



Federal Program—HPSA Physician Bonus

Learn more about how your tribal health center can both attract high-quality providers by utilizing the Health Professional Shortage Area Program.

It is no question that Indian Country shares an immense amount of diversity across the United States. Whether located near Metropolitan centers or in extensively rural areas, each tribe holds unique geographical and cultural characteristics. One difficulty that remains constant, though, is obtaining access to high-quality, culturally competent healthcare. Therefore, it is important for tribes to take advantage of programs that improve their efforts in attracting high-quality healthcare providers.

[Health Professional Shortage Areas \(HPSAs\)](#) are designated by the Health Resource & Services Administration (HRSA) as geographies, populations, or facilities with shortages of primary care, dental care, or mental health providers. To address the shortage, HRSA works with state governments to determine what qualifications are necessary for an HPSA designation. With these determinates in place, federal and state governments work in tandem to install incentive programs that entice the right providers to practice within an individual HPSA. The goal: Not only to find the high-quality doctors and nurses but, more importantly, to find those doctors and nurses who are the right fit for the communities they will serve.

What are the incentives?

HPSA designations provide two major incentives for providers. The first incentive comes in the form of student loan relief. Primary care medical, dental and mental/behavioral health clinicians often receive assistance through the [National Health Service Corps \(NHSC\) Loan Repayment Program \(LRP\)](#). Additionally, nurses serving within an HPSA have access to two main loan programs: 1) Primary care nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives, and psychiatric nurse specialists can take advantage of the NHSC program, and 2) Registered nurses, including nurse practitioners, have access to the [NURSE Corps Loan Repayment Program](#).

Additionally, providers can receive bonus payments when caring for their eligible patients. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) provide a [10% fee schedule bonus](#) to HPSA providers when they deliver care to Medicare patients. When providers reassign their patient billing rights to certain facilities, such as Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs), these facilities may qualify for bonuses in place of the provider. Individual states often mimic CMS by offering similar

bonuses to entice providers to care for the state's Medicaid population. For instance, HPSA providers in the state of Wisconsin can receive a [20% bonus for primary care services and a 50% bonus for Obstetric services](#). Fortunately for tribes, Indian Health Facilities, IHS and Tribal Hospitals, and Dual-funded Community Health Centers/Tribal Clinics all automatically qualify as HPSAs. So when a physician provides onsite care to an eligible patient, he or she can expect to receive an HPSA bonus.

How Indigenous Pact can help

As one can imagine, tackling the heavily bureaucratic process underneath an HPSA designation can be daunting. Although most tribal facilities qualify, there are many instances where additional certification and site scoring may be required. With such complex regulation, it is not all too uncommon to find errors in reimbursement, billing processes, and eligibility.

Indigenous Pact can help your tribe navigate the complex regulatory environment and maximize the HPSA program. The Pact's team has extensive experience in both healthcare policy and reimbursement and stands ready to assist your tribe today.