

NURSE Corps Scholarship Program

Fiscal Year 2015 Application and Program Guidance March 2015

Application Submission Deadline: May 21, 2015, 7:30 pm EST

For Questions, please call 1-800-221-9393 (TTY: 1-877-897-9910), or email GetHelp@hrsa.gov, Monday through Friday (except Federal holidays) 8:00 am to 8:00 pm.

Authority: Section 846(d) of the Public Health Service Act (42 United States Code 297(n)(d), as amended.. Future changes in the governing statute, implementing regulations and Program Guidances may also be applicable to your participation in the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program (formerly known as the Nursing Scholarship Program).



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Privacy Act Notification Statement

General

This information is provided pursuant to the Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-579), as amended, for individuals supplying information for inclusion in a system of records.

Statutory Authority

Section 846(d) of the Public Health Service Act (42 United States Code 297n(d)), as amended.

Purposes and Uses

The purpose of the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program, formerly known as the Nursing Scholarship Program, is to provide scholarships to nursing students in exchange for a minimum 2 year full-time service commitment (or part-time equivalent), at an eligible health care facility with a critical shortage of nurses. The information an applicant provides will be used to evaluate eligibility for participating in the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program. In addition, information from other sources will be considered (e.g., credit bureau reports).

A participant's contract, application, required supplemental forms, supporting documentation, correspondences and related data are maintained in a system of records to be used within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to monitor NURSE Corps Scholarship Program-related activities. The information may also be disclosed outside the Department, as permitted by the Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act, to the Congress, the National Archives, the Government Accountability Office, and pursuant to court order and various routine uses (see <http://www.hrsa.gov/about/privacyact/09150037.html>).

Effects of Nondisclosure

Disclosure of the information sought is voluntary; however, if not submitted, except for the replies to questions related to Race/Ethnicity of the online application, an application will be considered incomplete and therefore will not be considered for an award under this announcement.

Paperwork Reduction Act Public Burden Statement

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a current Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. The current OMB control number for information collected through this application process is 0915-0301 and expires 8/31/2015. The public reporting burden for this collection is estimated to average 5 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to HRSA Reports Clearance Office, 5600 Fishers Lane, Room 10C-03, Rockville, Maryland 20857.

Discrimination Prohibited

In accordance with applicable Federal laws, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is prohibited from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion or disability.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

What is the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program?

The purpose of the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program is to provide scholarships to nursing students in exchange for a minimum 2-year full-time service commitment (or part-time equivalent), at an eligible health care facility with a critical shortage of nurses. Scholarships are awarded competitively and consist of payment for tuition, required school fees, Other Reasonable Costs (as defined on page 12) and a monthly support stipend.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to explore the types of nursing opportunities that exist in critical shortage facilities before applying to the program.

Up to fifty percent of NURSE Corps Scholarship Program funds will be made available for nurse practitioners (NPs) to address key issues pertaining to the expanding need for health care.

What are the benefits of the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program?

- (1) Service: NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants will have the opportunity to increase access to care by delivering nursing services in eligible health care facilities with a critical shortage of nurses.
- (2) Scholarship: NURSE Corps Scholarship Program provides the following:
 - a. Funds to support nursing school tuition and fees;
 - b. An annual payment for Other Reasonable Costs to cover expenses for books, clinical supplies, and instruments; and
 - c. Monthly stipends to cover living expenses.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Am I eligible?

To be eligible for a scholarship, a NURSE Corps Scholarship Program applicant must:

- (1) Be a U.S. citizen (either U.S. born or naturalized), U.S. national, or a Lawful Permanent Resident.

Please note: A driver's license and social security card are NOT acceptable documentation of US citizenship. For a list of acceptable documentation please view page 33.

- (2) Be enrolled or accepted for enrollment as a full-time or part-time student in an accredited nursing degree program at one of the following:

AN ASSOCIATE DEGREE SCHOOL OF NURSING: A department, division, or other administrative unit in a junior college, community college, college, or university which provides primarily or exclusively a two-year program of education in professional nursing and allied subjects leading to an associate degree in nursing or to an equivalent degree and is an accredited program.

A COLLEGIATE SCHOOL OF NURSING: A department, division, or the administrative unit in a college or university which provides primarily or exclusively a program of education in professional nursing and related subjects leading to a degree of bachelor of arts, bachelor of science, bachelor of nursing, graduate degree in nursing, or to an equivalent degree, and including advanced training related to such program of education provided by such school and is an accredited program.

A DIPLOMA SCHOOL OF NURSING: A school affiliated with a hospital or university, or an independent school, which provides primarily or exclusively a program of education in professional nursing and allied subjects leading to a diploma or to an equivalent evidence of completion and is an accredited program.

Accredited Program. The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program considers a nursing program to be accredited if it is accredited by a national or regional nurse education accrediting agency or state approval agency recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. For a complete list of nursing accreditation agencies recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, please visit: <http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/Agencies.aspx>

- (3) Is enrolled in or accepted for enrollment in a school of nursing (as outlined above) located in a state, the District of Columbia, or a U.S. Territory.

Located in a State, the District of Columbia, or a U.S. Territory. The schools and educational programs for which scholarship support is requested must be in one of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Territory of Guam, the Territory of American Samoa, the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, or the Federated States of Micronesia. A student attending a school outside of these areas is not eligible for the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program, even though the student may be a citizen/national/lawful permanent resident of the United States.

- (4) Begin taking classes for the nursing degree program in which you are enrolled or accepted on or before September 30, 2015.
- (5) Submit a complete application and signed contract applicant will be deemed ineligible if the applicant:
- (1) Has any judgment liens against his or her property arising from a debt owed to the United States;
 - (2) Defaulted on a prior service obligation to the Federal government, a State or local government, or other entity, even if the applicant subsequently satisfied that obligation through service, monetary payment, or other means.
 - (3) Is excluded, debarred, suspended, or disqualified by a Federal Agency; OR

(4) **Has an existing service obligation.** An applicant who is already obligated to a Federal, State, or other entity for professional practice or service after academic training is not eligible for a NURSE Corps Scholarship Program award. An exception may be made if the entity to which the obligation is owed provides documentation that there is no potential conflict in fulfilling the service commitment to the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program and that the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program service commitment will be served first. A NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant who subsequently enters into another service commitment and is not immediately available after completion of the participant's degree to fulfill his/her NURSE Corps Scholarship Program service commitment will be subject to the breach-of-contract provisions described on page 26. The applicant may still apply as long as all service obligations are completed by the date the applicant submits the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program application.

FUNDING AWARDS

How does the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program determine which applicants will receive scholarships?

Among eligible applicants, the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program determines scholarship awardees utilizing funding preferences and selection factors.

Funding Preferences

There is a funding preference for applicants of greatest financial need. An applicant's financial need is determined based on the applicant's Expected Family Contribution (EFC), which is provided on the Official Student Aid Report (SAR) generated through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Applicants with an EFC between \$0 and \$5,158 will be considered as having the greatest financial need. The FAFSA's SAR is calculated by the Department of Education and NOT by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program.

Among qualified applicants with the greatest financial need (i.e., applicants with an EFC between \$0 and \$5,158):

First Funding Preference will be given to qualified applicants who are enrolled or accepted for enrollment in an accredited diploma, undergraduate nursing program or approved NURSE Corps Scholarship Program graduate level **nurse practitioner** program registered as full-time students for every consecutive term. **In the past, NURSE Corps Scholarship Program funds have been sufficient to reach applicants in the first funding preference only.**

Second Funding Preference will be given to qualified applicants who are enrolled or accepted for enrollment in an accredited graduate nursing program for Doctor of Nursing Practice programs, programs for certified nurse midwives, certified registered nurse anesthetists, or clinical nurse specialists as full-time students for consecutive terms.

Third Funding Preference will be given to qualified applicants who are enrolled or accepted for enrollment in an accredited diploma, undergraduate or graduate nursing program as part-time students as determined by school's registrar. Instances where students may be

enrolled in the maximum credits allowable by their programs but whose credit load falls below a level deemed acceptable by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program may be considered part-time enrollment.

To the extent that funds remain available, all other applicants will be considered in the order of decreasing financial need.

Selection Factors

The following selection factors will be considered when determining scholarship awardees:

- (1) **A history of not honoring a prior legal obligation.** A NURSE Corps Scholarship Program applicant who has a history of not honoring a prior legal obligation, as evidenced by one or more of the following factors, may not be selected for an award:
 - a. Default on any Federal payment obligations (e.g., student loans, Federal income tax liabilities, mortgages, etc.) or non-Federal payment obligations (e.g., court-ordered child support payments); OR
 - b. Write off of any Federal or non-Federal debt as uncollectible.
- (2) **Academic performance.** Demonstrates the ability to excel and maintain an acceptable level of academic standing in school.
- (3) **Response to essay questions.** Demonstrates a thorough commitment to a career in nursing; interest/motivation in providing care to underserved communities; and relevant work experience and/or activities (i.e., community service, research, and internships) that have prepared the applicant to work with underserved populations.
- (4) **Resume/Curriculum Vitae.** Summarizes educational qualifications, work experience, and volunteer/community service in chronological order.
- (5) **Recommendation letters.** Provides a detailed description of the applicant's performance in school; education/work achievements; community/civic or other non-academic achievements; demonstration of cultural awareness and ability to work and communicate constructively with others from diverse backgrounds; and interest and motivation to serve underserved populations through work experience, course work, special projects and research.

How many awards does the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program expect to give?

For the 2015-2016 academic year, the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program is expected to be highly competitive. The program anticipates more applicants for scholarship awards than there are funds available. It is expected that approximately 225 awards will be made for the 2015-2016 academic year. In the past, NURSE Corps Scholarship Program funds have been sufficient to reach applicants in the first funding preference. Below is a table of the award history for previous years.

Award History

Fiscal Year	# of Eligible Applications Received	# of Initial Awards Made	# of Continuations Made
2014	2,467	242	13
2013	2639	239	21
2012	2030	233	31

Once an applicant has been selected for an award, the applicant will be provided with information for logging into the BHW Program Portal. This web-based system will allow NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants to communicate with the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program and to manage several customer service inquiries, such as contact information changes. The Program Portal is available at <https://programportal.hrsa.gov/>.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTRACT AND LENGTH OF THE SERVICE COMMITMENT

How many years of school does the contract cover?

The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program award and contract is for the 2015-2016 academic year (July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016). Any funding provided after June 30, 2016, is considered another contract year. Any additional school years (Optional Contracts) requested by the applicant and agreed to by the Secretary or his/her designee is indicated in the executed contracts. Support will be provided during the academic years agreed to in the executed contracts (not to exceed 4 years), beginning with the 2015-2016 academic year and will be based on the cost of the initial school of record (i.e., the school attended at the time the initial contract is executed). Application funding may not be deferred. Awards are for consecutive academic terms.

Can I request additional scholarship support after I receive my award?

Additional scholarship support will only be provided for the same nursing degree that the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant's original contract funded. To request additional scholarship support for the 2016-2017 or any subsequent academic years, the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant must submit a signed contract for that academic year and a report verifying that he/she is still in an acceptable level of academic standing. The participant may also request optional contracts for subsequent academic years while pursuing the same nursing degree, program, and specialty on the original contract through graduation for a maximum of 4 academic years of support. The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will notify the participant when this submission is due.

The granting of continuation awards depends upon the availability of funds for the NURSE Corps SP and is contingent upon the participant's:

- (1) Continued eligibility to participate in the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program (e.g., acceptable level of academic standing, not repeating coursework, etc.). Please be advised that a credit check will be conducted as part of the eligibility process;
- (2) Compliance with policies and procedures established by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program for requesting continued support; AND

(3) Past compliance with program policies and requirements.

Participants requesting continued support must be able to financially support themselves until the scholarship benefit payment schedule can be reinstated. If a continuation award is granted, the first payment may not be received until mid-November but will include stipends retroactive to July 1 and the annual Other Reasonable Costs (ORC) payment. See page 14 for more information.

Can I terminate my NURSE Corps Scholarship Program contract?

The Secretary of Health and Human Services or his/her designee may terminate a NURSE Corps SP contract for an academic year if the participant, on or before June 1 of the school year: (1) submits a written request to terminate his/her contract for that academic year; and (2) repays all amounts paid to, or on behalf of, that participant (tuition, stipends and Other Reasonable Cost) for that academic year.

If a scholarship participant does not meet these requirements, he/she will incur a minimum 2-year service commitment for the full or partial year of support received, as set forth in the “Program Requirements” Section of this Guidance on page 11.

How long is my service commitment?

All participants incur, at a minimum, a 2-year full-time service obligation (or part-time equivalent) and may have a longer service obligation, as set forth below.

Participants who sign “Full-Time Student” contracts incur an obligation to provide one year of full-time service for each full or partial school year of support received beyond two years as set forth in the table below. For example, a student who receives a full year of support (12 months) the first school year, a partial year of support (6 months) the second school year, and a full year of support the third school year will owe the equivalent of 3 years of full-time clinical service. If a participant receives support for one year or less, there is still an obligation to serve two years.

Years of Scholarship Support	Years of Service Obligation
Up to 1 Full-Time School Year (2015-2016)	2 Years Full-Time
Up to 2 Full-Time School Years (2015-2017)	2 Years Full-Time
Up to 3 Full-Time School Years (2015-2018)	3 Years Full-Time
Up to 4 Full-Time School Years (2015-2019)	4 Years Full-Time

Participants who sign “Part-Time Student” contracts will have their part-time enrollment aggregated to determine the full-time equivalent.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

What are the requirements while I am in school?

- (1) **Maintain Enrollment.** The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant must maintain enrollment in the nursing program until the program is complete. Every NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant must verify their enrollment status through the Program Portal for each term (semester, quarter). In this process, an appropriate school official must certify the participant's full-time (part-time, if approved) enrollment, and submit a list of the courses and credit hours each term for which the Nurse Corps Scholarship Program will receive an invoice and describe the tuition and fees. The participant must also upload an unofficial transcript. Participants who fail to complete and submit their enrollment verification through the Program Portal each academic term could jeopardize their scholarship and stipend. Participants not in compliance may be recommended for default.
- (2) **Maintain an Acceptable Level of Academic Standing.** A scholarship participant must be in an acceptable level of academic standing, or the level at which a student retains eligibility to continue attending school under the school's standards and practices, for the duration of the academic year. Applicants on academic probation are not considered to be in an acceptable level of academic standing by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program.
- (3) **Notify NURSE Corps Scholarship Program of Any Changes in Enrollment Status.** A participant is required to notify the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program through the Program Portal as soon as one of the following events is anticipated:
 - a. Repeat course work for which the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program has already made payments;
 - b. A change in the applicant's graduation date;
 - c. A leave of absence approved by the school;
 - d. Withdrawal or dismissal from school;
 - e. A change from full-time student status as determined by the school's registrar, to a less than full-time student status for participants who sign "Full-Time Student" Contracts (a change from part-time student status for participants who sign "Part-Time Student" Contracts).
 - f. Voluntary withdrawal from courses during an academic term; OR
 - g. A transfer to another school or program.

These events could have an adverse impact on a participant's receipt of NURSE Corps Scholarship Program payments. Participants may be placed in default and may have to repay the support they received.

What happens if I have a change in enrollment status?

A change in enrollment status can result in a reduction or discontinuation of benefits (See *Changes in Scholarship Payment* on page 16). A participant is required to notify the Nurse Corps Scholarship Program promptly through the Program Portal as soon as one of the events listed above is anticipated. If a change in enrollment status has already occurred, the participant must submit a letter through the Program Portal from the school verifying that the change has occurred.

Please be advised that if the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program has any questions concerning a participant's eligibility for continued support, the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program may delay the payment of all benefits to that participant pending clarification of the participant's continuing eligibility and status.

TUITION, REQUIRED FEES, OTHER REASONABLE COSTS, AND STIPEND

The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program uses a Data Collection Worksheet (DCW) to collect information on tuition, fees, and student expenses for the current and upcoming school years. A school official will be asked to complete a DCW for each applicant considered for an award. This information will be used to determine award calculations including: Annual Tuition (both In-state and Out-of-state), Eligible Program Fees, Books, and Other Reasonable Costs (e.g., Clinical Supplies/Instruments, and Uniforms) for the entire academic year (including estimated summer fees). If the school official does not complete the DCW, program participants may experience delays in the process of their future tuition payments to their institutions.

Please note, once submitted, information on the DCW cannot be changed after the award is made.

Please ensure that school officials are aware of NURSE Corps Scholarship Program specific invoicing and payment requirements. All educational institutions will be required to submit an invoice to the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program for the payment of tuition and eligible fees for each term that the student is enrolled. All funds will be disbursed electronically; therefore, each institution must make sure they are registered with the System for Award Management (SAM) at the following web address: www.sam.gov.

The first payment for new NURSE Corps Scholarship Program awardees will be made no later than November 2015 and will include stipend payments retroactive to July 1, 2015, and the annual payment for Other Reasonable Costs.

What costs does the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program cover?

1. Tuition and Required Fees
 - a. **Tuition and eligible required fees will be paid directly to the nursing school.** The nursing school or the school's authorized financial office must submit an invoice to the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program for payment of tuition and fees for each term. Any fees on the invoice that are included in the Other Reasonable Costs (discussed below) will not be approved for payment to the nursing school.
 - b. **Summer sessions.** NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will only pay tuition and fees for required courses in summer school sessions when (1) summer session is an academic term normally required by the school for all students in the same program and (2) the summer session is in progress during the participant's contract period.
 - c. **Repeated coursework.** The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will not pay tuition and fees for repeated coursework for which the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program has previously made a payment (e.g., cost of the repeated course, overload fees). If the repeated course work does not delay the participant's graduation date, the scholarship payments for other tuition and fees may continue. The decision to

continue scholarship payments while a participant is repeating coursework will be made at the discretion of the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program. Participants who must repeat coursework should immediately contact the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program via the Program Portal or risk losing their monthly stipend payments.

- d. **Increases in tuition or required fees.** Payments for any increases in tuition or required fees that are reported by the school after the award has been made are not guaranteed and are subject to the availability of funds.
- e. **Attending more than one school.** For participants enrolled in programs that require taking classes at more than one school/campus, please be advised that payments will only be made to other institutions which have degree program agreements with the nursing institution as indicated on the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program application and only for courses required as part of the degree program.
- f. **The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will pay for ONLY the courses that are required for graduation.** The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will not pay for additional courses beyond those required for graduation. Also, the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will not pay for tuition costs or fees unrelated to the degree/program, such as membership dues for student societies/associations, loan processing fees, penalty or late fees, and other similar expenses.
- g. **Transfers to other academic institutions are strongly discouraged.** Transfers to other academic institutions are strongly discouraged once the applicant has been accepted into the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program. Transfers will be considered on a case-by-case basis and only for exceptional circumstances. Transfers must be approved by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program in advance to ensure continued eligibility for funding. Scholarship awards are based on the cost of attendance at the initial school of record for all school year contracts executed during the FY 2015 application cycle. If a transfer is approved, the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will not cover any increase in tuition and/or fees for the new institution; the participant will be responsible for the difference. Changes in type of nursing program **will not** be approved.

2. Other Reasonable Costs (ORC)

- a. The ORC is an additional, annual payment provided directly to each NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant to assist in the payment of books, clinical supplies/instruments, and uniforms. This information is obtained directly from the institution and is determined independently for each application. ORC payments will vary from student to student depending on the student's program and graduation date.
- b. The ORC payment will be reduced proportionately for students who plan to attend less than a full school year (e.g., December graduates) and for part-time students.

3. Stipend Amount

- a. During the 2015-2016 academic year, the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will pay each full-time student a monthly amount of \$1,316.00 (before Federal taxes). A part-time student will receive a proportionately reduced stipend amount.

- b. The stipend payments may be delayed or placed on hold if requested NURSE Corps Scholarship Program documents—invoices, enrollment verification forms, transcripts, etc.—have not been received. Stipend payments may also be stopped if a student is repeating coursework that has already been paid for by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program. (See “Changes in Scholarship Payments” on page 16 for more information.)
- c. Stipend payments will stop the month the nursing course work is completed or when the contract ends, whichever comes first.

Receipt of the stipend payment does not mean that the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant is employed by the Federal Government or participates in any of the benefits available to Federal employees.

NURSE CORPS Scholarship Program TAX ADVISORY

The ENTIRE NURSE Corps Scholarship Program award is taxable.

Although the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program does NOT withhold Federal, State, or local income taxes from a scholar’s tuition and fees, the scholar DOES owe taxes on the value of the ENTIRE AWARD.

The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program does withhold Federal income taxes owed on the stipend payments and ORC (based on information provided by the participant on the W-4, Employee’s Withholding Allowance Certificate), but please note that State and/or local taxes are not withheld from stipend and ORC payments.

Any participant who wants additional funds withheld from the stipend amount to cover the income tax on his or her tuition and fees should indicate the additional amount to be deducted on the appropriate line on the W-4. It is the participant’s responsibility to ensure that federal income tax is paid on the full amount of the award.

Each year, participants will receive a 1099-Miscellaneous Income form for amounts paid for tuition and fees and a W-2-Wage and Tax Statement form for amounts paid for stipends and ORC.

NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants should consult their local tax authority regarding applicable federal, state or local taxes for which they may be liable.

What if I have additional funding provided by an alternative source?

Receipt of the Nurse Corps Scholarship Program award does not automatically preclude an applicant from receiving funds from other programs, as long as no service obligation is involved. However, many student assistance programs are based on the applicant’s financial need, or may be limited to the payment of expenses already paid by HRSA. Applicants should contact their financial aid officer to determine how the receipt of a Nurse Corps Scholarship Program award may affect them.

(1) *Financial Aid Received Before Notice of Award.*

Grants and Scholarships. If tuition and fees for the academic year have been paid by another source of financial aid (e.g., Pell Grant, state grants or other scholarships) before the student received notice of the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program award, then the school may return payments to the funding source and submit an invoice to the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program for payment.

Loans. If a new NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant has taken out a student loan to cover the cost of tuition and fees for their summer and/or fall 2015 semester(s), while waiting for notice of a NURSE Corps Scholarship Program award, the student's academic institution should supply an itemized invoice to the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program showing the amount of tuition and fees paid for with that student loan. The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will pay that amount to the academic institution to cover the tuition costs covered by the loan. After the fall 2015 semester, the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will not pay tuition and fee costs covered by any student loans.

- (2) *Financial Aid Received After Notice of Award.* If a student receives financial aid to pay tuition and fees from sources other than NURSE Corps Scholarship Program after he or she has received notice of the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program award, the school will be instructed not to submit an invoice to the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program for costs that have already been covered by the other source of financial aid. If the other source of financial aid covers the full cost of tuition and fees, the school should submit documentation stating that it will not be seeking payment for the term. However, if a balance remains, then the school may submit an invoice for the balance remaining. Please note this section only relates to financial aid/loans that are used for tuition and fees. The amount of the student's NURSE Corps Scholarship Program award is not affected if the student collects financial aid/loans for non-tuition expenses such as cost of living expenses. However, the invoice must demonstrate the use of the financial aid/loan before NURSE Corp Scholarship Program determines the amount to pay for tuition and fees.

CHANGES IN SCHOLARSHIP PAYMENTS

What situations impact the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program's payment of tuition and/or stipend?

- (1) **Changes in Enrollment Status.** A change in enrollment status may result in a discontinuation of benefits. A participant is required to promptly notify the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program, through the Program Portal, if one of the events listed below is anticipated. If a change in enrollment status has already occurred, the participant must submit a letter from the school verifying the status change through the Program Portal.
- a. Repeat course work for which the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program has already made payments. The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program may continue payments for stipends and all other non-repeated course work, provided that the participant continues to meet the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program requirements;

- b. A change in the participant's graduation date;
- c. A leave of absence approved by the school. All payments will be discontinued;
- d. A withdrawal or dismissal from school. All payments will be discontinued;
- e. A change from full-time student status to a less than full-time student status for a participant who signs a "Full-Time Student" Contract. All benefits may be discontinued. An exception may be made if the participant is in his or her final academic term. In such instances, a participant with a student status change may receive scholarship support as long as the participant maintains enrollment and an acceptable level of academic standing and does not change the graduation date.
- f. A voluntary withdrawal from courses during an academic term. All payments will be discontinued; OR
- g. A transfer to another school or nursing program (See below).

(2) **Changes in Schools/Programs.** Changes in schools or nursing programs are strongly discouraged once the applicant has been accepted into the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program. Changes in schools/programs must be approved in advance by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program to ensure continued eligibility for funding and will be considered only for exceptional circumstances. Scholarship awards are based on the cost of attendance at the initial school of record for all school year contracts executed during the FY 2015 application cycle. If a transfer is approved, the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will not cover any increase in tuition and/or fees for the new institution; the participant will be responsible for the difference. Changes in type of nursing program and type of degree program (i.e., RN or NP) **will not** be approved. Participants must perform their Service Obligation in the degree program for which they were awarded.

(3) **Delinquent Federal and State Debt.** Under the Treasury Offset Program, the U.S. Treasury Department is authorized to offset a student's NURSE Corps Scholarship Program payments if the student is delinquent on a Federal debt. In addition, the Treasury Department is authorized to offset NURSE Corps Scholarship Program payments for application to the student's State debts, including delinquent child support payments.

(4) **NURSE Corps Scholarship Program Overpayments.** NURSE Corps Scholarship Program payments received by a participant, including payments made to a school on the participant's behalf, during the periods while the participant is on an approved leave of absence, is repeating course work, or is otherwise ineligible to receive payments are considered overpayments. Overpayments may also occur due to administrative error. A participant receiving an overpayment should immediately contact the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program through the Program Portal to make arrangements to promptly return all overpayments and avoid interest accrual and debt collection procedures.

Debt collection procedures include: sending delinquent overpayments to a debt collection agency, reporting the overpayments to credit reporting agencies, offsetting Federal and/or State payments due to the participant (e.g., IRS income tax refund) to collect the overpayments, recovery through Administrative Wage Garnishment, and/or referral of the overpayments to the Department of Justice for enforced collection. For participants who receive subsequent funding under the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program and who previously received any overpayments which have not been repaid, the overpayments will be collected through administrative offset. The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will withhold scholarship funds payable to, or on behalf of, the participant (including stipends, ORC payments, and, if necessary, tuition payments) until the overpayment owed is paid in full. Administrative offset is not a repayment option for NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants who wish to terminate a contract.

- (5) **Resumption of Benefits.** To resume benefits discontinued under existing scholarship contracts, NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants must submit documentation from their school official confirming that they are now eligible to receive scholarship support (e.g., not repeating course work, returned from a leave of absence, resumed full-time student status, etc.). Requests for the resumption of scholarship benefits should be sent to the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program via the Customer Support Portal. They will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program to determine the participant's eligibility to receive continuing funds. For participants who have not repaid overpayments previously received, the resumption of scholarship benefits will be subject to the administrative offset described in the *NURSE Corps Scholarship Program Overpayments* Section above. For participants whose benefits were discontinued due to their withdrawal or dismissal from school or due to their transfer to an ineligible program or school, benefits will not be resumed.

- (6) **Veteran Benefits.** Educational benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (G.I. Bill) generally continue along with NURSE Corps Scholarship Program funds, if awarded, since Veteran benefits were earned by prior active duty in a uniformed service. However, Scholarship benefits may be reduced for participants receiving funding under the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill.

Questions or concerns regarding changes in scholarship payments should be directed to the Program Portal.

POSTGRADUATE TRAINING/ NURSING RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Will I be allowed to participate in a nursing residency program?

Registered Nurse and Nurse Practitioner scholars may request a one year deferment for commencement (i.e., postpone) of their NURSE Corps Scholarship Program service obligation in order to complete a NURSE Corps Scholarship Program-approved postgraduate residency/training. Scholars will have the option to complete a residency program for an

approved specialty that must be consistent with the specialty for which the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program awarded funding. The postgraduate training program cannot exceed one year in length. **Eligible scholars must 1) Obtain their license and 2) start their postgraduate training no later than 6 months after graduation. Post-residency scholars have 3 months to commence employment before being considered non-compliant with contract terms and at risk of default.** Scholars may pursue only the postgraduate training that the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program has officially approved and may not make any changes to the type or length of postgraduate training without prior approval from the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program. Scholars who have not requested or have not been granted service deferment to complete a postgraduate nursing residency program are required to begin their NURSE Corps Scholarship Program service obligation upon degree completion as outlined on page 19.

During the final year of a scholar's nursing program, scholars will be sent information on how to pursue post graduate training and how to notify and obtain approval from the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program.

How do I request deferment of service to participate in a postgraduate Nursing Residency Program?

Scholars who are required or who desire to complete Nursing Residency Programs are required to submit a written request for deferment of their service obligation to the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program at the beginning of their final school term before graduation. The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will review the Postgraduate Training Deferment Request and either approve or disapprove the request.

Scholars may pursue only the postgraduate training that the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program has officially approved and may not make any changes to the type or length of postgraduate training without prior approval from the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program and are required to notify the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program in writing, within 30 days, of their new mailing address and/or any changes that affect their training status. After graduation, scholarship participants who enter non pre-approved NURSE Corps Scholarship Program nurse residency training programs will be subject to the damages provision described in *Breaching the Contract* on page 26.

Participants who withdraw or are terminated from the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program approved postgraduate residency/training program are required to notify the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program and adhere to the time frame established by NURSE Corps Scholarship Program to commence service. Participants who default on their NURSE Corps Scholarship Program service obligation incur the damages described in the Breaching the Contract section on page 26.

Can I receive financial support from the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program or service credit during my postgraduate training?

Scholars do not receive NURSE Corps Scholarship Program financial support during their post graduate training, nor do they incur any additional NURSE Corps Scholarship Program service obligation as a result of the service deferment. Moreover, periods of postgraduate training are not credited toward satisfying the scholarship service obligation even if the training occurred at an eligible critical shortage facility located in a HPSA.

FINDING A PRACTICE SITE

Scholars will be given information about the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program CSF site search process. Scholars are required to practice at an eligible Critical Shortage Facility (CSF) located in, designated as, or serving primary medical care or mental health Tier 1 HPSAs with a score of 14 or higher. The HPSA score is calculated and published for each year that a scholar is ready to begin their service.

The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program must approve the site where the scholar wishes to complete their service prior to the commencement of employment in order to receive appropriate credit. There is no guarantee that HPSAs or CSFs which are eligible during a scholar's training will still be eligible at the time scholars are available to serve.

SERVICE REQUIREMENTS AND ELIGIBLE SITES UNDER NURSE CORPS Scholarship Program

What are the service requirements after graduation?

- (1) **Obtain a license.** Prior to commencing service at a Critical Shortage Facility (CSF), NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants must be permanently licensed within 6 months of graduation to practice as a registered nurse (or if appropriate, as an advanced practice nurse) in the State where they will be serving.
 - a. Credit towards fulfillment of the scholarship service commitment will not be given in the absence of a current, unencumbered permanent license in the State of service.
 - b. In addition, advanced practice nurses are expected to pass a national certification examination for their specialty (that is administered by a nationally recognized certifying body) prior to commencing service.
 - c. Service credit will NOT be given until the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program has received documentation that all licensure and certification requirements have been met. Documents should be uploaded to the Program Portal.
 - d. Responsibility for obtaining the required State license (and national certification exam, if applicable) prior to the service start date rests with the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant.
 - e. NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants are expected to take the appropriate licensure/certification exams at the earliest possible date.
 - f. If the participant is unsuccessful in obtaining a license or passing the certification exam(s) within 6 months of his or her graduation date, the participant should immediately contact the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program through the program

portal to request a suspension. See the *Suspension and Waiver* section on page 26 in this Guidance.

(2) Obtain a Position at a Critical Shortage Facility

NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants will have up to 6 months from their date of graduation to (1) obtain a nursing license and (2) accept an offer of employment, in the nursing capacity for which their scholarship was funded, from a NURSE Corps Scholarship Program-approved critical shortage facility (see boxed section on page 21). Participants will have up to 3 months following the date of the acceptance of such job offer to commence full-time (or if approved by the Secretary, part-time) clinical services at the facility.

Participants must contact the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program prior to accepting employment to assure the facility and position is eligible. The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program reserves the right to grant final approval of all service locations to ensure a participant's compliance with statutory requirements related to the service obligation (See *What are the types of sites where I can fulfill my service obligation?* on page 21).

Participants may be recommended for default of their service obligation for failure to (1) accept an offer of employment from an NURSE Corps Scholarship Program-approved facility within 6 months of their date of graduation or (2) commence full-time (or if approved by the Secretary, part-time) clinical services at the facility within 3 months following the date of the acceptance of the job offer. Participants who default on their NURSE Corps Scholarship Program service obligation incur the damages described in the *Breaching the Contract* section on page 25.

(3) Perform Full-Time or Part-Time Clinical Service

Participants may satisfy their service obligations on either a full-time or, with written approval from the Secretary or his/her designee, a part-time basis.

- a. Full-Time clinical practice is defined as a minimum of 32 hours per week. At least 26 hours per week must be spent providing clinical services, or direct patient care, to patients. The remaining 6 hours may be spent on administrative or other non-clinical activities.
- b. Part-Time clinical practice is defined as a minimum of 16 hours per week and up to a maximum of 31 hours per week. Participants wishing to serve part-time **must first** obtain approval from the Secretary or his/her designee and must extend their service obligation so that the aggregate amount of service performed will equal the amount of a full-time service obligation. At least 80% of the hours each week must be spent providing clinical services, or direct patient care, to patients. For example, a nurse scheduled to work 20 hours per week must spend at least 16 hours per week providing clinical services.
- c. Absences. No more than 35 work days per service year can be spent away from the approved NURSE Corps Scholarship Program site for vacation, holidays, continuing professional education, illness, or any other reason. If a participant has a medical or personal emergency that will result in an extended period of absence, he/she must

request a suspension of the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program service commitment. The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program cannot guarantee that a suspension request will be approved. If a suspension is requested and approved, the participant's service commitment end date will be extended accordingly.

Please note that the information provided above pertains to compliance with the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program service obligation and is not a guarantee that an employer will allow any particular amount of leave.

(4) **Verify Service.**

Every NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant who has completed school and is fulfilling their service obligation by providing clinical nursing services must verify their service every six (6) months through the Program Portal. In this process, an appropriate official at the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program-approved CSF must certify the participant's compliance or noncompliance with the full-time or part-time service requirement during each 6-month period. The service verification process will also record the time spent away from the CSF.

Participants who fail to complete and submit their 6-month service verification through the Program Portal on time may jeopardize receiving service credit and may also be recommended for default.

Participants must identify an active point of contact on his/her portal submission with an administrative portal account to complete and submit the 6-month service verification online via the Program Portal. Any participant who cannot have the 6-month service verification completed online through the Portal should contact the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program immediately through the Program Portal, by email (GetHelp@hrsa.gov) or by phone (1-800-221-9393).

What are the types of sites where I can fulfill my service obligation?

NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants are required to serve for a minimum of 2 years at a health care facility with a critical shortage of nurses (Critical Shortage Facility) and **are required to serve at a Tier 1 Critical Shortage Facility** located in a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) with a score of 14 or higher. (see page 24). A Critical Shortage Facility is defined to be:

Critical Shortage Facility (CSF) – a health care facility located in, designated as, or serving a primary medical care or mental health Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA).

Health care facilities include:

- a. **Critical Access Hospital (CAH).** A facility certified by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) under section 1820 of the Social Security Act. A CAH must be located in a rural area in a state that has a Rural Hospital Flexibility Program, have no more than 25 inpatient beds, an average annual length of stay of 96 hours or less, and be located either more than a 35-mile drive from the nearest hospital or CAH, or more than a 15-mile drive in areas with mountainous terrain or only secondary roads.. For more information, please visit:
<https://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Medicare-Learning-Network-MLN/MLNProducts/downloads/critaccesshospfctsh.pdf>.
- b. **Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH).** A hospital that has a disproportionately large share of low-income patients and receives an augmented payment from the State under Medicaid or a payment adjustment from Medicare. Hospital-based outpatient services are included under this definition. For more information, please visit:
http://www.cms.hhs.gov/AcuteInpatientPPS/05_dsh.asp#TopOfPage.
- c. **Public Hospital.** Any hospital that is owned by a government (Federal, State, or Local) and receives government funding and is primarily engaged in providing, by or under the supervision of physicians, to inpatients: (a) diagnostic and therapeutic services for medical diagnosis, treatment, and care of injured, disabled, or sick persons; or (b) rehabilitation of injured, disabled, or sick persons. Hospital-based outpatient services are included under this definition.
- d. **Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC).** FQHCs include (a) nonprofit entities that receive a grant, or funding from a grant, under section 330 of the Public Health Service Act to provide primary health services and other related services to a population that is medically underserved; (b) FQHC "Look-Alikes" which are nonprofit entities that are certified by the Secretary of HHS as meeting the requirements for receiving a grant under section 330 of the Public Health Service Act but are not grantees; and (c) outpatient health programs or facilities operated by a tribe or tribal organization under the Indian Self-Determination Act or by an urban Indian organization receiving funds under Title V of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act. FQHCs include Community Health Centers, Migrant Health Centers, Health Care for the Homeless Health Centers, and Public Housing Primary Care Health Centers. For more information, please visit:
<http://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov>.
- e. **Indian Health Service Health Center.** A health care facility (whether operated directly by the Indian Health Service or by a tribe or tribal organization, contractor or grantee under the Indian Self-Determination Act, as described in 42 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 136, Subparts C and H, or by an urban Indian organization receiving funds under Title V of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act) that is physically separated from a hospital, and which provides clinical treatment services on an outpatient basis to person of Indian or Alaskan Native descent as described in 42 CFR Section 136.12. For more information, please visit: <http://www.ihs.gov>.
- f. **Native Hawaiian Health Center.** An entity (a) which is organized under the laws of the State of Hawaii; (b) which provides or arranges for health care services through practitioners licensed by the State of Hawaii, where licensure requirements are applicable; (c) which is a public or nonprofit private entity; and (d) in which Native

Hawaiian health practitioners significantly participate in the planning, management, monitoring, and evaluation of health services. For more information, please see the Native Hawaiian Health Care Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-579), as amended by Public Law 102-396, and <http://healthfinder.gov/orgs/HR3600.htm>.

- g. **Rural Health Clinic.** An entity that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has certified as a rural health clinic under section 1861(aa)(2) of the Social Security Act. A rural health clinic provides outpatient services to a non-urban area with an insufficient number of health care practitioners. For more information, please visit: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/center/rural.asp>.
- h. **Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF).** An institution (or a distinct part of an institution), certified under section 1819(a) of the Social Security Act, that is primarily engaged in providing skilled nursing care and related services to residents requiring medical, rehabilitation, or nursing care and is not primarily for the care and treatment of mental diseases. For more information, please visit: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/center/snf.asp>.
- i. **State or Local Public Health or Human Services Department.** The State, county, parish, or district entity in a State that is responsible for providing population-focused health services which include health promotion, disease prevention, and intervention services provided in clinics or other health care facilities that are operated by the Department.
- j. **Ambulatory Surgical Center.** An ASC, for Medicare purposes, is a distinct entity that operates exclusively for the purpose of furnishing surgical services to patients who do not require hospitalization and in which the expected duration of services does not exceed 24 hours following admission.
<http://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Medicare-Learning-Network-MLN/MLNProducts/downloads/AmbSurgCtrFeepymtfcst508-09.pdf>
- k. **Home Health Agency.** An agency or organization, certified under section 1861(o) of the Social Security Act that is primarily engaged in providing skilled nursing care and other therapeutic services. For more information, please visit: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/center/hha.asp>.
- l. **Hospice Program.** An agency or organization, certified under section 1861(dd)(2) of the Social Security Act, that provides 24-hour care and treatment services (as needed) to terminally ill individuals and bereavement counseling for their immediate family members. This care is provided in individuals' homes, on an outpatient basis, and on a short-term inpatient basis, directly or under arrangements made by the agency or organization.
- m. **Non-Disproportionate Share Hospital.** An institution in a State that is primarily engaged in providing care, by or under the supervision of physicians, to inpatients including (a) diagnostic and therapeutic services for medical diagnosis, treatment, and care of injured, disabled, or sick persons; and (b) rehabilitation of injured, disabled, or sick persons. Hospital-based outpatient services are included under this definition.
- n. **Nursing Home.** An institution (or a distinct part of an institution), certified under section 1919(a) of the Social Security Act, that is primarily engaged in providing, on a regular basis, health related care and service to individuals who because of their mental or physical condition require care and service (above the level of room and board) that can be made available to them only through institutional facilities, and is not primarily

for the care and treatment of mental diseases. For more information, please visit:
<http://www.medicare.gov/Nursing/Overview.asp>.

Ineligible facilities include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Free-standing clinics that do not qualify as a facility above;
- (2) Renal dialysis centers;
- (3) Private practice offices;
- (4) Assisted living facilities; and
- (5) Clinics in prisons and correctional facilities.

If a participant is not sure whether a facility fits into one of the categories above, please contact the facility’s business office or human resources department. Applicants are strongly encouraged to research the types of nursing opportunities that exist in critical shortage facilities before applying to the program.

NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants must provide full-time (or if approved, part-time) clinical service in a CSF. Participants are required to serve in CSF located in, designated as, or serving primary medical care or mental health HSPAs in a Tier 1 CSF with a score of 14 or higher (See definitions and reference page) NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants who must relocate to accept a position in a different geographic area will not receive a relocation incentive or reimbursement.

Critical Shortage Facilities		
Critical Access Hospital; Disproportionate Share Hospital; Federally Qualified Health Center; Indian Health Service Health Center; Public Hospital; Native Hawaiian Health Center; Rural Health Clinic; Skilled Nursing Facility; and State or Local Public Health or Human Services Department	Primary Care or Mental Health HPSA Score 14 or above	Tier 1
	Primary Care or Mental Health HPSA Score between 10 – 13	Tier 2
	Primary Care or Mental Health HPSA Score between 0 – 9	Tier 3
Ambulatory Surgical Center; Nursing Home; Home Health Agency; Hospice Program; and Non-Disproportionate Share Hospital	Primary Care or Mental Health HPSA Score between 0 – 25	Tier 4

What is a HPSA and how do I locate a facility’s HPSA score?

Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) are designated by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) as having shortages of primary medical care, dental or mental health providers and may be geographic, population, or institutional (facility). The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will only be using primary medical care and mental health HPSA

designations and scores. For more information on HPSA designations, please visit <http://www.hrsa.gov/shortage/>.

There are three different categories of HPSAs based on health discipline: 1) Primary Care; 2) Mental Health; and 3) Dental. For each discipline category, there are three different types of HPSA designations: 1) geographic (a county or service area); 2) population group (e.g. low income population, migrant farm workers); and 3) facility (e.g. rural health clinic, community health center). Please note, serving uninsured, Medicare and/or Medicaid populations, in and of itself does not qualify an area, population or facility as a HPSA. The specific HPSA designation criteria and guidelines may be found at <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/shortage/hpsas/designationcriteria/index.html>

Participants should consult the HPSA websites listed below:

- <http://datawarehouse.hrsa.gov/GeoAdvisor/ShortageDesignationAdvisor.aspx>: Enter the facility's address to see if the facility is located in a HPSA. The facility **MUST** be located in a primary medical care or mental health HPSA. More specifically, "Yes" must appear beside "In a Primary Care (or Mental Health) Health Professional Shortage Area". The primary care/mental health HPSA score(s) will appear beneath the respective designation(s).
- <http://hpsafind.hrsa.gov>: Find HPSAs by State, county, and discipline (select only primary medical care or mental health).

A HPSA score or HPSA designation status may change on the HPSA websites over time. A facility may have one HPSA score at the time the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant begins nursing school but have a different HPSA score or no longer be a HPSA by the time the participant completes nursing school. Site eligibility will be based on the HPSA score at the time of service placement. If a facility has more than one HPSA designation with different scores (e.g., a primary care and a mental health HPSA), NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will use the highest score to determine site eligibility.

Can I leave my NURSE Corps Scholarship Program-approved Critical Shortage Facility prior to completion of service?

The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program expects that a participant will fulfill his/her obligation at the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program-approved CSF; however, the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program does understand that circumstances may arise that require a participant to leave the initial facility and complete service at another NURSE Corps Scholarship Program-approved HPSA CSF. If a participant feels he/she can no longer continue working at the approved facility, the participant should contact the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program immediately. All transfers must be approved by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program. A transfer request should be submitted through the Program Portal before the participant leaves his or her site. The participant must transfer to a facility of the same Tier or higher HPSA score. Leaving the assigned site without prior written approval by NURSE Corps Scholarship Program may result in a default recommendation.

BREACHING THE CONTRACT

What is a breach of the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program Contract?

A participant is in breach of the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program contract if he or she:

- (1) Fails to maintain an acceptable level of academic standing in the nursing program;
- (2) Is dismissed from the nursing program for disciplinary reasons;
- (3) Voluntarily terminates or withdraws from the nursing program; or
- (4) Fails to begin or complete the service obligation as specified in the participant's NURSE Corps Scholarship Program contract.

What happens if I breach the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program Contract?

The participant will be liable to the Federal Government to repay all funds paid to the participant, or on the participant's behalf, under the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program and pay interest on such amounts at the maximum legal prevailing rate from the date of default. The amount owed, including interest, must be repaid within 3 years of the date of the participant's default. Please note that participants who default on their NURSE Corps Scholarship Program contract will be ineligible to participate in federal loan repayment programs, including the NURSE Corps Loan Repayment Program.

What happens if a debt incurred by a breach of contract is not paid?

Failure to repay the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program debt within 3 years will result in delinquency and has the following consequences:

- (1) **The debt will be reported to credit reporting agencies.** During the three-year repayment period, the debt will be reported to credit reporting agencies as "current." If the debt becomes past due, it will be reported as "delinquent."
- (2) **The debt will be referred to a debt collection agency and the Department of Justice.** Any NURSE Corps Scholarship Program debt past due for 45 days may be referred to a debt collection agency. If the debt collection agency is unsuccessful in receiving payment in full, the debt may be referred to the U.S. Department of Justice for enforced collection.
- (3) **Administrative offset.** Federal and/or State payments due to the participant (e.g., an income tax refund) may be offset by the U.S. Department of Treasury to repay a delinquent NURSE Corps Scholarship Program debt. Also, recovery through Administrative Wage Garnishment may be enforced to repay a delinquent NURSE Corps Scholarship Program debt.
- (4) **Medicare/Medicaid Exclusion.** Delinquent defaulters who are unwilling to enter into, or stay in compliance with, an agreement to repay their scholarship debt can be excluded from participation in Medicare, Medicaid and other Federal Health care programs.

SUSPENSION & WAIVER

How do I inform the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program about my upcoming maternity/paternity/adoption leave?

If a scholar plans to be away from his/her site for maternity/paternity/adoption leave, the scholar is required to inform the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program before taking the leave.

The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will allow scholars to be away from their site within the timeframes established by either the Family Medical Leave Act (up to 12 weeks) or the scholar's state of residence; however, the scholar must adhere to the leave policies of his or her NURSE Corps Scholarship Program-approved service site. If a scholar plans to take additional leave, the scholar is required to request a suspension (see "Suspension" below), which may or may not be approved by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program. Requests should be submitted through the Program Portal. Remember that a scholar is required to serve a minimum of 45 weeks per service year and is allowed to be away from the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program-approved service site for no more than 35 workdays per service year; therefore, a participant's obligation end date will be extended for each day of absence over the allowable 35 workdays.

What should I do if I cannot continue my service or payment obligation?

The Secretary of Health and Human Services may, under certain circumstances, suspend (put "on hold") or waive (excuse) the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program service or payment obligation. A request for a suspension or waiver must be submitted through the Program Portal. Additional supporting documentation will be required following submission of the request.

- (1) **Suspension.** This mechanism provides temporary relief to an NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant if he/she has short-term (not permanent) circumstances that currently make compliance with the obligation impossible or would involve an extreme hardship such that enforcement of the obligation would be unconscionable. Periods of approved suspension will extend a participant's NURSE Corps Scholarship Program service obligation end date.

The major categories of service suspensions are set forth below.

- a. **Medical or Personal Hardship** – A suspension may be granted for up to one year, if the participant provides independent medical documentation of a physical or mental health disability, or personal hardship, including a terminal illness of an immediate family member (e.g., child or spouse, including a same-sex spouse regardless of where the couple lives), which results in the participant's temporary inability to perform the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program service obligation. Upon receipt of the suspension request, the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will notify the participant of instructions for submitting supporting documentation.
- b. **Parental (Maternity/Paternity/Adoption Leave)** – Participants must notify the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program of pending parental leave and provide appropriate documentation. Parental leave of 12 weeks or less will be automatically approved, if properly documented. If the participant's parental leave will exceed 12 weeks during that service year, a suspension may be granted by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program based on documented medical need or if additional parental leave time is permitted under State law.
- c. **Call to Active Duty in the Armed Forces** – Participants who are also military reservists and are called to active duty will be granted a suspension, for up to

one year, beginning on the activation date described in the reservist's call to active duty order. In addition to the written request for a suspension, a copy of the order to active duty must be submitted to NURSE Corps Scholarship Program. The suspension will be extended if the applicable Armed Forces entity continues the period of active duty. The period of active military duty will not be credited toward the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program service obligation.

- (2) **Waiver.** A waiver permanently relieves the participant of all or part of the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program obligation. A waiver will be granted only if the participant demonstrates that compliance with his/her obligation (a) is permanently impossible or (b) would involve an extreme hardship such that enforcement of the obligation would be unconscionable. A waiver request must be submitted by uploading a signed request letter, including the reason(s) the waiver is being sought, as an inquiry to BWH through the Program Portal. The scholar will be contacted by the BHW Branch of Legal and Compliance regarding any medical and financial documentation necessary to complete the waiver request. Note that waivers are not routinely granted and require a showing of compelling circumstances.

When would my service obligation be cancelled?

A participant's obligation will be cancelled only in the unfortunate event of death. No liability will be transferred to the participant's heirs.

HOW TO APPLY

APPLICATION AND PROGRAM GUIDANCE

Please read the Application and Program Guidance in its entirety before proceeding with the online application. This Guidance explains in detail the contractual obligations of NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants and the Secretary of Health and Human Services or his/her designee. Be sure you have a complete understanding of the obligation to serve for a minimum of 2 years at a Critical Shortage Facility and the financial consequences of failing to perform that obligation. Applicants are strongly encouraged to research nursing opportunities that exist in various critical shortage facilities before applying to the program.

After creating an account, the applicant should use their Applicant ID # (not their social security number) on all required uploaded supporting documents.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

The online application and all supporting document must be submitted to the BHW Program Portal at <https://programportal.hrsa.gov/> by May 21, 2015. Applicants are **strongly encouraged** to upload all supporting documents in PDF format to expedite processing of their application.

What if I run into technical difficulties while attempting to submit my application?

Due to high volume of applications submitted, it is advised that you complete your application well before the deadline. In previous years, the application portal has been slowed down due to an abundance of applicants submitting applications at the last minute which caused some applicants to miss the deadline. Although it is our mission to eradicate technical difficulties, some are unpreventable. We recommend that you submit your application as early as possible, if you encounter technical difficulties, please contact the customer service hotline immediately. If you choose to send an email, please include a screen shot of the error message you receive. It may take up to two business days (48 hours) for someone to get back to you. If you have not received an e-mail within two business days informing you whether your issue has been resolved or not, please contact us immediately.

COMPLETING AN APPLICATION

The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program application consists of (1) an online application, (2) required supporting documentation, and if applicable, (3) additional supporting documentation. Applicants should keep a copy of the application package for their records. Applicants are responsible for submitting a complete application. It is required that the information in the online application match the submitted supporting documentation. Application packages will be initially reviewed to determine their completeness. Application packages deemed incomplete (e.g., missing, illegible, or incomplete application materials) as of the application deadline will not be considered for funding.

Please note: NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will not accept requests to update a submitted application or permit the submission/resubmission of incomplete, rejected,

or otherwise delayed application materials after the deadline. **In addition, the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program staff will not fill in any missing information or contact applicants regarding missing information. Changes to an applicant's choice of school or discipline entered on the submitted application prior to award MAY NOT be accepted.** Awardees' who elect to enter a different school and/or program should contact the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program immediately and prior to the award.

CHANGE OF SCHOOL

A transfer or change in school and/or program must be reviewed and approved by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program to be considered for eligibility. Failure to immediately report a change in program may result in both the application and award being deemed ineligible. If the applicant's choice of school changes, the applicant must notify the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program in writing within 10 business days of receipt of acceptance by the new school, and submit a Verification of Acceptance from the new school by June 1, 2015. After a scholarship award has been made, a scholar transferring to the same degree program at another school, who remains eligible for scholarship support, may have tuition and required fees paid at the lower rate of the two schools (subject to the availability of funds).

(1) ONLINE APPLICATION

Applicants are required to complete each of the sections below to be able to submit an online application.

- a. **Eligibility Screening.** If an individual does not pass the initial screening portion of the online application, he/she will not be able to continue with the application. Please refer to the Eligibility Requirements section of this *Guidance* on page 5 for further details.
- b. **General Information.** Answers to this section pertain to the applicant's name, social security number, mailing and email addresses, and other contact information.
- c. **Background Information.** Answers to this section pertain to the educational background, individual and family background, and emergency contact information.
- d. **Degree Information.** Answers to this section should pertain only to the degree or certificate program for which applicants are applying for an NURSE Corps Scholarship.
- e. **Completed Academic Recommendation Letter**
Applicants must obtain a recommendation letter from a non-relative academic official such as a department chair, faculty advisor, or a faculty member of their current academic nursing program (or most recent academic program if the applicant has not begun the nursing program).

The academic official's recommendation letter must describe his or her relationship and length of time acquainted with the applicant. The recommendation letter must be on institution letterhead containing the applicant's name, application ID number which will be provided in the instructions of the online recommender portal, the recommender's name, title, organization and address. The completed

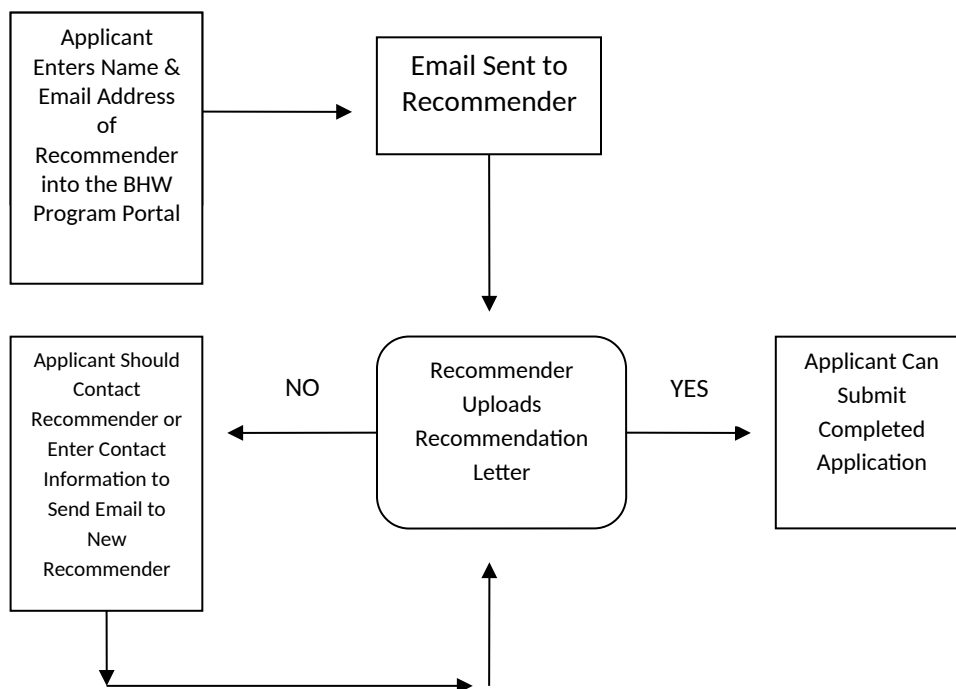
recommendation must then be signed and uploaded into the online recommender portal. The recommendation letter should address the three discussion points described in the instructions of the recommender online portal. The application will not be complete until the letter of recommendation has been uploaded by the official. The applicant will not be notified if the recommender does not complete the letter only if the recommender does. If the original recommender cannot provide a recommendation letter, the applicant must delete the original recommender's name and submit the name of another official selected to complete the letter of recommendation. Once the letter has been received (uploaded into) by the portal, the application can be submitted for processing. Please note, it is the applicants' responsibility to check the portal to verify that the recommender has uploaded the letter of recommendation (LOR) and to submit the application once completed. The Nurse Corps Scholarship Program is not responsible for submitting the application on behalf of the applicant.

f. **Completed Non-Academic Recommendation Letter**

The non-academic letter is used to assess the applicant's compatibility to serve populations of greatest need. The evaluator should complete the letter on official letterhead if representing an organization.

The evaluator must describe his or her relationship and length of time acquainted with the applicant. The non-academic recommendation letter must have the applicant's name, application ID number which will be provided in the instructions of the online recommender portal, the recommender's name, title, organization and address. The completed recommendation must then be signed and uploaded into the online recommender portal. The recommendation letter should address the discussion points described in the instructions of the recommender online portal. The application will not be complete until the letter of recommendation has been uploaded by the official. The applicant will not be notified if the recommender does not complete the letter only if the recommender does. If the original recommender cannot provide a recommendation letter, the applicant must delete the original recommender's name and submit the name of another official selected to complete the letter of recommendation. Once the letter has been received by (uploaded into) the Portal, the application can be submitted for processing. The evaluator cannot be a relative of the applicant, or be the same individual who completed the Academic Recommendation letter. A second non-academic letter of recommendation may be submitted in place of an academic letter of recommendation if the applicant has been out of school for an extended period of time; however, the same components must be addressed.

Recommendation Letter Steps to Completion



- g. **Self-Certification.** Applicants are required to certify to the accuracy, truthfulness, and completeness of their application and information entered in the online application.

What if my school/institution is not listed in the drop down menu when I am completing my application?

If the applicant is unable to locate his/her school in the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program database, he/she must notify the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program via the application to have the school reviewed and possibly added (if accredited). The process to add a school can take up to two business days (48 hours). Requests to add schools not found must be made prior to the application cycle closing. Without the correct school information in the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program database, the electronic application cannot be submitted. If you have not received an e-mail from NURSE Corps Scholarship Program within two business days informing you whether your school has been added or not, please contact us immediately. Once the eligible school has been added, it is the applicant's responsibility to go back to the application and select the newly added school in order to proceed with completing the application.

Customer Care Center

Any individual with questions about the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program may contact the Customer Care Center Monday through Friday (except Federal holidays), 8:00 am to 8:00 pm EST.

- GetHelp@hrsa.gov
- 1-800-221-9393 (TTY - 1-877-897-9910)

(2) REQUIRED SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Applicants are responsible for submitting a complete application package. Application packages will be initially reviewed to determine completeness. Application packages deemed incomplete (e.g., missing, illegible, or incomplete application materials) as of May 21, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. EST deadline will not be considered for funding. It is required that the information in your online application match your supporting documents. Erroneous information and/or illegible documentation could result in your application receiving an inaccurate ranking and not being considered for funding.

Required Supporting Documentation
a. Authorization to Release Information Form
b. Proof of Citizenship
c. Verification of Acceptance/Enrollment Verification Form of Good Standing
d. Official Student Aid Report
e. Current Tuition and Fee Schedule
f. Essays
g. Resume/CV
h. Academic Transcript

All supporting documentation must be uploaded by May 21, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. EST. PDF file uploads are strongly encouraged to ensure uploaded documents can be reviewed. The applicant must provide their applicant ID number generated by the application at the top of each document.

a. **Authorization to Release Information Form**

This form authorizes the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and/or its contractors, to release information that identifies the applicant for purposes of coordinating financial aid at schools and checking whether the applicant appears on the list of excluded parties on U.S. System for Award Management. It also authorizes the applicant's school and future service entity to release information to DHHS and/or its contractors.

b. **Documentation of Status as a U.S. Citizen, U.S. National, or Lawful Permanent Resident**

Applicants must provide proof of U.S. citizenship or status as a U.S. National or Lawful Permanent Resident. Acceptable documents include:

- a) a copy of a birth certificate,
- b) certificate of citizenship or naturalization,
- c) U.S. Passport ID page, or
- d) Green Card.

A driver's license and/or social security card are not valid proof of citizenship. Failure to provide the appropriate Documentation of Status WILL result in an application being deemed ineligible.

c. ***Completed Verification of Acceptance/Enrollment Verification Form***

The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program uses the Verification of Acceptance and Enrollment Verification Forms to confirm the student's enrollment and status, the start date for the 2015-2016 academic year, expected date of graduation, grade point average, institution's name and address, and the official contact person for the school of nursing.

d. ***Official Student Aid Report***

Applicants must provide a **complete** copy of their Official Student Aid Report (SAR) which summarizes all the information provided on the FAFSA. There are two different versions of the SAR, electronic or paper. Either the Official Department of Education letter or the electronic SAR will be accepted. **Student Aid Reports received from institutions other than the Department of Education will NOT be accepted and will deem an application ineligible.** The SAR will contain the applicant's Expected Family Contribution (EFC), the number used in determining eligibility for federal student aid. The EFC should appear in the upper portion of a paper or electronic SAR in addition to a SAR 'expiration' or 'valid through' date. The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will deem partial or expired SAR submissions as incomplete. The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program only accepts official SARs; any other type of document will deem the applicant ineligible. Applicants can request a copy of their official SAR from the Department of Education by calling 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243) or via email at FederalStudentAidCustomerService@ed.gov.

e. ***Current Tuition and Fee Schedule***

Each applicant must provide a tuition and fees schedule for the 2015-2016 academic year or, if not yet available, the most recent tuition and fees schedule published by the school in the school catalog or on its website.

f. ***Completed Essay Questions***

The applicant must provide typed responses to the three essay questions listed below. Each response is limited to 5,000 characters or less in Times New Roman 12

font. The applicant must include the Applicant ID number generated by application at the top of each document.

Essay 1: How will you contribute to the mission of the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program in providing care to underserved communities?

Essay 2: What defines an underserved community? What experiences have you had that have prepared you to work with underserved populations?

Essay 3: Please discuss your commitment to pursue a career in nursing.

g. **Resume/Curriculum Vitae (CV)**

Applicants must provide a resume/CV that summarizes their educational qualifications, work experiences, and volunteer/community service in chronological order. The resume/CV must also include the location (city/state) where the experience took place.

h. **Academic Transcript**

Applicants must submit an official or unofficial transcript from the most recently completed undergraduate or graduate academic institution/program attended (or high school, if applicable) if you have not completed one full academic term in the program for which you are seeking NURSE Corps Scholarship Program funding. If you have completed at least one undergraduate or graduate academic term, then submit a transcript from your current institution. Otherwise, a complete high school transcript should be submitted. The uploaded transcript must be legible and include the applicant's school name, courses taken, grades received for each course, and cumulative Grade Point Average.

(3) **Additional Supporting Documentation** (if applicable)

Based on the applicant's responses to the online application, the following additional document will be required for submission. Only applicants who have this document listed on the Supporting Documents page of their online application should submit it. This document will be added to their Supporting Documents list once the online application has been submitted.

- **Statement Regarding Existing Service Obligation**

A letter on official letterhead from the entity to which the applicant's existing service obligation is owed, indicating there is no potential conflict in fulfilling the service commitment to the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program and that the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program service commitment will be served first.

Application Status

- (1) The deadline for submitting an online application and supporting documentation is May 21, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. EST.
- (2) Applicants will receive a receipt of submission notice once the application has been successfully submitted online.
- (3) The application review process will take approximately three to four months. Applicants selected for an NURSE Corps Scholarship Program award will be notified by email. Applicants may opt to accept or decline the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program award. In order for Program to make an award to the selected applicant, the applicant offered the award must:
 - a. Sign and upload the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program contract;
 - b. Complete and upload the online banking form for direct deposit;
 - c. Complete and upload the Enrollment Verification Form; and
 - d. Complete and upload the W-4 form.

Awards are subject to the availability of funds. All applicants, those selected for an award and those not selected for an award will be notified no later than September 30, 2015.

Notification of Award

Individuals selected for awards will receive a Confirmation of Interest email/letter no later than September 30, 2015. To accept the award, an applicant must respond by the deadline indicated in the Confirmation of Interest email/letter. If the applicant does not respond to the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program by that deadline, the offer of award expires and will be offered to an alternate. Applicants who respond by the deadline will be asked to sign the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program contract, complete the online banking form for direct deposit, complete the Enrollment Verification Form and complete the W-4 form. A credit check will also be performed on each applicant's behalf. Awards are subject to the availability of funds. Applicant award notifications will begin in late August and continue through September, 2015. All applicants will be notified of their final award status no later than September 30, 2015.

Individuals selected for an award must be enrolled as a **full-time** student during the 2015-2015 academic year and full-time class attendance **must begin on or before September 30, 2015**. Applicants who will not begin classes on or before September 30, 2015, including applicants who will be on a leave of absence from school through September 30, 2015, **must** decline the award.

An individual selected for an award, who decides not to accept the award, may decline the scholarship support without penalty and permits the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program to select an alternate for award. Once an applicant declines the offer of award, the award will be offered to an alternate. There will not be any opportunities to reclaim the award. A decision to decline the scholarship award is final and cannot be changed under any circumstances. An applicant who declines an award may apply in the next application cycle. To receive an email notification of when the next application cycle will open, visit the following website: https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USHHSHRSA/subscriber/new?topic_id=USHHSHRSA_22.

DEFINITIONS

- (1) ACADEMIC YEAR** – All NURSE Corps Scholarship Program scholarship contracts are for a specific year. Under the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program, all academic years run from July 1 through June 30 of the following year. If for example, a student is in a full-time 24-month program that begins on August 2, 2015, and he/she signs contracts for 2 academic years, the student will receive stipend, ORC and tuition payments from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016. Funding for the extra months of the program beyond June 30, 2016, would require the student to request a third year of scholarship funding, and if granted, obligates the participant to 3 years of full-time service. If a student is in a 24-month program that begins on May 2, 2015, and he/she signs contracts for 2 school years, the student will receive stipend, ORC and tuition payments from July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016, or the month the participant completes the required classes for graduation, whichever comes first.
- (2) ACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF ACADEMIC STANDING** –The level at which a student retains eligibility to continue attending school under the school’s standards and practices. Applicants on academic probation will not be considered as in an acceptable level of academic standing by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program.
- (3) ADMINISTRATIVE OFFSET** – Administrative offset is the withholding of funds payable by the United States to, or held by the United States for, a person to satisfy a debt. For NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants who received overpayments which have not been repaid, the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will withhold scholarship funds payable to, or on behalf of, the participant (including stipends, ORC payments, and, if necessary, tuition payments) until the overpayment owed is paid in full. Administrative offset is not a repayment option for NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants who wish to terminate a contract.
- (4) CONTRACT** – A written contract under Section 846(d) of the Public Health Service Act, as amended, for an academic year pursuant to which (1) the individual agrees to serve as a nurse for a period of not less than 2 years at a health care facility with a critical shortage of nurses and (2) the Federal government agrees to provide the individual with a scholarship, for attendance at a school of nursing during that academic year.
- (5) CRITICAL SHORTAGE FACILITY** – A health care facility located in, designated as, or serving a primary medical care or mental health Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA).

Critical Shortage Facilities		
Critical Access Hospital; Disproportionate Share Hospital; Federally Qualified Health Center; Indian Health Service Health Center; Public Hospital; Native Hawaiian	Primary Care or Mental Health HPSA Score 14 or above	Tier 1
	Primary Care or Mental Health HPSA Score between 10 – 13	Tier 2

Health Center; Rural Health Clinic; Skilled Nursing Facility; and State or Local Public Health or Human Services Department	Primary Care or Mental Health HPSA Score between 0 – 9	Tier 3
Ambulatory Surgical Center; Nursing Home; Home Health Agency; Hospice Program; and Non-Disproportionate Share Hospital	Primary Care or Mental Health HPSA Score between 0 – 25	Tier 4

(6) DEFAULT OF SERVICE OBLIGATION - Failure for any reason to begin or complete a contractual service obligation.

(7) DEFERMENT - Deferment is a delay in the start of service obligation granted by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program upon a scholar’s request, for a specified period of time to enter and complete an approved postgraduate nursing residency program.

(8) ELIGIBLE REQUIRED FEES - Fees that may be covered by NURSE Corps Scholarship Program if required by a participant’s school, may include but not limited to:

• Academic Support Services Fee	• Education Fee	• Matriculation Fee
• Administrative Fee	• Graduation Fee in last year of program	• Processing Fee
• Facility Fee	• Health Insurance (Must be required of all students regardless of source of funding)	• Recreation Fee
• Campus Life Fee	• Health Services Fee and Immunizations	• Student Activities Fee
• Computer Lab Fee	• Laboratory Fees	• Student Services Fee
• Curriculum Fee	• Library Fee	• Technology Fee
• Disability Insurance (Must be required of all students regardless of source of funding)	• Malpractice Insurance if it is mandatory that it be purchased through the school by all nursing students	• University Fee and Distance Learning Fees

(9) ENROLLED OR ACCEPTED FOR ENROLLMENT - NURSE Corps Scholarship Program defines "Accepted" to a School or Nursing Program as having been officially granted entrance

without contingency to an RN or NP program at an accredited school of nursing. Wait-listed and alternate selection candidates do not meet this criterion. A Letter of Acceptance is typically provided by the school for confirmation. Enrolled is defined as having been formally admitted to an RN or NP Program at an accredited School of Nursing, committed to attend the program and have scheduled or are eligible to schedule classes which have or will begin no later than September 30 of the year for which the award was made.

- (10) EXPECTED FAMILY CONTRIBUTION** - The Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is the amount of money your family is expected to contribute to your college education for one year, as determined by the Department of Education in your Official Student Aid Report.
- (11) FAMILY/FAMILY MEMBER** - As used in the guidance and for the purposes of the NURSE Corps, "family member" includes spouses, as well as unmarried partners (both same-sex and opposite-sex).
- (12) FULL-TIME CLINICAL PRACTICE** - Full-time practice is defined as the provision of nursing services for a minimum of 32 hours per week. At least 26 hours per week, of the minimum 32 hours per week, must be spent providing clinical services (direct patient care) to patients. No more than 35 work days per service year can be spent away from the approved practice site for vacation, holidays, continuing education, illness, maternity, or any other reason. Absences of greater than 35 work days in a 52-week service year will extend the service obligation end date or result in a breach of contract, as determined by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program.
- (13) FULL-TIME STUDENT** - A student will be considered full-time if the student meets the school registrar's definition of a full-time student.
- (14) GRADUATE NURSING PROGRAM** - Any department, division, or other administrative unit in a college or university which provides primarily or exclusively a program of education in professional nursing and related subjects leading to a graduate degree in nursing, or to an equivalent degree, and including advanced training related to such program of education provided by such school, but only if such program, or such unit, college or university is accredited.
- (15) INITIAL SCHOOL OF RECORD** - The school indicated on the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program application and attended at the time the initial contract is executed.
- (16) LEAVE OF ABSENCE** - A period of approved absence from a course of study granted to a student by his or her nursing school for medical, personal, and other reasons. The leave of absence is usually granted for a period of 1 year or less. When a leave of absence is expected, a participant is required to notify the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program immediately through the Program Portal and submit a letter from the school approving

the leave of absence and indicating the start and end dates for the period of the absence. Payment of all benefits is discontinued when a participant is on an approved leave of absence, and may be resumed when the student returns to the course of study for which the scholarship was awarded.

- (17) LOCATED IN A STATE, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, OR A TERRITORY** – One of the following: a State within the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Territory of Guam, the Territory of American Samoa, the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia. The definition of “located in a State, the District of Columbia or a Territory” does not include any location outside of the U.S. that is not listed above.
- (18) PART-TIME CLINICAL PRACTICE** – Part-time practice is defined as provision of nursing services for a minimum of 16 hours per week (up to a maximum of 31 hours per week). At least 80% of the hours each week must be spent providing clinical services (direct patient care) to patients. No more than 35 work days per service year can be spent away from the approved practice site for vacation, holidays, continuing education, illness, maternity, or any other reason. Absences of greater than 35 days in a 52-week service year will extend the service obligation end date or result in a breach of contract, as determined by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program.
- (19) PART-TIME STUDENT** – A less than full-time student will be considered part-time if the student is enrolled on at least a half-time basis (i.e., the student is taking a sufficient number of credit hours to meet or exceed 50% of the credit hours required by the nursing school program to be a full-time student).
- (20) POSTGRADUATE TRAINING** –Types of postgraduate training include residencies and fellowships. NSCP participants have the option to complete up to one year of a Nursing Residency. No credit towards NURSE Corps Scholarship Program service obligation is given.
- (21) SPOUSE** – As used in this *Guidance* and for the purposes of the NURSE Corps, “spouse” includes same-sex couples, legally married in jurisdictions that recognize their marriages. This applies regardless of whether the couple lives in a jurisdiction that recognizes their same-sex marriage. Any same-sex marriage legally entered into or recognized in one of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, a U.S. territory or a foreign country will be recognized. However, this does not apply to registered domestic partnerships, civil unions or similar formal relationships recognized under state law as something other than a marriage.
- (22) SUSPENSION** – A temporary status. A suspension of the service or payment obligation will be granted if compliance with the obligation by the participant (1) is temporarily impossible or (2) would involve a temporary extreme hardship such that enforcement of

the obligation would be unconscionable. All requests for a suspension must be submitted, in writing via the Program Portal and be supported by full medical and/or financial documentation.

- (23) THE SECRETARY** - The Secretary of Health and Human Services, and any other officer or employee of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to whom the authority to administer the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program has been delegated.
- (24) UNDERGRADUATE NURSING PROGRAM** - Any school of nursing program where graduates will be authorized to sit for the National Council Licensure Examination-Registered Nurse (NCLEX-RN) (i.e., where students will receive a Diploma, Associate, or Baccalaureate degree). See Section 801 of the Public Health Service Act for a full and complete definition of these terms. The educational programs in the school of nursing must be accredited by a national nursing accrediting agency or state approval agency recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.
- (25) UNENCUMBERED LICENSE** - A license is unencumbered if it is not revoked, suspended, or made probationary or conditional by a licensing or registering authority in the applicable jurisdiction as the result of disciplinary action.
- (26) U.S. System for Award Management** - A website (www.sam.gov) maintained by the General Services Administration for the purpose of disseminating information on parties that are excluded from receiving federal contracts, subcontracts, and federal financial and non-financial assistance and benefits, pursuant to E.O. 12549, E.O. 12689, and implementing regulations.
- (27) WAIVER** - A permanent release of a participant's NURSE Corps Scholarship Program service or payment obligation. A waiver will only be granted if compliance with the obligation by the participant (1) is permanently impossible or (2) would involve a permanent extreme hardship such that enforcement of the obligation would be unconscionable.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How do interested applicants apply to the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program?

The application deadline for the 2015-2016 , academic year is 7:30 pm EST, May 21, 2015. Those interested in applying to the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program should read the Application and Program Guidance. To apply for the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program, complete the online application and submit the required Supporting Documentation. Please read the *How to Apply Section on page 30* for instructions on completing the application and the supporting documentation.

2. What if an awardee changes his/her mind about going into nursing after he/she has accepted the NURSE Corps Scholarship?

Accepting a NURSE Corps Scholarship is a serious commitment to serve as a registered nurse or nurse practitioner in a facility with a critical shortage of nurses. Individuals who accept the scholarship and change their mind about nursing before completing nursing school or the service commitment, have breached their contract with the U.S. Government and must pay back all monies paid to directly them and to the school on their behalf, with interest. The amount owed, including interest, must be paid within 3 years of the date of your default. Please note that participants who default on their NURSE Corps Scholarship Program contract become ineligible to participate in any Federal loan repayment programs, including the NURSE Corps Loan Repayment Program (formerly known as the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program).

3. The Secretary of Health and Human Services or his/her designee may terminate a NURSE Corps SP contract for an academic year if the participant, on or before June 1 of the school year: (1) submits a written request to terminate his/her contract for that academic year; and (2) repays all amounts paid to, or on behalf of, that participant (tuition, stipends and Other Reasonable Cost) for that academic year.

For more information, see *Breaching the Contract* on page 26.

4. What if a NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant changes his/her mind about the type of nursing program he/she wants to complete?

Participants cannot change degree once the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program contract has been signed. The terminal degree indicated on a participant's application is the ONLY degree that the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will support. Service commitment must be consistent with the area of nursing for which the award was made. For example, if you were awarded as a NP, you must perform service as a NP, and not as a RN.

5. Can a NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant defer his/her scholarship start date?

No, scholarship start dates cannot be deferred. The scholarship will start at the beginning of the 2015-2016 academic year.

6. What is an eligible health facility where NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants can fulfill the service obligation?

NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants are required to serve at a Tier 1 Critical Shortage Facility in a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) with a Primary or Mental Health HPSA Score of 14 or above.

Critical Shortage Facilities		
Critical Access Hospital; Disproportionate Share Hospital; Federally Qualified Health Center; Indian Health Service Health Center; Public Hospital; Native Hawaiian Health Center; Rural Health Clinic; Skilled Nursing Facility; and State or Local Public Health or Human Services Department	Primary Care or Mental Health HPSA Score 14 or above	Tier 1
	Primary Care or Mental Health HPSA Score between 10 – 13	Tier 2
	Primary Care or Mental Health HPSA Score between 0 – 9	Tier 3
Ambulatory Surgical Center; Nursing Home; Home Health Agency; Hospice Program; and Non-Disproportionate Share Hospital	Primary Care or Mental Health HPSA Score between 0 – 25	Tier 4

NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants are responsible for finding their own employment site and confirming its eligibility with the Program. The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program reserves the right of final approval to ensure a participant’s compliance with statutory requirements related to the service obligation.

For more information, see *Service Requirements and Eligible Sites under NURSE Corps Scholarship Program* on page 19.

7. Are there any sites where a participant could be employed as a nurse that would not fulfill the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program service obligation?

Yes. Ineligible facilities include, but are not limited to: Renal Dialysis Centers; Private Practice Offices; Assisted Living Facilities; Clinics in Prisons and Correctional Facilities; and Free Standing Clinics that do not qualify as one of the facilities listed in the Application and Program Guidance under *Service Requirements and Eligible Sites under NURSE Corps Scholarship Program* on page 19.

For more information, see *Service Requirements and Eligible Sites under NURSE Corps Scholarship Program* on page 19.

8. What type of nursing degree program must an applicant be accepted to or enrolled in to apply for the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program?

NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants may be enrolled in or accepted for enrollment in an accredited associate, collegiate (baccalaureate or graduate level), or diploma school of nursing. See Section 801 of the Public Health Service Act for a full and complete definition of these terms. The educational programs in the school of nursing must be accredited by a national nursing accrediting agency or state approval agency recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

For information on NURSE Corps Scholarship Program eligibility requirements, see *Eligibility Requirements on page 5*.

9. How many hours must a NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant work at a critical shortage facility to be considered full-time?

Full-time employment is considered to be no less than 32 hours of nursing services per week. At least 26 hours of the minimum 32 hours per week must be spent providing clinical services (direct patient care) to patients.

Participants wishing to serve part-time must obtain prior approval from the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program and must extend the service obligation to equal the full-time commitment.

For more information, see *Understanding the Contract and Length of the Service Commitment on page 9*.

10. When does the NURSE Corps Scholarship service obligation begin?

Nursing participants have up to 6 months from the date of graduation to (1) obtain a nursing license and (2) accept an offer of employment from a NURSE Corps Scholarship Program-approved facility.

Participants have up to 3 months from the date of their acceptance of such employment offer to commence full-time (or if approved, part-time) clinical services at a Critical Shortage Facility.

For more information, see *Service Requirements and Eligible Sites under NURSE Corps Scholarship Program on page 19*.

11. How much is the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program monthly stipend and when is the payment made?

For the 2015-2016 academic year, the monthly stipend will be \$1,316.00. The stipend is disbursed by the end of each month; payments are not considered late until the 15th of the following month. The first stipend payment is issued in November and includes a lump sum payment for all months (July through October) of the Fall term and Summer term only if the Summer term was still in session on July 1.

For more information, see *Tuition, Required Fees, Other Reasonable Costs, and Stipend* on page 12.

12. Is the entire NURSE Corps Scholarship taxable?

Yes, all NURSE Corps Scholarship Program payments made to and on behalf of the participant (e.g., tuition, fees, Other Reasonable Costs, and stipend) are considered taxable income.

For more information, see *Tuition, Required Fees, Other Reasonable Costs, and Stipend* on page 12.

13. Once a participant is selected to receive a NURSE Corps Scholarship, when will I receive tuition payment?

Payment of tuition and fees are made directly to the school on the participant's behalf. The Notice of Award Letter issued by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program to the participant serves as authorization to the school to bill the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program directly for tuition and required fees.

It is the participant's responsibility to take the Notice of Award Letter to the appropriate school official and explain to them what the school official's role and responsibilities will be while the scholar is under contract with the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program. E.g. invoice payment, Enrollment Verification Form submission each term; and other inquiries as needed. It takes approximately 6 weeks from date of receipt of the invoice by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program for the school to receive payment. For more information, see *Tuition, Required Fees, Other Reasonable Costs, and Stipend* on page 12.

14. Once a participant is selected to receive a NURSE Corps Scholarship, will the program cover tuition and fees if his/her program started prior to July 1, 2015?

Yes, the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will pay tuition and required fees for summer sessions when (1) summer school is an academic term normally required by the school for all students in the same program and (2) the summer session is in progress during the participant's contract period (i.e., through July 1, 2015).

For more information, see *Tuition, Required Fees, Other Reasonable Costs, and Stipend* on page 12.

15. How are NURSE Corps Scholarship Program stipend and other reasonable cost payments issued?

NURSE Corps Scholarship Program stipend and other reasonable cost payments are transferred electronically to each participant's financial institution through direct deposit. Direct deposit is mandatory.

For more information, see *Tuition, Required Fees, Other Reasonable Costs, and Stipend* on page 12.

16. What happens if tuition has been paid by another source of financial aid before the participant receives notice of the NURSE Corps Scholarship?

Tuition and fees are paid directly to the educational institution that the scholarship participant is attending.

If tuition and fees for the initial Summer and/or Fall term of the academic year have been paid by another scholarship or a grant (e.g., Pell Grant, state grants or other scholarships), pending notice of an NURSE Corps Scholarship Program award, the school may return payments to the source of funding and then submit an invoice to the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program for payment.

If a scholarship participant has taken out a student loan to cover the cost of tuition and fees for their initial summer and/or fall semester(s) while waiting for notice of an NURSE Corps Scholarship Program award, the student should supply an itemized invoice to the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program showing the amount of tuition and fees paid for with the student loan. The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will then pay that amount to the academic institution.

For more information, see *Tuition, Required Fees, Other Reasonable Costs, and Stipend* on page 12.

17. Does the NURSE Corps Scholarship cover additional books or materials a participant is required to purchase during the school year?

During the Fall of the academic year, the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program makes a single "other reasonable cost" payment to the participant. This payment is to assist with covering expenses for required materials such as books, clinical supplies/instruments, and uniforms during that school year. If additional expenses for books and other materials arise, those expenses are not covered by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program. The participant is responsible for paying those expenses. The "other reasonable cost" payment is established in the initial award year and cannot be adjusted.

18. Is health insurance coverage included in the fees paid for by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program?

If health insurance is required and purchase through the school is mandatory, the cost can be included in the fees paid by the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program to the school. Insurance for family members is not covered.

If the required insurance is purchased through any other source, then the school will not be allowed to submit the costs for the insurance fee.

19. Can the rules change after an individual selected to receive the NURSE Corps Scholarship has accepted the scholarship?

NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants may be subject to changes in the statute,

regulations, and/or policies of the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program that occur after they have received their awards.

20. What happens if a NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant takes a leave of absence and/or repeats course work while attending the nursing program?

The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will discontinue the payment of all benefits during a leave of absence approved by the school (for personal, medical or other reasons). If the participant is repeating course work for which the Nurse Corps Scholarship Program has already paid, the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will not pay for that repeated course work but may maintain payments for stipends and all other non-repeated course work provided that the participant continues to meet the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program requirements.

For more information, see “Changes in Scholarship Payment” on page 15.

21. What if a participant’s nursing program does not offer courses needed during the participant’s first fall semester in the program?

NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants must be enrolled full-time in classes by September 30, 2015 in the program. If a participant’s school does not offer enough courses for the participant to enroll full-time, they will have to forfeit the scholarship. An exception is granted if the participant is on an official leave of absence from the school. In this case, the participant must provide official documentation from the school confirming the leave of absence. During this leave of absence, the participant will not be eligible to receive stipend or ORC payments, but can apply to have their stipend and ORC reinstated at the conclusion of their leave of absence.

22. What happens if the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program runs out of money or is discontinued?

When a scholarship is awarded, funds are obligated (set aside) for the number of school years of support requested by the participant and agreed to by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, as indicated by the signed contract(s).

If the participant did not sign contracts through the date of graduation, he/she will be given priority for continued funding when the existing scholarship support ends. Continuation funding will be subject to the availability of future funding and the continued existence of the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program.

For more information, see *Understanding the Contract and Length of the Service Commitment* on page 10.

23. When can a NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant start applying for positions to fulfill the service commitment? Participants are encouraged to begin searching and applying for open positions as soon as possible. Participants have up to six (6) months from

the date of graduation to obtain a nursing license and accept an offer of employment from an NURSE Corps Scholarship Program-approved Critical Shortage Facility. Participants have up to three (3) months following the day of their acceptance of such a job offer to commence full-time (or, if approved, part-time) work providing clinical services at the Critical Shortage Facility.

24. Who pays the salary of a NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant fulfilling the service commitment?

The health care facility that employs the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant pays the participant's salary. Each NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant negotiates his/her own salary and benefits packages with the Critical Shortage Facility where he/she is employed after graduation. There is no "typical" salary. Salaries vary by employing facility and location.

25. What is the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and what if my EFC needs to be updated?

The EFC (Expected Family Contribution) is part of the Official Student Aid Report (SAR) that you receive when you complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The SAR is required on the application and must be **complete** and **official**. The report is generated directly from the Department of Education.

The EFC measures a student's expected family contribution in terms of the ability to pay for educational costs. It is used to determine eligibility for Federal student aid. The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program has a funding preference for applicants of greatest financial need, defined as qualified applicants with an EFC between \$0 and \$5,158.

The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program uses the EFC listed on the SAR. If your EFC has changed due to special circumstances, the SAR must be corrected. Call 1-800-433-3243 to speak with the Federal Student Aid Information Center about your situation and obtain help updating your FAFSA. If your EFC changes before the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program application cycle closes, you must notify the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program. The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program will reconsider your application based on this change. The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program does not calculate your SAR. Your SAR is determined from the Department of Education by filling out a FAFSA.

26. What does the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program mean when it says participants must make "at least a two-year service commitment"?

Individuals who receive the NURSE Corps Scholarship are required to serve, at a minimum, a two-year full-time service obligation (or its part-time equivalent). NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants who receive less than 2 years of scholarship support will still owe the equivalent of 2 years of full-time service. The service obligation is extended by one year for each full-time year of NURSE Corps Scholarship support received beyond two years.

For more information, see *Understanding the Contract and Length of the Service Commitment* on page 9.

The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program hopes that participants will remain at their service sites and continue serving those in need even after the service commitment is fulfilled.

Participants who have satisfactorily completed their service commitment and are working at eligible public or nonprofit private facilities may apply to the NURSE Corps Loan Repayment Program (formerly known as the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program) to obtain funds to repay a portion of the outstanding balance on qualifying education loans.

27. What are the computer requirements for the online portion of the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program application?

The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program recommends the following browsers when completing the online application: Internet Explorer 8, Firefox, Chrome 6, or Safari 5.

28. Are students accepted for enrollment or enrolled in bridge or dual degree programs eligible for the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program?

Direct Entry Nursing Programs are eligible for a scholarship award. Direct Entry programs include non-nursing bachelor's degree to NP, RN to NP, and RN to BSN bridge programs. Doctor of Nursing Practice programs are also eligible. Applicants may be enrolled in an on-line program as long as they are NOT self-paced programs, the curriculum requires in-person clinical rotations, and all other programmatic guidelines are met. Students enrolled in Licensed Practical Nurse programs, combined degree, and dual degree programs are not eligible for a scholarship award. For complete eligibility information, see *Eligibility Requirements* on page 5.

29. Where do I send my NURSE Corps Scholarship Program supporting documentation?

Please upload your NURSE Corps Scholarship Program supporting documents to the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program Online Application: <https://programportal.hrsa.gov>. Applicants are **strongly encouraged** to upload all supporting documents in PDF format to expedite processing of their application. Materials must be received by the application deadline (EST 7:30p.m., May 21, 2015).

30. How may I check the status of my NURSE Corps Scholarship Application?

Applicants will receive a receipt of submission notice once the application has been successfully submitted online. Status and confirmation of receipt will be provided for uploaded documents via the online portal. Individuals selected for awards will be notified by e-mail no later than September 30, 2015. Individuals not selected for a NURSE Corps Scholarship Program award will be notified by e-mail no later than September 30, 2015.

31. Can a NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participant transfer schools and still receive NURSE Corps Scholarship Program support?

Transferring to another school or changing programs is strongly discouraged once the applicant has been accepted into the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program. Transferring to another school or changing programs will be considered only for exceptional circumstances and must be approved in advance to ensure continued eligibility for funding.

32. Can NURSE Corps Scholarship Program participants make changes to banking information after it has been submitted?

Yes, once the scholarship award has been accepted and the participant has electronically signed his/her application he/she will be asked to enter banking information including a bank account and routing number along with the Enrollment Verification Form and W-4.

You can make any additional changes to your banking information by using the online participant Portal at <https://programportal.hrsa.gov/extranet/application/ncsp/login.seam>

You can click on the banking information link and follow the prompts as directed.

Paper submission is acceptable only if the Portal is experiencing technical difficulty preventing the applicant from electronic submission. The required information must then be completed and faxed to the NURSE Corps Scholarship Program staff at 301-451-5629.

Please note: Only applicants who are selected for a NURSE Corps Scholarship Program scholarship will be requested to submit banking information.