per week, for 45 weeks per year, with at least 32 hours spent providing direct patient care. The clinician must work at least 4 days per week, and no more than 12 hours can be counted in any 24-hour period. Half-time clinical practice is defined as a minimum of 20 hours (not to exceed 39 hours) per week, for 45 weeks per year, with at least 16 hours to be spent providing direct patient care. The clinician must work at least 2 days per week, and no more than 12 hours can be counted in any 24-hour period. For both full- and half-time, time spent "on-call" will not count toward the clinical practice requirement, unless the clinician is providing patient care during that time. Hours worked over minimum requirement (40 hours per week in the case of full-time, 20 hours per week in the case of half-time) may not be applied to any other work week.

If an NHSC participant is forced to exceed the maximum allowable absences because he/she is unable to meet his/her minimum service requirement due to a mandatory furlough or reduction-in-force, the participant's service end date will be recalculated (extended) accordingly.

Those in full-time clinical practice that are experiencing a permanent reduction in the number of hours worked per week may be eligible to convert to half-time clinical practice and have their remaining service commitment doubled. Note that once a conversion to half-time has been executed, the clinician must complete the remaining service in half-time; there is no opportunity to switch back to full-time. For more details on eligibility requirements for converting to half-time, please review the following FAQ - <http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/downloads/conversionfaqs.pdf>.

The NHSC will work with clinicians to find alternative solutions to those identified above – extending the service obligation or converting to half-time. For example, clinicians may consider finding employment at an additional or alternate site (i.e., adding an additional site or transferring to another NHSC-approved service site) to ensure that they are able to meet the minimum clinical practice requirements noted above. Others may seek approval from their sites to report to work and perform practice-related administrative activities (not to exceed 8 hours per week) in accordance with NHSC requirements on scheduled furlough days so that they can continue to receive credit towards their NHSC service.

FAQs provide current information on specific topics. A FAQ does not create or confer any rights for or on any person and does not operate to bind BCRS or the public. Applicable statutes and guidances must be satisfied. The use of the word "must" means that something is required under the Public Health Service Act. For further information on this topic please contact the Division of Program Operations at (301) 594-4200 or [gethelp@hrsa.gov](mailto:gethelp@hrsa.gov). Revised December 2011.