

# Healthcare Professional Reference Guide

## Healthcare Workforce Enhancement Program

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Office of  
**Healthcare**  
— Access —  
**Workforce  
Incentives**

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## Section 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose of the Manual

This Healthcare Professional Reference Manual provides comprehensive guidance for individuals participating in the Healthcare Workforce Enhancement Program (HWEF). It outlines the program's structure, eligibility criteria, service obligations, reporting requirements, and available financial benefits.

This manual serves as both an onboarding resource and a compliance guide to support professionals in successfully completing their service term under HWEF. It ensures participants understand their roles, rights, and responsibilities as outlined in the Alaska Statutes (AS 18.29), Alaska Administrative Code (7 AAC 24), and program policies.

### 1.2 Scope and Use

This manual applies to all healthcare professionals actively participating in HWEF or considering enrollment. It is intended for use throughout the professional's service period and should be referenced regularly to ensure continued compliance with program requirements.

This document is updated periodically. Participants are responsible for referencing the most current version published by the Department of Health.

### 1.3 Program Overview

The Healthcare Workforce Enhancement Program (HWEF) is administered by the Alaska Department of Health, Division of Public Health, Office of Healthcare Access. The program aims to improve access to healthcare across the state by providing financial incentives to qualified healthcare professionals who serve in underserved, rural, or high-need communities.

In exchange for committing to a three-year term of qualified employment, participants may receive:

- **Direct Incentive Payments**, issued quarterly to the healthcare professional, **or**
- **Student Loan Repayment**, issued directly to the loan holder or the professional

All participants must be employed at an approved site and meet minimum service thresholds. Awards vary by tier, service level (full-time or half-time), and position classification (regular or very hard to fill).

### 1.4 Program Contacts

For questions, submissions, or comments, related to HWEF participation, contact:

- **Office of Healthcare Access – Workforce Incentives**
  - **Email** – [oha.wi.info@alaska.gov](mailto:oha.wi.info@alaska.gov)
  - **Phone** – 907-465-4065
  - **Mailing** – 3601 C Street, Suite 300, Anchorage, AK 99503

## Section 2 Program Foundations and Requirements

The Healthcare Workforce Enhancement Program is governed by Alaska statute, administrative code, and state-level policies. This section identifies the legal framework, defines program intent, and outlines the respective responsibilities of the Department of Health, healthcare professionals, and sponsoring employers under HWEP.

### 2.1 Statutory and Regulatory Authority (AS 18.29 & 7 AAC 24)

#### **Alaska Statutes – AS 18.29**

It authorizes the Alaska Department of Health to operate the program, define eligibility criteria, administer incentive awards, and enforce compliance. The statute outlines the structure of service commitments, allowable incentives, and professional participation limits.

#### **Alaska Administrative Code – 7 AAC 24**

7 AAC 24 implements the operational and procedural elements of HWEP. It governs program implementation, site and professional eligibility, reporting requirements, and enforcement actions. Key Provisions include:

- 7 AAC 24.031 – Position classification and service level definitions;
- 7 AAC 24.061 – Administrative fees and payment structures;
- 7 AAC 24.071 – Reporting and documentation requirements;
- 7 AAC 24.081 – Penalties, appeals, and enforcement procedures.

Healthcare professionals are required to comply with both the statute and regulations as conditions of participation in HWEP.

### 2.2 HWEP Goals and Policy Intent

The Healthcare Workforce Enhancement Program supports the long-term improvement of Alaska’s healthcare delivery system by addressing persistent workforce shortages. The program’s objectives include:

- Increasing access to high-quality healthcare for underserved Alaskans;
- Improving staffing stability in critical shortage areas;
- Providing sustainable financial incentives to support long-term service.

### 2.3 Roles and Responsibilities

Participation in HWEP requires coordinated efforts between the Department of Health, healthcare professionals, and participating employers. The table below summarizes primary responsibilities:

Entity	Primary Responsibilities
<b>Department of Health (DOH)</b>	Administers HWEP; evaluates applications; issues payments; monitors compliance; conducts reviews and audits.
<b>Advisory Council</b>	Provides strategic recommendations; identifies workforce shortages; advises on policy and payment adjustments.
<b>Participating Employers</b>	Sponsor eligible professionals; verify credentials; maintain site eligibility; submit documentation; pay quarterly contributions.
<b>Healthcare Professionals</b>	Fulfill service commitments; maintain licensure; comply with reporting; notify DOH of job or site changes.

*Table 1: Roles and Responsibilities*

All program activities must be conducted in alignment with applicable Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs), statutes, administrative code, and HWEP policies.

## Section 3 Eligibility and Application

To participate in HWEP, healthcare professionals must meet specific eligibility criteria, be employed at an approved site, and submit a complete application package. This section outlines qualification standards, service level requirements, and required documentation.

### 3.1 Eligibility Criteria

To qualify for participation in the Healthcare Workforce Enhancement Program (HWEP), professionals must meet the minimum eligibility requirements established by Alaska Statutes (AS 18.29), Alaska Administrative Code (7 AAC 24), and HWEP Policies 1–3.

#### 3.1.1 Citizenship and Residency

The applicant must:

- Be a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident;
- Be domiciled in the State of Alaska for the full duration of HWEP participation.

#### 3.1.2 Eligible Disciplines and Tiers

Eligible disciplines are grouped into three tiers:

##### Tier 1

- Dentists (DDS/DMD)
- Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)
- Pharmacists (Pharm)
- Physicians (MD/DO)
- Psychiatrists (MD/DO)
- Psychologists (PhD)

##### Tier 2

- Behavior Analyst (BCBA)
- Certified Nurse Midwives (CNM)
- Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA)
- Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS)
- Dental Hygienists (DH)
- Licensed Associate Counselors (LAC)
- Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW)
- Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC)
- Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFT)
- Nurse Practitioners (NP)
- Physical Therapist (PT)
- Physician Assistants (PA)
- Registered Nurses (RN)

##### Tier 3

- Non-licensed or paraprofessional roles directly supporting healthcare delivery
- Social or support professionals not otherwise eligible under Tier 1 or 2.

### 3.1.3 Licensure Requirements

- Tier 1 and Tier 2: Must hold active, unrestricted Alaska licensure or an applicable exemption.
- Tier 3: Licensure is not required unless specific to the position.

### 3.1.4 Qualified Employment and Service Levels

To qualify for HWEP, healthcare professionals must be employed at a Department-approved service site listed in their Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), Attachment A. Positions must meet one of two recognized service levels:

- **Full-Time Service** – A minimum of 36 hours per week across at least three service days.
- **Half-Time Service** – A minimum of 20 hours per week across at least two service days.

These service levels determine eligibility for participation and govern the amount of financial award available.

**Note:** Detailed hour thresholds, time-away allowances, and compliance expectations are outlined in Section 4 – Program Participation and Compliance.

### 3.1.5 Loan Repayment Eligibility

To qualify for student loan repayment, the applicant must:

- Have one or more qualifying student loans in their own name;
- Submit a loan statement dated within 30 days and a full loan disbursement history;
- Ensure loans meet the definition under 26 U.S.C. §108(f)(2);
- Not receiving repayment for the same loan through another forgiveness or service program.

Ineligible loan types include:

- Parent PLUS or loans held by someone other than the applicant;
- Consolidated loans that contain non-qualifying debt;
- Personal loans or consumer credit used for relocation, housing, or residency.

Annual loan repayment is capped at 33.3% of the verified loan balance as of the MOA start date.

## 3.2 Sponsorship Requirements

Healthcare professionals may not apply independently. They must be actively employed or conditionally hired by an approved HWEP employer. Sponsorship affirms support for the professional's participation in HWEP.

### 3.2.1 Employer Sponsorship and Documentation

Employers must complete and sign the Employer Sponsorship Form as part of the application. This form must include:

- Verification that the professional meets licensure, residency, and credentialing requirements;
- Confirmation of the professional's start date, role title, and discipline.

The Employer Sponsorship Form must be included with the healthcare professional application and include following attachments:

- Position Description;
- 12-Week Work Hours Schedule;
- Employer Worksites Form;
- Very Hard to Fill Position Request (if applicable).

### 3.3 Application and Required Forms

HWEP operates on a quarterly application cycle. Healthcare professionals must submit a complete application package, including required employer sponsorship, during an active cycle window. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

#### 3.3.1 Application Cycles

HWEP operates on a quarterly application cycle to align review processes, award schedules, and MOA start dates. Each cycle includes a three-month application window, a one-month review period, and a fixed MOA start date.

Cycle	Application Window	Review Period	MOA Start Date
<b>Cycle 1</b>	December 1 – February 28/29	March	April 1
<b>Cycle 2</b>	March 1 – May 31	June	July 1
<b>Cycle 3</b>	June 1 – August 31	September	October 1
<b>Cycle 4</b>	September 1 – November 30	December	January 1 (following year)

Table 2: Application Cycles

**Important:** Late or incomplete applications are automatically deferred to the next available cycle. MOA service start dates are not retroactive.

#### 3.3.2 Required Application Components

To be considered for review, a complete HWEP application must be submitted through the Department’s online portal and include two primary components.

- **HWEP Application Form** must be completed and provide the applicant’s information.
- **Employer Sponsorship Form** and the following attachments: a current Position Description, a 12-Week Work Hours Schedule, a list of all Employer Worksites, and, if applicable, a Very Hard to Fill Position Request.
  - This form must be completed and signed by the employer’s Authorized Representative.

**Note:** Incomplete applications will be rejected and not considered.

#### 3.3.3 Loan Documentation Requirements

All applications for student loan repayment must submit the following for each qualified loan.

- **Account Statement** on official letterhead or secure web portal print out, dated within 30 days of submission, showing the following:
  - Borrower name and full account number;
  - Current principal and interest balance or payoff amount.
- **Disbursement/Loan History Report** on official letterhead or secure web portal print out, showing the following:
  - Borrower name and full account number;
  - Original loan type;
  - Original disbursement date(s) (must predate application);
  - Original principal amount;
  - Statement that funds were for educational expenses.

**Tip:** Most federal loans allow you to download both items from [studentaid.gov](http://studentaid.gov).

## Section 4 Program Participation and Compliance

Once approved, HWEPP participants must fulfill their service obligations in accordance with Alaska Statutes, Administrative Code, and their executed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). This section outlines service expectations, reporting duties, compliance standards, and allowable exceptions.

### 4.1 Service Commitment and Hour Thresholds

HWEPP participants must meet defined weekly and annual service thresholds based on their designated service level.

#### 4.1.1 Full-Time and Half-Time Structures

Service Level	Weekly Minimum	Annual Minimum	Annual Maximum	Allowed Time Away
<b>Full-Time</b>	36 hours per week, in no less than three days	1,592 hours	1,872 hours	Up to 280 hours
<b>Half-Time</b>	20 hours per week, in no less than two days	900 hours	1,040 hours	Up to 140 hours

Table 3: Service Level Requirements

- No more than 12 hours may be credited in any rolling 24-hour period.
- Excess hours beyond the weekly or annual maximum do not carry forward.
- Only hours performed at approved HWEPP sites listed in Attachment A of the MOA are eligible for credit.

#### 4.1.2 Time Away Allowances

Each service level includes an allowable “time away” buffer to account for vacation, illness, training, or other non-service periods. Exceeding the allowed absence limits without a prior Suspension Request will result in proration, compliance warnings, or penalties.

### 4.2 Weekly Schedule and Approved Worksites

All credited work must be performed at approved employer sites listed in Attachment A of the participant’s MOA. Any hours worked at unlisted or non-approved locations will not count toward program requirements.

Participants must maintain a consistent work schedule that:

- Meets their full-time or half-time minimums;
- Spans the minimum number of weekly service days (three for full-time, two for half-time);
- Reflects the work hour limitations described above.

### 4.3 Direct Patient Care Standards

For professionals classified as Tier 1 or Tier 2, a minimum of 50% of all credited hours must involve direct patient care activities, including:

- Clinical services (diagnosis, treatment, medication management);
- Case consultation and coordination;
- Patient follow-up and documentation.

Tier 3 professionals are exempt from this 50% requirement but must demonstrate that their work directly supports access to care in underserved communities.

**Non-clinical activities** such as administrative duties or on-call status without patient contact do not count toward the direct care requirement.

### 4.4 Telehealth Policies

HWEP permits telehealth service hours within limits:

- Up to 75% of total weekly service hours may be delivered via telehealth.
- All telehealth must be conducted from an approved HWEP site.
- Professionals must maintain licensure and comply with all relevant state and federal telemedicine standards.
- Providers must be available for in-person services as clinically necessary.

### 4.5 Absences and Leave Policies

HWEP recognizes that extended absences may occasionally be necessary. Professionals are expected to remain within annual absence limits (280 hours for full-time; 140 for half-time). Exceeding these limits without prior approval constitutes non-compliance.

#### 4.5.1 Suspension Request

If a participant anticipates exceeding the annual time-away limit, they must submit a Suspension Request before reaching the threshold.

Acceptable grounds include:

- Extended medical leave;
- Family or caregiving responsibilities;
- Military deployment;
- Other substantial personal hardship.

#### **Suspension Process:**

1. Submit the Suspension Request form with documentation.
2. Await Department review and written approval.
3. If approved, an MOA amendment will pause the service term for up to 12 months.

Incentive payments are suspended during an approved leave period. Service credit resumes only upon formal reinstatement.

## 4.6 Dual Program Participation Restrictions

Participants may not hold a simultaneous service obligation under another loan repayment or incentive program covering the same time period, except in the following cases:

- U.S. Armed Forces Reserves,
- Alaska National Guard, State Defense Force, or Naval Militia,
- Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service.

Bonuses such as employer-sponsored sign-on, retention, or performance incentives are allowed and do not conflict with HWEF participation.

## 4.7 Reporting Requirements

Participants and employers must meet strict documentation and reporting requirements to remain in good standing.

### 4.7.1 QWR Review and Approval

Each calendar quarter:

- The employer must complete and submit a QWR within 30 days of quarter-end.
- The healthcare professional must review and approve the QWR before incentive or loan repayment disbursement.

The QWR includes:

- Weekly hours worked (total, direct care, and telehealth);
- Worksite location(s);
- Caseload demographics and payer mix.

Payments will be withheld for any quarter lacking a complete and approved QWR.

### 4.7.2 Notification of Separation

Participants and employer must notify the Department within 10 business days of an employment separation, either voluntary or involuntary.

#### Notification Process

1. Submit a Notice of Employment Separation form or written notice to the Department.
2. Include the effective date, reason for separation or change, and any relevant documentation.
3. Await Department review. The MOA may be amended, suspended, or terminated based on the nature of the change.

Failure to notify the Department may result in retroactive non-compliance findings or financial penalties.

## Section 5 Awards and Payment Process

HWEP provides financial incentives to participating healthcare professionals in the form of either direct quarterly payments or student loan repayment. This section outlines the types of awards available, payment calculation methods, disbursement timelines, and conditions that may delay or reduce payments.

### 5.1 Award Types: Direct Incentive vs. Loan Repayment

Participants may receive only one award type per MOA term, based on their employer's sponsorship and the participant's loan status.

#### 5.1.1 Direct Incentive

Direct incentive awards are quarterly cash payments issued to the healthcare professional. These are taxable and must be reported by the recipient.

#### 5.1.2 Student Loan Repayment

Loan repayment awards are paid directly to the loan servicer or directly to the professional for the sole purpose of repaying qualified educational debt. These payments may be tax-exempt under 26 U.S.C. §108(f)(2) if the statutory criteria are met.

**Note:** Loan repayment awards are supplemental payments; the professional remains responsible for making regularly scheduled payments. The Department shall not be responsible for late payments.

#### 5.1.3 Award Structure

Awards amounts are determined based on three key factors:

- **Tier** – Based on discipline;
- **Service Level** – Full-time or half-time;
- **Position Classification:** Regular or Very Hard to Fill.

Tier	Service Level	Regular Position	Very Hard-to-Fill Position
Tier 1	Full-Time	\$35,000/annually	\$47,250/annually
	Half-Time	\$17,500/annually	\$23,625/annually
Tier 2	Full-Time	\$20,000/annually	\$27,000/annually
	Half-Time	\$10,000/annually	\$13,500/annually
Tier 3	Full-Time	\$15,000/annually	\$20,250/annually
	Half-Time	\$7,500/annually	\$10,125/annually

Table 4: Award Structure

#### Loan Repayment Limit

Annual loan repayment is limited to 33.3% of the verified loan balance at the time of MOA execution.

## 5.2 Payment Schedule and Dependencies

Payments are issued quarterly, contingent on:

- Submission and professional approval of the Quarterly Work Report (QWR);
- Receipt of the full employer contribution;
- Continued professional compliance with all MOA and program requirements.

Service Period	QWR Due	Employer Payment Due	Incentive Issued
Jan 1 – Mar 31	Apr 30	May 30	June 30
Apr 1 – Jun 30	Jul 31	Aug 31	Sept 30
Jul 1 – Sep 30	Oct 31	Nov 30	Dec 31
Oct 1 – Dec 31	Jan 31	Feb 28	Mar 31

Table 5: Payment Schedule

## 5.3 Delays due to Missing Documentation or Employer Payment

Delays in payment may result from:

- Late or incomplete Quarterly Work Reports;
- Employer failure to submit required payments or forms;
- Unresolved non-compliance issues;
- Missing or outdated loan documentation (for loan repayment participants).

Participants will be notified of any documentation or compliance issue that affects payment processing. The Department will not issue partial or estimated payments.

## Section 6 Optional Requests and Modifications

Throughout the course of participation, healthcare professionals may encounter circumstances that require changes to their original HWEF agreement. This section outlines the processes for requesting changes to service level, taking extended leave, updating personal information, or seeking a waiver of obligations due to hardship or permanent inability to serve.

### 6.1 Change of Service Level

Participants may request to change from full-time to half-time service, or vice versa, based on personal or professional circumstances. Service level changes affect award amounts and will require an amendment to the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

**Examples of qualifying reasons:**

- Medical or behavioral health needs;
- Family caregiving obligations;
- Educational or licensure-related demands;
- Site workload adjustments.

**Process:**

1. Submit a Change of Service Level Request Form via the online portal;
2. Include justification and a proposed effective date;
3. Employer must endorse the change;
4. The Department will issue an amended MOA if approved.

Changes are not retroactive and take effect only after Department approval.

### 6.2 Suspension Request

See [Section 4.5.1](#).

### 6.3 Personal and Contact Information Updates

Professionals must keep their contact and mailing information current throughout the program term. Changes in name, mailing address, phone number, or email must be reported within 10 business days.

**Process:**

1. Submit a Personal Information Update Form via the online portal.
2. Include both current and updated contact information.

## 6.4 Waiver Requests (Disability, Hardship, etc.)

In rare circumstances, professionals may request a waiver from their HWEP obligation due to:

- A permanent medical condition that prevents continued service, or
- An extreme personal hardship that renders further participation infeasible.

**Process:**

1. Submit a Waiver Request Form via the online portal.
2. Provide a clear written explanation and supporting documentation (e.g., medical certification, legal paperwork).
3. The Department will review and determine whether to release the participant from remaining obligations.

Approved waivers result in formal closure of the MOA. Partial service credit and award proration will apply. Submission does not guarantee approval.

## Section 7 Non-Compliance and Termination

HWEP participants are required to meet all service, reporting, licensure, and contractual obligations outlined in their Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). Failure to meet these obligations may result in disciplinary action, financial penalties, and termination from the program.

### 7.1 Non-Compliance Conditions

A healthcare professional may be found non-compliant for any of the following:

- **Failure to Meet Service Requirements** – Not meeting weekly or annual service hour thresholds or direct patient care minimums;
- **Employment Separation** – Voluntary or involuntary termination before the MOA obligation is fulfilled;
- **Unapproved Absence** – Exceeding annual time-away limits without an approved Suspension Request;
- **Simultaneous Participation** – Participation in another service-based repayment or incentive program not exempted by HWEP;
- **Licensure or Certification Issues** – Loss, expiration, or suspension of licensure or certification required for service;
- **Documentation Failure** – Not submitting required documents by specified deadlines.

### 7.2 Penalties and Enforcement

Depending on the nature and severity of the violation, the Department may impose any of the following actions:

- **Suspension of Incentive Payments** – Pending resolution of the issue;
- **Civil Penalties** – Up to \$1,000 per violation, as authorized by AS 18.29.105(d);
- **Repayment of Benefits** – Any funds disbursed in error or due to non-compliance must be returned;
- **Breach Determination** – A formal designation of program breach, triggering further enforcement or disqualification.

### 7.3 MOA Termination Procedures

#### 7.3.1 Department-Initiated Termination

The Department may terminate a professional’s MOA for cause or other allowable reasons, including but not limited to:

- **For Breach of MOA:** Termination due to violation of terms.
  - **Disqualification:** Professionals terminated for breach will be classified as Not in Good Standing and are ineligible for future participation in HWEP or similar programs. This status may be disclosed to other programs or professional entities upon request.
- **In the Best Interest of the State:** Termination may occur with 30 days’ notice if necessary to protect the program’s integrity or resources.
- **Upon Death:** The MOA is canceled without further obligation in the event of the professional’s death.

### 7.3.2 Professional-Initiated Termination

A healthcare professional may withdraw from the program without penalty only if the request is submitted prior to the effective date of the MOA. Any withdrawal after this date constitutes a breach.

## 7.4 Appeal and Reconsideration Process

Professionals have the right to appeal adverse decisions related to eligibility, penalties, or termination.

### Steps for Appeal:

1. Initial Appeal must be submitted within 30 calendar days of the date of the DOH decision letter. The appeal must include:
  - a. A copy of the contested decision;
  - b. A written justification citing errors of fact, policy, or procedure;
  - c. Supporting documentation.
2. Reconsideration Request may be submitted if the initial appeal is denied. This must also be filed within 30 days and addressed to the Commissioner of Health.

The Commissioner’s decision is final and concludes the administrative review process.

**Note:** Use the Appeals and Reconsideration Request Form, available through the official HWEP online portal.

## Section 8 Healthcare Professional Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

All healthcare professionals participating in HWEP must execute a Healthcare Professional Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Alaska Department of Health. The MOA is a legally binding document that outlines the terms, conditions, and service obligations of the participant under state statute, regulation, and program policy.

### 8.1 MOA Characteristics

The Healthcare Professional MOA is not an employment contract. Employment terms such as salary, benefits, and working conditions are solely between the professional and employer and are not subject to Department oversight.

All HWEP participation requirements, including service level, site eligibility, incentive terms, and compliance obligations are governed exclusively by the Department.

### 8.2 Amendments

Amendments to the Healthcare Professional MOA must be executed in writing and signed by all parties, unless the amendment pertains solely to a professional's suspension due to employment separation, in which case the employer's signature is not required. Amendments are mandatory for changes in:

- Service level or duration;
- Approved sites;
- Role or employment status;
- Payment schedule or financial award.

### 8.3 Monitoring and Enforcement

The Department will regularly monitor Healthcare Professional MOA compliance through documentation review, reporting, and employer communication. Any discrepancies may result in suspension, penalties, or termination of the agreement.