

Proposed Changes Safeguard Federal Loan Forgiveness Program

Eligibility for Care Providers

The Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) recently changed the National Health Service Corp (NHSC) student loan repayment program requirements for eligible medical providers to qualify for loan forgiveness in exchange for work commitments in safety-net settings servicing historically marginalized communities. NHSC now requires eligible medical providers to complete no less than 36 clinical hours per week (up from 32 hours at Howard Brown Health). NHSC also set a new 4-hour cap on administrative time per week (down from 8 hours at Howard Brown).

As a designated NHSC site, Howard Brown is required to create work schedules for current and potential participants of the NHSC program that align with HRSA requirements. As such, Howard Brown proposes updating the standard work schedule for full-time providers to 36 clinical hours per week and 4 hours of administrative time per week.

Howard Brown's designation as an NHSC site is essential to our ability to attract medical providers interested in working in community health. Currently, nearly 30% of all Howard Brown medical providers participate in the NHSC loan forgiveness program. Howard Brown is proposing moving to this standard for all care providers. Alignment with federal requirements for all care settings at Howard Brown will secure loan repayment options for all current and future care providers, who often come from disadvantaged backgrounds. A single, updated standard will also close disparities between program recipients and non-recipients. Currently, over 50% of NHSC participants at Howard Brown are people of color and over 50% identify as women.

Most Chicago Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) provide administrative time in alignment with the NHSC program. Howard Brown surveyed 12 safety net community health clinics. Eight provided four hours of admin. time in line with the

NHSC standard. Two provide four hours for most providers and five to six hours for one specific specialty or classification. This proposed change creates parity with similar health systems.

Howard Brown continues to make operational changes to reduce providers' administrative workload by leveraging support staff to assist with tasks at the top of their training and license. Additionally, we will continue to maximize the potential of our new medical record system, EPIC, to assist patients and care teams to more effectively and efficiently support documentation, scheduling, registration, and other care delivery needs.

Howard Brown is currently bargaining this proposed change with the Illinois Nurses Association (INA) on behalf of its members and is committed to bargaining in good faith. We will rely on the bargaining process to reach a determination before any changes are made affecting APPs and physicians. In all cases, we will respect provider contracts that may establish slightly different terms than those being proposed.

In sharing this summary with you, this is for your information, only. Howard Brown is not attempting any direct negotiations or individual dealing with union-represented staff of any kind. Howard Brown Health will and must negotiate only with the Union, your exclusive bargaining representative.

Should any union-represented employees have questions about bargaining or this communication, they should contact their union representatives listed below.

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