

Final Recommendation:

The Establishment of Guidelines for the Nurse Support Program II

December 9, 2009

This recommendation was approved by the Commission on December 9, 2009.

NURSE SUPPORT PROGRAM II GUIDELINES

Section 11-405(e) of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland provides that Nurse Support Program II (NSPII) funds shall be used in accordance with guidelines established by the Health Services Cost Review Commission and the Maryland Higher Education Commission. This recommendation establishes the guidelines for the NSPII program.

A. PURPOSE

The Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC) approved the creation of the Nurse Support Program II (NSP II) on May 4, 2005, in order to alleviate the critical shortage of qualified nurses in Maryland by expanding the capacity of Maryland nursing schools. The program is scheduled to be funded for up to ten years by a 0.1% increase to regulated gross patient revenue. NSP II focuses on expanding the capacity to educate nurses, with specific attention given to educating nurses to become faculty members.

B. ADMINISTRATION

The HSCRC contracted with the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to administer NSP II, which includes developing applications and guidelines, overseeing the review and selection of applicants, conducting site visits, and monitoring and evaluating NSP II. MHEC provides the programmatic and administrative support necessary for the successful administration of the NSP II program. MHEC is compensated an agreed-upon amount from NSP II funds each year to perform its administrative duties.

C. NSP II Program Description

Under Nurse Support Program II, two components are authorized:

- 1) Competitive Institutional Grants
- 2) Statewide Initiatives (which include)
 - a. Graduate Nursing Faculty Scholarship
 - b. Living Expenses Grant
 - c. New Nursing Faculty Fellowship
 - d. Loan Assistance Repayment for New Nursing Faculty

Competitive Institutional Grants

Competitive Institutional Grants are awarded to eligible applicants consisting of: 1) a consortia of Maryland institutions of higher education with nursing degree programs and Maryland hospitals; 2) individual Maryland higher education institutions with nursing degree programs partnered with several Maryland hospitals; 3) individual Maryland higher education institutions with nursing degree programs; or 4) partnerships of Maryland higher education institutions with nursing degree programs through a

competitive Request for Applications process. The size of each Competitive Institutional Grant award will depend upon the grant project's ability to impact the nursing shortage in a timely manner, the depth and breadth of the initiative, and the feasibility of the budget.

In the annual Request for Applications, MHEC, in consultation with HSCRC staff, will designate initiatives that are eligible for funding. In FY 2010, allowable initiatives included:

- Initiatives to expand Maryland's nursing capacity through shared resources of schools of nursing and hospitals, allowing for immediate expansion of nursing enrollments and graduates.
- Initiatives to increase Maryland's nursing faculty through the implementation of sustainable strategies to increase the supply of nursing faculty by increasing enrollments and enhancing or creating graduate nursing programs.
- Initiatives to increase nursing student retention through strategies such as tutoring, mentoring, on-line testing.
- Initiatives to increase the pipeline for nursing faculty by increasing the proportion of students entering community colleges who transition into baccalaureate degree programs immediately after completion of community college.
- Initiatives to increase capacity statewide through development of innovative statewide programs in areas such as faculty development, simulation training, student retention, preceptor training.

MHEC will establish a review panel to evaluate all applications and make recommendations regarding the selection of proposals that best meet established goals for this program. Each proposal will be evaluated based on the criteria described in the proposal narrative section and summarized below. The rating given for each criterion will serve as a significant, but not exclusive aspect of the judgment made by the review panel. State priorities, support of diversity, and regional needs will also be taken into consideration. The panel also makes recommendations on the level of funding and adjustments that the project staff might make to improve the project. The recommendations of the review panel will be presented to the HSCRC, which will make the final determination.

Projects may range from three to five years. MHEC, in collaboration with the staff of the HSCRC, reserves the right to request changes to the original plan and the right to end the grant if deemed necessary.

Grantees may wish to request changes to the original plan once a project is underway. Approval must be received from MHEC before such changes are made.

Annual progress reports are required each year.

Statewide Initiatives

Statewide Initiatives provide funding to individual students and faculty using application processes. The authorized initiatives are:

- *Graduate Nursing Faculty Scholarships* are available to eligible students who are sponsored by Maryland higher education institutions to complete the graduate education necessary to become qualified nursing faculty at Maryland institutions.

The maximum total award per graduate student is \$26,000 for tuition and fees. Students may receive up to \$13,000 per year, which is pro-rated for part-time students. Recipients must sign a promissory note pledging to work as nursing faculty after receiving their graduate degrees or must repay the scholarship. The number of awards is dependent upon the number of applications and availability of funds.

- *Living Expenses Grants* are awarded to those recipients of the Graduate Nursing Faculty Scholarship who show need through submission of federal tax returns and W-2s. Awards may total \$50,000 per applicant over the course of graduate studies, with a maximum of \$25,000 per year.
- *New Nursing Faculty Fellowships* are provided to eligible, recently-hired nursing faculty members. Maryland institutions may nominate any number of newly-hired (within the past year) full-time, tenure-track faculty. Full-time clinical-track faculty who have a long-term contract with a Maryland school of nursing also may be eligible.

The maximum award amount is \$20,000, with \$10,000 distributed the first year, and \$5,000 distributed in each of the following two years, provided the faculty member is still employed in good standing. These funds must not replace any portion of the nursing faculty fellow's regular salary, but may be used as a supplement or to assist fellows with professional expenses, such as loan repayment, professional development, and other relevant expenses. The number of awards is dependent upon the number of nominations and the availability of funds.

- *Loan Assistance Repayment Program (through the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program)* is for Maryland residents who are nursing faculty. Awards are determined by applicants' overall reported educational debt at the time of application. Applicants will be ranked according to graduation date and then application date. Priority is given to individuals who have graduated from an institution of higher education in the last three years.

The awards are based on each applicant's overall reported educational debt. Award funds are distributed over three years provided the recipient remains eligible and submits required documentation.

D. Continuing Non-lapsing Special Fund

Legislation was enacted to create a non-lapsing special fund that is not subject to Section 7-302 of the State Finance and Procurement Article. The NSPII fund shall consist of revenue generated through an increase to rates of all Maryland hospitals, as approved by the HSCRC. Any interest earned on the fund shall be paid into the fund and shall not revert to the General Fund.

These NSP II Special Funds may only be used for authorized NSP II initiatives, including grants and awards as designated and approved by the HSCRC and MHEC.

Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of these guidelines to comply with the provisions of Section 11-405(e) of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. If adopted, the Commission will submit the approved guidelines to the Maryland Higher Education Commission for final approval.