



NHSC SCHOLAR ORIENTATION AND EMPLOYMENT SEARCH GUIDE

JULY 2018

Connecting dedicated primary care providers with the communities that need them



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
HEALTH RESOURCES AND SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

NHSC.hrsa.gov

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Letter from the Director

Congratulations! We at the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) hope that your training experiences thus far have not only been fulfilling, but have further strengthened your passion to provide primary health care to the underserved.

The impact you will make as you transition to practice is vast. One in five people in the United States lives in a primary care shortage area, which means they go without essential health services, or have to travel long distances to see their primary care practitioner. Too many Americans—particularly in underserved rural and urban areas—go without checkups, preventive screenings, vaccines, routine dental work, and other care, simply because there is no one to provide care and treatment. At its heart, the NHSC is about bringing primary care to communities in need and you will help us to fulfill that mission.

As an NHSC scholar, you will have the opportunity to choose from positions located at NHSC approved sites in high-need areas. You and the NHSC-approved site will be looking for a match that is right for you both. As you transition into practice, we encourage you to maintain consistent communication with the NHSC. Reach out to our dedicated staff with any questions you may have. We are here to provide support as you explore the many job opportunities that can be found within our diverse array of NHSC-approved sites.

Our hope is that you not only find a site that meets your professional needs, but a community that you will be proud to call home for years to come!

Thank you,

Director, National Health Service Corps

Employment Search Overview

You are entering the phase of your National Health Service Corps (NHSC) scholarship commitment where you transition from training to service.

During this time, you will:

- Identify geographic locations of interest.
- Research NHSC-approved sites and inquire about current, or anticipated vacancies.
- Apply for competitive positions and visit sites that not only meet program requirements, but are also of interest to you.
- Accept a job and (possibly) relocate to begin your career.

The *NHSC Scholar Orientation and Employment Search Guide* is intended to serve as a resource. It includes information on key dates, site search resources, site visit and relocation logistics, and much more.

While the responsibility for finding a job is yours, the NHSC is here to support you throughout the site search process. During this time, the NHSC will also provide resources and invitations to participate in virtual events that are created specifically for you. You are strongly encouraged to participate in these events, since they will provide details about your upcoming site search, relocation process and fulfilling your NHSC service requirements.



Get started early on trying to find a job.

– TOBY IMLER, DDS

Important Dates and Milestones

It is your responsibility to meet specific deadlines. Closely review the dates listed below, since they vary by discipline.

EMPLOYMENT DEADLINES

DISCIPLINE	TEST & LICENSURE	BEGIN SERVICE BY
Physicians completing residency	By the time service is	Within 6 months of the end of residency
Dentists completing residency	By the time service is	Within 6 months of the end of training or
Nurse-Midwives, Nurse	By the time service is	Within 6 months of graduation

EMPLOYMENT SEARCH MILESTONES

Dentists (not doing a residency), family nurse practitioners, nurse-midwives, and physician assistants should adapt this schedule to their applicable deadlines.

WHEN	WHAT	HOW WHY
July 2018	You will be introduced to and contacted by your Regional Advisor and will receive information about participating in the Program Guidelines webinar.	Regular communication between you and your Regional Advisor will make the site search process easier.
July 2018	The <i>NHSC Scholar Orientation and Employment Search Guide</i> is available to all scholars in the 2019 scholar class.	The <i>NHSC Scholar Orientation and Employment Search Guide</i> will help you understand and prepare for your transition to service.
July 2018 through state of employment	Regular calls to your Regional Advisor.	Regular communication between you and your Regional Advisor will keep your advisor informed of how your interviews and site search are going.
February 1, 2019	Deadline to submit Notice of Intent to accept a chief residency or fellowship position.	Deferments are granted in 1-year increments. Requests for chief residency or fellowship positions should be submitted through the Customer Service Portal .
April 15, 2019	Deferment deadline to continue postgraduate residency training for physicians and dentists.	Deferments are granted in 1-year increments. Submit requests through the Customer Service Portal while you complete your residency.



I came from a small rural area and that's what I wanted to find. My site offers a lot to me in terms of outdoor lifestyle — there's hunting and fishing in this area.

– DENVER BROWN, PA

Preparing for Service

PICKING YOUR TOP THREE STATES

This spring, you will receive an email from NHSC asking you to enter the top 3 states where you would like to work. This can be done through the Customer Service Portal. Once you have logged in to the [Customer Service Portal](#), you will then select “Begin My Site Search” from the “I NEED TO...” section of your main portal page (See Figure 1), from there you will be able to enter your top 3 states. This information will help determine which Regional Advisor will be assigned to you. Think about your ideal living and working environments. Although you may need to make compromises along the way, it is good to start by assessing your needs versus wants.

Take a moment to consider the following questions:

- Would I prefer a rural, frontier, or urban setting?
- In which city or state would I prefer to reside?
- What types of social or recreational amenities would I like nearby?
- Are there special considerations I need to make for my spouse/partner or my children?
- Are there other NHSC-approved sites where I can work if my first preference isn't available?

Figure 1



WORKING WITH YOUR REGIONAL ADVISOR

Once you have picked your top 3 states, you will be assigned a Regional Advisor. In most cases, NHSC will try to assign you to a Regional Advisor who is very familiar to the area you list as your first choice. Once assigned, your Regional Advisor will be in contact with you to make sure that you are on track for finding your new job. The Regional Advisor may know of sites that have not yet posted a job vacancy. Your Regional Advisor will also work with other Regional Advisors across the country should you decide to change your first choice.

The Regional Advisor can offer suggestions, give advice, and assist you in getting all of your documentation uploaded into the **Customer Service Portal**. While your Regional Advisor will work with you to help find a new job, your Regional Advisor will not communicate on your behalf with potential employers or assist you in negotiations.

CLINICAL ROTATIONS AT NHSC-APPROVED SITES

If you have elective clinical rotations remaining in your academic training, you should consider a clinical rotation at an NHSC-approved site that has a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) score of 18 or higher to experience working in a high-need site. Once you have selected the site you wish to visit, ask if they would be willing to host you during a clinical rotation. During this type of clinical experience, you will get a valuable opportunity to get acquainted with the practice site, its leadership, and the larger community.

The NHSC will pay for your round-trip travel, hotel, and three days and two nights of per diem to complete a clinical rotation at an NHSC-approved site. You and the site should discuss any additional costs beforehand, including a possible stipend while in rotation.

We strongly advise that you secure a written agreement, with the rotation site, that details items such as: room and board; anticipated clinical experience; dates of rotation; and any other items that are unique to the rotation.

Identifying Potential Service Sites

EMPLOYMENT SITE REQUIREMENTS

To successfully fulfill your NHSC service commitment, you must find a job at an NHSC-approved site with the requisite HPSA score for your discipline. Refer to the Employment Deadlines on page 3. Disciplines include mental and behavioral health, primary care, and dental. Scholars may work at more than one NHSC-approved site. However, each of the sites must be NHSC-approved and meet the HPSA requirement. There can only be one NHSC Scholar hired per discipline at any one site per placement year. For further details see page 17 – Sites Requesting Additional Scholars.

NHSC-APPROVED SITES

NHSC-approved sites are facilities that provide primary care, dental, and/or mental and behavioral health services to all patients regardless of their ability to pay. All sites must be approved through the NHSC and have a formal NHSC Site Agreement in place. During your site search, you should develop a list of potential sites with job vacancies, so you have additional alternatives in case your first choice is not available.

1. Federally Qualified Health Centers

- a. Community Health Center
- b. Migrant Health
- c. Homeless Program



Ask to shadow a clinician for a few hours to get a sense of how the center and their patient flow works.

– LEIGH MONTEJO, NP

- d. Public Housing Program
- e. School-Based Program
- f. Mobile Clinic

2. American Indian Health Facilities: Indian Health Service Facilities, Tribally-Operated 638 Health Programs, and Urban Indian Health Programs

- a. Federal Indian Health Service
- b. Tribal/638 Health Facility
- c. Dual-Funded (Tribal Health Clinic and FQHC 330 Funded)
- d. Urban Indian Health Program

3. FQHC Look-Alikes

4. Correctional or Detention Facilities

- a. Federal Prison
- b. State Prison
- c. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Health Service Corps

5. Certified Rural Health Clinics

- a. Provider-Based
- b. Independent

6. Critical Access Hospitals

7. Community Mental Health Centers

8. State or Local Health Departments

- a. State-run
- b. Local-run

9. Community Outpatient Facilities

- a. Hospital Affiliated
- b. Non-Hospital Affiliated

10. Private Practices

- a. Solo Practice
- b. Group Practice

11. School-Based Clinics

12. Mobile Units

13. Free Clinics

The following are **not** NHSC-approved site types:

1. Inpatient Hospitals (including Veterans Administration Hospitals, and with the exception of Medicare-approved Critical Access Hospitals)

2. Other Inpatient Facilities

3. Residential Facilities

4. County/Local Prisons

For more information on NHSC-approved sites, please visit the [Health Workforce Connector](#) or review the [NHSC Site Reference Guide](#).

Health Professional Shortage Area Scores

Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) scores are a multi-variable calculation that defines the degree of health services needed in a given area, facility, or population. HPSA scores range from 0 to 26 for dental, 0 to 25 for primary care, and 0 to 25 for mental health. A higher HPSA score equates to a greater need for health professionals. The required HPSA score varies from year to year and is published in the *Federal Register Notice*. To successfully fulfill your commitment to the NHSC, you must find a job at an NHSC-approved site and begin employment at this site by your Employment Deadline. For your scholar class, the site must have a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) score of 18 or higher in your professional field of primary care, mental health, or dental.

NHSC-approved sites may carry different HPSA scores for each discipline (i.e. mental and behavioral health, primary care, and dental). If, for example, the qualifying HPSA score for your scholar class assignment is 18 or above, a site that has a HPSA score of 19 for dental and a 6 for primary care, would ONLY be eligible to hire an oral health practitioner because the primary care score falls below the requisite HPSA threshold for this particular scholar class.

It is possible for a HPSA score to change during the course of the year. If a HPSA score has changed after you have already interviewed with a site, the NHSC will honor the score at the time of interview for up to six months. For more information, see the “HPSA Lock Post Interview” section.

Although the NHSC strongly encourages you to begin and end your service commitment at the same site, we recognize that situations may arise that will require a transfer to a new site. If such a circumstance occurs, you will still be required to transfer to an NHSC-approved site that meets the requisite HPSA score for your assigned scholar class.

The HPSA data listed in the [Health Workforce Connector](#) is considered the official data for use with NHSC programs. However, you are required to verify the site’s HPSA score with your Regional Advisor. Please visit the [Health Workforce Connector](#) to view HPSA scores for all active and approved NHSC sites. You may work at more than one NHSC-approved site. However, each of the sites must be NHSC-approved and meet your HPSA score requirement.

Employment Search Resources

REGIONAL ADVISOR

You will be paired with a Regional Advisor who will provide you with resources to aid in your site search. They will also monitor your submission of appropriate documentation as you transition into service. Check in with them regularly. Your advisor is available to answer any questions you may have.

HEALTH WORKFORCE CONNECTOR

Before you contact an NHSC-approved site, find out about the site by viewing its Site Profile on the [Health Workforce Connector](#). It includes information about NHSC-approved sites and allows you to sort sites by city, state, discipline, open vacancies, and HPSA scores. Although the HPSA scores posted on the [Health Workforce Connector](#) are considered official, scholars are required to contact their Regional Advisor to confirm the accuracy of the HPSA scores.

An Internet search can also uncover valuable information about a site, its vacancies, and the surrounding area. Not all NHSC-approved sites use the Health Workforce Connector to its full capacity, so Internet searches, or accessing the organization’s website, can be useful too. **Remember, it is up to you to contact potential employers and secure a job that meets your NHSC contract requirements.**

STATE CONTACTS

You can contact state workforce partners, who are dedicated to supporting primary care in underserved areas, to assist you with identifying NHSC-approved sites that have, or may soon have, open positions. Although it varies, most states have the offices and associations listed on the next page. Please speak with your Regional Advisor about engaging with representatives from one or all of these organizations.

The site must have a **Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) score of 18 or higher in your professional field of primary care, mental health, or dental.**



My advisor helped me find resources outside of the [Health Workforce Connector]. One of the agencies contacted me out of the blue and told me about the job that I now have.

– ALLISON BACON, MD

- **Primary Care Associations (PCA)** represent the community health centers in each state. Some have their own job websites or recruitment resources. You might also consider asking them **to send an email to their member health centers (with the requisite HPSA score) to gauge if there is a particular interest in hiring NHSC scholars.**
- **Primary Care Offices (PCO)** are state-level organizations that work on health care workforce issues. Primary Care Offices work with the NHSC to approve sites, determine HPSA designations, and often have good information about sites and communities in their state.
- **State Offices of Rural Health** work on rural health issues in a given state. Some offices are co-located with the Primary Care Office, while others are independent organizations.
- **National Rural Recruitment and Retention Network** (a.k.a. 3RNet) is a job search resource that you may also find useful. Its members are not-for-profit organizations dedicated to helping health professionals find jobs in rural and underserved areas throughout the country. If you use this resource, you will need to confirm with your Regional Advisor that the site is an NHSC-approved site.

Site Visit Logistics

The NHSC provides assistance with travel to attend job interviews (referred to as “site visits”) at NHSC-approved sites with the requisite HPSA score for your scholar class. Site visits may include a trip to a single site, or may include one trip with several sites in the immediate area. If you are doing a local site visit and traveling within 50 miles for your interview, you are not eligible to use the NHSC travel allotment. Communicate with your Regional Advisor, so they can help you plan your visits.

All site visits will be completed in accordance with **Federal Travel Regulations** and NHSC travel policies. The NHSC works with a contractor that specializes in Federal travel and relocation logistics. After you have submitted your request for travel through the **Customer Service Portal**, and it has been approved by the NHSC, a travel & relocation coordinator will work with you one-on-one to ensure that you are informed of all the travel regulations and guidelines. The travel & relocation coordinator can make complete arrangements for all your site visit and/or relocation needs.

Travel Authorization

In order to receive reimbursement for travel expenses associated with an interview at a site, you must obtain advance approval by submitting a site visit or relocation request through your **Customer Service Portal** account at least 14 days in advance. If you are notified of a last minute interview, please be sure to submit your site visit request as soon as possible.

All site visit and relocation requests **MUST** be approved in advance of travel. Failure to comply will result in site visit or relocation expenses not being reimbursed. You must have your Regional Advisor verify that the site you want to travel to meets your NHSC contract requirements. Once this has been confirmed, submit your request at least 14 days before the start of your planned travel to assure that your request is approved and to allow the travel & relocation coordinator to make arrangements.

The Travel and Relocation request link can be found in the “I NEED TO...” section of your Customer Service Portal page. (See Figure 2)

After submitting your request, the NHSC will confirm the HPSA score of the site to assure that it meets your HPSA score requirement. Site visits to unapproved sites, or to sites that do not meet your HPSA score requirement, will not be approved. A decision to approve or deny your request typically takes three business days once all necessary information has been received. You will be notified of the status of your request through the **Customer Service Portal**.

HPSA Lock Post Interview

On rare occasions, a HPSA score may change during the course of the year. It is your responsibility to notify your Regional Advisor if you interview at a site local to you or remotely. Site visits requiring a travel request automatically have the site’s score documented for a six month period. For site visits not requiring a travel request, please inform your Regional Advisor, so that your advisor can enter a note into your record that verifies that the site meets your HPSA score requirement at the time of your interview. Should the score change after you have interviewed, the NHSC will honor the HPSA score for up to six months after the date of your interview. After

Travel Reminders:

All site visits **MUST** be pre-approved in order to be reimbursed!

Additional visits to the same site will not be funded by the NHSC.

NHSC will only approve site visit requests for job interviews.

Figure 2



six months, you will no longer be eligible to work at the site and will have to resume your job search.

Site Visits to Alaska, Hawaii, and U.S. Territories

If you are interested in conducting a site visit to Alaska, Hawaii, or any one of the U.S. territories, you are required to complete the following steps:

- Contact an NHSC Regional Overseas Consultant:
 - Hawaii and the Pacific Trust Islands: Darren Orgel /San Francisco Regional Office (dorgel@hrsa.gov or 415-437-8039).
 - Alaska: Maria Garcia/Seattle Regional Office (mgarcia@hrsa.gov or 206-615-2636).
 - Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands: Anne Venner/New York Regional Office (avenner@hrsa.gov or 212-264-2806).
- Conduct a phone interview with a representative from the NHSC-approved site.
- Have a detailed discussion with the site regarding the resource limitations, cultural differences, and their expectations.

Be aware that the travel allotment remains at \$1,200 and the NHSC will not allow an additional site visit funding should you decide to make an overseas site visit. Please discuss this with your NHSC Regional Overseas Consultant.

Site Visit Allowable Expenses

SITE VISIT LENGTH OF TRIP

The length of a standard site visit trip to one site is 3 days/2 nights, this should give you enough time to travel to the site's location, and then have an adequate visit with that site. On some occasions however, you may find two or more sites in the same area that you may wish to visit and may request (in advance) for one or more additional days in order to complete a reasonable site visit. These requests will be handled on a case-by-case basis and MUST be approved in advance of the trip with proper justification to warrant the time extension. Travel that is extended beyond the standard 3 days/2 nights, without prior approval, will not be reimbursed.

LODGING

Lodging costs must not exceed the prevailing lodging per diem rate for a particular location, per the **General Services Administration**. Original receipts are required for reimbursement.

GROUND TRANSPORTATION

If approved in advance, the NHSC will reimburse you for:

1. Mileage when using your privately-owned vehicle for a round-trip site visit.
2. Mileage when driving your privately-owned vehicle to and from the closest accommodating airport.

To determine the appropriate reimbursement rate for mileage, the NHSC will use the prevailing federal mileage reimbursement rates, which includes the cost of gas.

USING A RENTAL CAR

Any use of a rental car must be approved in advance of the proposed site visit or it will not be reimbursed. The most common reason for requesting a rental car is the distance between the airport and the interview site. The NHSC does not permit the use of rental cars in metropolitan areas and prefers you to use public transportation or taxis. The site visit request must have a rental car justification, which clearly states why the rental car is needed and the distance between the airport and the interview site. Should a rental car be approved, you will obtain the most economic rental, not to exceed a mid-sized vehicle.

PER DIEM

Per Diem is intended to cover expenses for meals and incidentals. Your Per Diem begins when travel commences to an authorized destination and ends upon return to the point of origin, or at the NHSC authorized termination point. Federal **Per Diem rates** are determined by geographic location.

Family Member Travel

The NHSC permits reimbursement of up to \$1,200 for one family member to accompany you on only one site visit. A family member is considered to be someone who will be relocating with you, and living in the household with you, while you are serving your NHSC service commitment. You and your family member must depart and return together when traveling, and also stay together in one hotel room. Hotel double-occupancy government rates apply. The hotel costs come out of your travel allotment. The NHSC will fund air, or rail transportation expenses, as well as meals and incidentals for your family member. Family members are not allowed to be reimbursed beyond the standard site visit of 3 days/2 nights. For example, if you are visiting multiple sites and have been approved for an extension of 5 days/4 nights, your family member will only be reimbursed for 3 days of the site visit. Scholar couples (spouses or unmarried partners) that are in the same scholar class and wish to travel together will not receive an additional \$1,200 allotment for family member travel. If you are traveling together on the same site visit, the NHSC will use your \$1,200 allotment to cover the costs of your travel.

A family member is considered to be someone who will be relocating with you, and living in the household with you, while you are serving your NHSC service commitment.

Reimbursement

For site visits, you have a \$1,200 maximum allotment to conduct all of your site visits. As you conduct site visits, the travel & relocation coordinator will inform you of the remaining balance in your travel allotment. Once all of your site visit travel has been completed, any unused funds in the travel allotment will no longer be available to you. If you go over your \$1,200 allotment, you will be expected to pay for any additional expenses. You are encouraged to contact the site to inquire if they can offer you any travel support.

When arranging your travel, you should be aware of expenses paid upfront by the NHSC and expenses for which you may be reimbursed. When approved in advance, your airline ticket (round trip), hotel, and rental car expenses (if allowed), will be paid directly to the vendor by the NHSC. Other allowable expenses, including the per diem, will be reimbursed to you after you complete and submit a reimbursement form with accompanying receipts.

Keep track of all receipts for expenses incurred during your trip. Under fixed federal per diem rates, receipts for meals are not necessary. Extra costs incurred while on travel, such as taxi fares, or airport parking, may be reimbursable. Personal expenses (excluding per diem) will not be reimbursed, this may include any clothing, personal items, or gifts to take back to family members.

When returning from a site visit, submit your Travel Reimbursement Form immediately to the travel & relocation coordinator. This will enable the coordinator to track available funds in your travel allotment and determine if you are eligible to be reimbursed for any travel costs. Reimbursement for allowable expenses will be sent within 30–60 business days.

Interviewing

Be well prepared for your interviews and conduct yourself with the utmost professionalism during all interactions with the site recruiters and staff. You are competing with other clinicians in securing a position at an NHSC-approved site. These sites have no requirement to hire you over other applicants.

INTERVIEW TIPS:

- Research the site and community in advance. Be prepared to explain how you will be an asset to the organization.
- Be as professional and formal during phone interviews as you would during in-person interviews. Always address your interviewer as Dr./Mr./Ms. unless they tell you otherwise.

- Prepare answers for potential interview questions beforehand.
- Show interest by asking questions about the site, practice, community, and patients served.
- Demonstrate your passion for the field and the position.
- Be prepared to discuss your training and experience.
- Practice a mock interview, preferably with someone in your profession.
- Record and listen to yourself before the official interview.
- Do not discuss salary during your first interview. If asked, your response should be, “I will consider your strongest offer.”
- Bring copies of your CV/resume, relevant licensure and contact information for your references, a pen, paper and/or an electronic device for note taking.
- Business attire (i.e., a suit) is still the standard when being interviewed.
- If you like what you see, do not leave the interview without letting the interviewer know you are really interested in the position. Close the deal.
- Send a thank-you note after your interview.

Matching to a Site

Before accepting a job offer, always speak with your Regional Advisor and verify that the NHSC-approved site is in good standing and meets your HPSA score requirement.

JOB OFFER AND EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT

If you and the site feel you are a good match, your next step will be to negotiate your employment contract directly with the site. The NHSC will not participate in these negotiations, nor will it have any bearing on your employment contract with the site. It is your responsibility to assure that your employment contract with the site will allow you to successfully complete your contract commitment to the NHSC. Employment start dates will also be negotiated between you and the authorized representative from the practice site. You are expected to begin your NHSC service commitment within six months of the end of your training.

SITE ASSIGNMENT

If you do not meet your Employment Deadline, you will be “Site Assigned.” This means that the NHSC will identify vacancies that you must interview for and do your best to compete for the job. If you are offered a position at that site, you must accept it and begin your NHSC service commitment immediately. Your preferences will be considered, however, there is no guarantee that those preferences will be accommodated. If you are being “Site Assigned,” you will be notified in writing and given instructions. If you are in the “Site Assignment” phase, you cannot turn down an offer of employment, as it is considered a breach of contract.

FAILURE TO BEGIN OR COMPLETE YOUR SERVICE COMMITMENT

If you breach an NHSC scholarship contract by not fulfilling your NHSC service commitment, you become financially liable to the United States Government for damages approximately three times the amount of the NHSC scholarship award, plus interest and penalties. You will be encouraged to request a “debt estimate” from the Division of Participant Support and Compliance and be recommended for default.

While the responsibility for finding a job is yours, the NHSC is here to support you throughout the site search process.

Completing the Site Search Process

There are four documents you will need to submit to the NHSC to complete the site search process. As you receive these documents they should be uploaded to your **Customer Service Portal** account (see instructions below). Use the Important Documents Checklist to keep track of what you will need to submit to the NHSC.

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS CHECKLIST

- 
Results of Board/Certification Exams
 - Dentists: Submit a copy of your National Dental Board Exam Part II.
 - Nurse-Midwives: Submit a copy of a discipline-specific, and if applicable, a specialty-specific National Certification Exam.
 - Nurse Practitioners: Submit a copy of a discipline-specific, and if applicable, a specialty-specific National Certification Exam.
 - Physicians: Submit a copy of your USMLE or COMLEX Part III scores.
 - Physician Assistants: Submit a copy of a discipline-specific, and if applicable, a specialty-specific National Certification Exam.
- 
Unrestricted-State License

This license should be for the state where you will be practicing. However, if you are working at a site that is considered a Federal facility (i.e., a Federal prison, Indian Health Service site, or an Immigration and Customs Enforcement site), you may submit a license from any state.
- 
Offer Letter (Refer to Appendix B)

Provide a copy of your Job Offer Letter (on company letterhead and signed by the site or personnel representative). The letter should contain the name and address of each site where you will work, the number of hours you will work at each site your anticipated start of employment date, and whether the site will pay for your malpractice and tail coverage.
- 
Acceptance Letter (Refer to Appendix C)

Provide a copy of your formal Job Acceptance Letter sent to your future employer. This should mirror the information provided in your Job Offer Letter and have your signature.

Upon starting your NHSC service commitment, you will either receive a Private Practice Assignment Agreement (PPA), a Private Practice Option Agreement (PPO), or a Federal Assignment Agreement (FA), outlining your contractual obligation during your service period. For more information on these agreements, please review the Scholarship Program Application & Program Guidance.

UPLOADING DOCUMENTS TO THE CUSTOMER SERVICE PORTAL

You will be expected to upload documents listed in the Important Documents Checklist to your **Customer Service Portal** account. Please do not wait until you have all documents to submit them through the **Customer Service Portal**. These documents should be uploaded as you receive them. To upload documents in your **Customer Service Portal**, select the Site Search link under the “Activities” Section on your main portal page, this will then take you to the Site Search Support page. (See Figure 3)

On the site search support page, you will see a Documents section. This is where you will upload the required documents. (See Figure 4)

If you have any questions about this process, contact your Regional Advisor. If you have technical issues regarding the **Customer Service Portal**, please contact the Customer Care Center at 1-800-221-9393, Monday through Friday (except federal holidays) between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. ET.

Figure 3

ACTIVITIES		
Activity Type	Last Updated	Status
Site Status Change	04/03/2014	Submitted
Site Search	04/03/2014	In Progress

Figure 4

DOCUMENTS

Document Type

- Professional Exams/Board Scores
- License Information
- Offer Letter
- Signed Offer Acceptance Letter
- Enter Description

Relocation

REQUEST FOR RELOCATION SUPPORT

*If you live within 50 miles of your new job location or residence, you are **NOT** eligible for NHSC funded or supported relocation services.* Once you have accepted a job and submitted all four NHSC required documents, you are ready to actively plan a move to your new location. The NHSC provides assistance for your initial relocation; it does not provide any relocation support for additional transfers, or moves, beyond your first NHSC-approved site.

In order to start the relocation process, you must sign in to the **Customer Service Portal**. Once you have submitted your online request and the NHSC has verified that all of the required documents (see the Important Documents Checklist) have been uploaded, a travel & relocation coordinator will contact you to coordinate your move. We request that you give the NHSC and the moving contractor as much advance notice as possible. A minimum of at least 21 business days is needed to organize your move. This notice provides the travel & relocation coordinator with enough time to find the best deal from a moving company and time to get estimates. It also gives the NHSC sufficient time to complete the document verifications.

All relocations must be approved prior to the actual move! All moves must be requested through the **Customer Service Portal** before any relocation arrangements can be made.

Important Reminders:

- The NHSC will not start to work on any relocation activities until a valid job offer and acceptance letter have been received and uploaded.
- Failure to obtain approval prior to relocation may result in your not being reimbursed for your relocation expenses.
- You are advised not to travel, relocate, or make any commitments related to relocation, without first receiving confirmation from the NHSC that your move has been approved.

RELOCATION OPTIONS

The NHSC has two options for relocation assistance. All relocation and advanced storage requests **MUST** be approved at least 21 business days in advance.

The two types of relocation options are listed below:

1. **Government Managed Option:** This option is the most common type used, since it allows you to minimize your advance out-of-pocket expenses. It is an available option for those who have submitted all required documents and are fully licensed to practice at their approved NHSC site. With the Government Managed Option your household goods are packed and moved by an NHSC-contracted carrier, and the movers are paid directly by the NHSC. All household goods must be shipped from one location to another location, and must not exceed 18,000 pounds. Reimbursement will be based on allowable expenses (and submission of the expense report) and should not exceed a total of \$10,000.
2. **Self-Move Option:** This option allows you to choose a moving company or rent a truck and move yourself to your new location. This option is commonly used by members who have found a job, but have not acquired a full, unencumbered license to practice at their approved NHSC site. If you have not submitted all required documents, you must request a conditional approval from the NHSC before making ANY self-move arrangements. If you have submitted all required documents to the NHSC and would like to choose the self-move option, you must receive approval from the NHSC before you make self-move arrangements.

With the Self-Move Option, you will pay for moving costs yourself and then be reimbursed up to \$10,000 for allowable expenses. If your move costs any amount less than \$10,000, you will only be reimbursed the cost of your move and you will relinquish the remaining relocation allotment. Any amount remaining belongs to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and cannot be used for future moves to or from NHSC sites.

Remember a minimum of at least 21 business days is needed to organize your move.

Please note that if you choose to obtain a rental truck, rather than hire a moving company, the NHSC does not reimburse labor costs to those who may help you move (e.g., family, friends, or hired help). The NHSC will reimburse you for the cost of the rental truck and other related expenses such as gas, tolls, and lodging, or will reimburse allowable costs to your hired moving company. Should you decide to hire a moving company yourself, you must assure that the moving company is a licensed and registered moving company that is listed with the Federal Commerce Commission to make in-state and intra-state moves. We suggest that you consult with one of our travel & relocation coordinators, to learn more about regulations, guidelines and allowable expenses, before making any arrangements on your own. Once you have obtained your full, unencumbered license, and meet all other NHSC requirements, you will need to submit your expense report to the travel & relocation coordinator for reimbursement of your self-move.

ALLOWABLE EXPENSES

The NHSC will provide assistance with your initial relocation only. The NHSC will allow up to \$10,000 for approved relocation expenses (up to \$25,000 for non-contiguous United States travel and relocation expenses). Once the relocation has been completed, any unused funds will no longer be available to you. Your expense report must be submitted within 6 months of the relocation or it will no longer be reimbursable. For scholar couples (spouses or unmarried partners) who are in the same scholar class and currently living at the same residence, you are entitled to up to \$10,000 per household if you will be relocating to the same residence within the Continental United States, and up to \$25,000 per household for overseas relocations.

Relocation allowance for you and your family members may include:

- **Traveling to your new location** — The NHSC will pay for you to get to your new location; this can be done in several ways. Unlike when making a site visit, you and your family members do not have to travel together. In some instances, one family member may wish to get to the new location quicker than the rest of the family, this may be done to 1) find a place to live; 2) insure that the new residence is clean and ready to be moved into or 3) the NHSC clinician is needed at the site to start their work sooner than their family may be ready to travel. We have had instances where a family member may wish or need to travel by car to get to the new location and the other family member has flown to the new location. These are acceptable options. If you have any questions please contact the travel & relocation coordinator who can help explain some of these options to you. Commercial transportation (coach-class) accommodations will be provided.
- **Travel by one privately owned vehicle** — Gas mileage reimbursement at the prevailing government rate for the most direct route, one night's lodging for every 300 miles, and a per diem based on the local per diem rate will be provided.
- **Hotel lodging** — Should you elect to drive to your new location, the NHSC will pay for a hotel for you and your family members, plus meals and incidental expenses, based on traveling a minimum of 300 miles per day. You will also receive mileage cost at the prevailing government rate at the time of the relocation. The NHSC's travel & relocation coordinator will reimburse mileage based on a straight point A to point B calculation; this will not cover any side trips that you and your family may make while in travel status.
- **Vehicle (shipping one vehicle to Alaska, Hawaii, and U.S. territories)** — NHSC will ship one automobile to your initial overseas assignment.
- **Household Goods** — The NHSC will help move all household goods, furniture/ clothing/dishes etc. from your current residence to where you are going to practice.
- **Advanced Storage** — You may submit an advanced storage request to place your household goods into a storage facility to be held for no longer than 90 days prior to your relocation. This will grant you an opportunity to place household goods into either a secure storage facility or a self-storage locker. If you are relocating under the Government-Managed Option, you may use the Secure Storage Facility or the Self-Storage locker. If you are relocating under the Self-Move Option, you may only use the Self-Storage Locker. There are advantages and disadvantages to both types of storage. Please see table on the next page for a comparison.

Expense reports must be submitted within 6 months of your relocation or it will no longer be reimbursable.

STORAGE TYPE	GOVT MANAGED OPTION	SELF MOVE OPTION	PROS	CONS
Secure Storage Facility	YES	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government contracted mover assumes liability for loss or damage. Movers pick up items at your residence and then hold them in a secure storage facility until the day of the move. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is an expensive option; costs are calculated as part of the move allotment. You will not have access to your household goods once the items are in storage. Movers will only move items from the storage facility to the final destination (they will not pick up items from two locations). Only approved for compelling reasons.
Self-Storage Locker	YES	YES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less expensive. You have access to your household goods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member is responsible for any loss or damages to items in storage. Member has to move items into and out of self-storage locker. If using the Government Managed Option, all items must be in one location on the day of the move or an extra charge will be your responsibility.

You and your family members are eligible for reimbursement of travel and shipment of household goods to the initial employment location and in accordance with the Federal Travel Regulations and the NHSC’s travel policies. Any subsequent relocation during, or at the end of, the service obligation period are at your expense.

Travel for family members, and the shipment of your household goods to the new location, must occur within six months from the start date listed in your employment contract. For transportation of household goods, the NHSC-contracted carriers will pack, transport, and unpack household goods. All household goods must be packed and shipped from one location and delivered to only one location.

Relocation allowances DO NOT include the following and cannot be claimed for reimbursement:

- Vehicles — The NHSC does not haul, ship, or tow any vehicle; the only exception to this is if you accept an overseas assignment. Then one vehicle may be shipped with household goods, but the cost is covered under the \$25,000 overseas relocation allotment. The NHSC will pay mileage for you to drive one (1) privately owned vehicle to your new location. The NHSC will not pay for any boats, trailers, campers, motorcycles, or any additional vehicles to the new location. Any additional vehicle costs are the responsibility of you or a family member.
- Cleaning charges for either moving out of your former residence or into your new residence.
- Redecorating charges that the movers may offer.
- Tips or gratuities you may wish to give to the movers.

Relocation for family members and household goods must occur within six months from the start date listed in your employment contract.

- Moving a home-based business, many people have home-based businesses that do not necessarily need to be located in one specific location and may need to be moved along with your household goods. Please note: while the NHSC may move a desk and some office equipment as part of the household goods, the NHSC will not move or be responsible for any home business stock or inventory. This is you or your family member's responsibility.

Special Situations

POSTGRADUATE TRAINING REQUESTS

Postgraduate training requests are granted in one-year increments or less for each year of residency. To receive a deferment for approved postgraduate residency training, a scholar must submit a request through the [Customer Service Portal](#) by April 15. (Note: The deadline to submit a notice of intent for a chief residency or fellowship is February 1). The request should include the year of postgraduate training and the specialty (e.g., second year of Family Practice residency). You must also upload an official letter from the residency director, on letterhead, that includes the start and completion dates for the residency program. Additional information can be found in the [Postgraduate Training Bulletin](#) posted on the NHSC website. The NHSC will provide written approval of all deferment requests.

Notify the NHSC if you chose to defer your service to pursue postgraduate training.

FELLOWSHIPS AND CHIEF RESIDENCY

Opportunities may arise, such as a chief resident position or a fellowship. The annual [Postgraduate Training Bulletin](#) will provide guidance. Specific activities for which a deferment may be approved are detailed below. These are the only activities for which an extension of your training time may be granted.

On a case-by-case and year-to-year basis, the NHSC will review and approve requests submitted by physicians in their last year of residency training for additional training under the following circumstances only:

- A one-year Chief Residency position, which may follow the completion of residency training.
- A two-year Child Psychiatry fellowship, which may follow the completion of residency training in General Psychiatry.
- A one-year Obstetrics/Gynecology fellowship, which may follow the completion of residency training in Family Practice.
- A one-year Geriatrics fellowship, which may follow the completion of residency training in Family Practice or General Internal Medicine.

There are four eligible dental deferments:

- General Practice Dentistry — one year
- Advanced Education in General Dentistry Program — one year
- General Pediatrics Dentistry — two years
- Public Health Dentistry — two years

If your postgraduate training is approved, you may be reassigned to a different scholar class. Each scholar class has a unique HPSA score requirement; therefore, you must be aware that a deferment may mean a different HPSA requirement for you. This may impact the list of NHSC approved sites where you are eligible to work.

Review the [Postgraduate Training Bulletin](#) posted on the NHSC website for detailed information about deferments.

SUSPENSION REQUESTS

A suspension is a break in service that typically occurs for either medical or academic reasons and is requested through the [Customer Service Portal](#).

ACADEMIC SUSPENSION

Should you have difficulties during your final year of training or during your residency with your Academic portion of your training you may be asked to submit a request for Suspension. If approved a Suspension will allow you the time needed for you to regain a firm foothold on your academic track. The request will be approved, or disapproved, by the NHSC's Legal and Compliance Branch. Once you have passed the required exam(s), or completed residency, they will refer you back to the Scholarship Branch for your placement cycle assignment. You will also be assigned to a Regional Advisor. Please note that a change in your Employment Search Cycle assignment may result in a change in your requisite health professional shortage area score.

MEDICAL SUSPENSION

The basis for a medical suspension is a medical condition that would either make it temporarily impossible for you to continue your service commitment or temporarily involve an extreme hardship whereby the enforcement of the service commitment would be against equity and good conscience. Requests for a suspension must be submitted, in writing, through the [Customer Service Portal](#). It must include full medical documentation. Your Program Support Officer within the NHSC Scholarship Branch, your Regional Advisor, or a staff person from the Division of Participant Support and Compliance will be able to assist you with submitting your medical suspension request.

WAIVERS

A waiver permanently relieves you of all, or part, of your NHSC obligation. Approvals of waivers are exceedingly rare, and have only been granted in extreme hardship situations where an awardee is medically determined to never again be capable of work in the discipline in which he/she was trained, and for which he/she received a scholarship. Requests for waivers should be submitted through the [Customer Service Portal](#).

SITE REQUESTING ADDITIONAL SCHOLARS

The NHSC allows one NHSC Scholar per discipline to serve at a given NHSC-approved site within a yearly placement cycle. The NHSC will consider requests from NHSC- approved sites for up to one additional scholar placement per discipline per placement cycle on an exceptional/case- by- case basis.

Communicating with the NHSC

The NHSC has a host of divisions, offices, and contractors that specialize in different phases of your NHSC experience. This section lists contact information for these staff members.

WHILE IN SCHOOL & TRAINING: PROGRAM SUPPORT OFFICER (PSO)

The Program Support Officer (PSO) in the Division of the National Health Service Corps Scholarship Branch is responsible for supporting you while you are in school. The PSO can assist you with questions or issues you may have that relate to funding, deferments, suspensions, waivers, graduation dates and residency end-dates. PSOs are assigned to various states. When contacting the NHSC, please submit your questions through the [Customer Service Portal](#) for a response from the PSO who is assigned to the state where your school or residency training is located. For further assistance, please send an email to NHSC@hrsa.gov or the PSO Lead: Malissa Lewis at mlewis@hrsa.gov.

WHILE SEARCHING FOR A JOB (IN YOUR LAST YEAR OF TRAINING): REGIONAL ADVISOR

The NHSC's Division of Regional Operations (DRO) has Regional Advisors across the 10 regions outlined in the map below. Your Regional Advisor will routinely contact you throughout your site search process to provide resources that can make your experience as easy as possible. The more in touch you are with your Regional Advisor, the more efficient and streamlined your job search will be. If you have not heard from your Advisor by July 1, 2018, please contact the DRO Scholar/S2S Lead, Michelle Stewart (MStewart1@hrsa.gov /312-938-9820) or the Site Visit and Relocation Coordinator, Racheal Hawkins (RHawkins@hrsa.gov /301-443-0446). A list of DRO's Regional Advisors can be found on the NHSC website [DRO Contact List](#).



WHILE IN SERVICE

Once you begin working at your site, you will be in contact with the NHSC about your service commitment. Throughout your service commitment, you will need to verify your employment every six months. These verifications will be processed through the [Customer Service Portal](#).

Please feel free to contact the National Health Service Corps by:

- Sending an inquire through your account in the [Customer Service Portal](#)
- Calling the Customer Care Center at 1-800-221-9393 (for TTY hearing impaired 1-877-897-9910)

Appendix A: Important Websites/Links

NHSC Website: www.nhsc.hrsa.gov

Health Workforce Connector: <http://connector.hrsa.gov>

DRO Contact List: https://www.nhsc.hrsa.gov/sites/becomenhscapprovedsite/dro_contact_list

BHW Customer Service Portal: <https://programportal.hrsa.gov/>

Central Regional Dental Testing Service: <http://www.crdts.org>

Northeast Regional Board of Dental Examiners: <http://www.nerb.org>

Southern Regional Board of Dental Examiners: <http://www.srta.org>

Western Regional Examining Board: <http://www.wreb.org>

Federation of State Medical Boards: <http://www.fsmb.org>

State Dental Licensing Boards: <http://www.dentalwatch.org>

Physician Assistant State and Territorial Regulatory Authorities: <http://www.aapa.org>

National Council of State Boards of Nursing: <http://www.ncsbn.org>

Appendix B: Sample Offer Letter

(Site Letterhead)

(Date)

(Clinician's Name)
(Clinician's Street Address)
(City, State ZIP Code)

Dear (Clinician's Name):

We are pleased to offer you full-time employment as a (Discipline/Specialty). You will work at: (NOTE: If you will work at more than one site, include each site name, physical address and number of hours you will work at each site.)

- (Site #1 Name), (Street Address), in (City, State ZIP Code) for (Number of hours per week)
- (Site #2 Name), (Street Address), in (City, State ZIP Code) for (Number of hours per week)
- (Site #3 Name), (Street Address), in (City, State ZIP Code) for (Number of hours per week)

Your anticipated start date will be (Anticipated Start Date). We (will or will not) pay for your malpractice insurance and tail coverage for the duration of your employment)

Thank you for your interest in our site. We look forward to you joining our team and working with you at (Site Name).

Sincerely,

(Site Representative Name)
(Site Representative Title)

Appendix C: Sample Acceptance Letter

(Clinician's Name) (Clinician's
Street Address #1) (City,
State ZIP)

(Date)

(Site Representative Name)
(Site Representative Title)
(Site Name)
(Site Address #1)
(City, State ZIP)

Dear (Site Representative Name),

I, (Clinician's Name), am pleased to accept your (full-time or half-time) employment offer as a (Discipline/Specialty) at the (Site Name), (Site Address), in (City, State ZIP) working (number of hours) per week.

(NOTE: If you will work at more than one site, include each site name, physical address and number of hours you will work at each site. The site information needs to match the NHSC records.)

As discussed, my anticipated start date is (Anticipated State Date).

I understand that you (will or will not) pay for my malpractice insurance and tail coverage for the duration of my employment.

Thank you again, for extending this exciting opportunity to me. Please let me know if there is anything I can do in advance of my start date to facilitate the start of my employment at your organization.

I look forward to joining the (Site Name) team.

Sincerely,

(Clinician's Signature, Discipline/Specialty)
(Clinician's Name)
(Clinician's Street Address #1)
(City, State ZIP)
(Clinician's Name, Discipline/Specialty)

Appendix D: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q. What is the Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) score requirement for my discipline?

A. Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) scores are released annually through the Federal Register, an online U.S. Government journal. The HPSA score for your class year is an 18.

Q. Can I visit multiple sites on one site visit?

A. Yes, you may request more than one site visit through the site visit function in the **Customer Service Portal**. Should you elect to visit more than two sites during your site visit trip you may request an extension to the standard 3-day/2-night site visit length. These must be requested and approved in advance of your travel.

Q. Will the NHSC allow me to use my travel stipend to visit a site more than once?

A. The NHSC pays for only one visit per site.

Q. Can I work at multiple sites?

A. Yes. You may split your time at multiple NHSC-approved sites as long as they all meet the Health Professional Shortage Area requirement.

Q. What documents do I need to have on file to begin the relocation process to my site?

A. In order to begin the NHSC Government-managed relocation process, the NHSC must have on file a copy of your discipline-specific professional examination results (e.g., USMLE, COMLEX, and PANCE), a signed Offer Letter, a signed Acceptance Letter, and a permanent unrestricted license for the state where you will practice.

Q. When does my NHSC service commitment begin?

A. If you have been issued a permanent unrestricted license for the state where you will practice, credit toward your NHSC service commitment will be calculated from the first full day of employment at service site.

OR

If you begin work prior to receipt of your permanent unrestricted license, your service commitment will begin on the issue date of your permanent unrestricted license.

Q. Can I work as a half-time provider to fulfill my service commitment?

A. Yes. NHSC scholarship recipients can fulfill their service obligation by practicing half time, provided required service hours are completed. More information can be found in the Application and Program Guidance under Service Requirements.

Q. Will I be able to transfer to another site after beginning my service commitment?

A. The NHSC would prefer that you complete your service commitment at your original service site; therefore, it is important that you thoroughly research your selection. For extenuating circumstances, NHSC will review and consider a request for a transfer. If approved for a transfer request, please note know that the NHSC does not provide any further travel or relocation funding or assistance.

Q. If I am interested in working for the Federal Bureau of Prisons, Indian Health Service, or U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, do I need to possess a license in that state?

A. If you are planning to work at a federal site, a permanent unrestricted license from any state will be acceptable.

Q. Do I have to use a specific moving company if I choose the Self-Move Relocation option?

A. You have the option to use a moving company of your choice if you are using the Self-Move Relocation option; please discuss reimbursable expenses with the travel & relocation coordinators. If you select to use the Government-Managed option, you must use an NHSC-contracted option.

Q. Will the NHSC pay to relocate me back once I have completed my service commitment?

A. The NHSC does not pay for return relocations. This includes awardees that wish to return to the contiguous states after completing their service commitment in the U.S. territories.

Q. What should I do if my name, address or other contact information has changed since I started school?

A. Please notify the NHSC any time your name or contact information changes. These changes can be made through the [Customer Service Portal](#).

Q. Can I continue receiving NHSC scholarship financial assistance while I am serving a residency?

A. The NHSC does not provide financial assistance to scholarship recipients during residency and postgraduate training.

Q. Can I go from an NHSC scholarship-supported PA/NP training program to medical school before serving my NHSC commitment?

A. Your NHSC scholarship contract requires you to fulfill your service commitment upon completion of the health professions degree and/or training for which you received the scholarship.

Q. Can NHSC scholars who have completed their first residency serve a second primary care residency before beginning to fulfill their service commitments?

A. NHSC scholarship recipients must fulfill their service commitments after completing their required residency. Scholarship recipients may be approved for a second primary care residency on a case-by-case basis consistent with the needs of the NHSC. Requests must be submitted by scholarship recipients in their last year of residency training.

Q. I want to specialize in internal medicine, but would also like to sub-specialize. If I am selected to receive the NHSC scholarship, will I be able to do this before serving my obligation to provide clinical primary care services at an NHSC-approved site?

A. NHSC scholars must complete the NHSC service commitment as soon as they have completed required training and education.

Q. What if I change my mind about going into primary care after I have accepted the scholarship or while in residency?

A. Accepting an NHSC scholarship is a serious commitment. If, after graduation, you enter training that is not approved by the NHSC Scholarship Program, or you otherwise fail to comply with your contract, you will be liable for financial damages equal to three times the amount of your scholarship plus interest.

Q. What makes a site eligible for fulfillment of the NHSC service commitment?

A. Sites must apply to and be approved by the NHSC to be considered an NHSC-approved site. To become an NHSC-approved site, the site must meet several eligibility requirements. More information can be found on the [NHSC website](#).