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NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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TITLE 183 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

CHAPTER 1 STUDENT LOAN PROGRAM UNDER THE RURAL HEALTH SYSTEMS AND
PROFESSIONAL INCENTIVE ACT

1-001 SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF REGULATIONS: These rules and regulations are promulgated under the authority of and in compliance with Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 71-5650 to 71-5670, the Rural Health Systems and Professional Incentive Act. The purpose of these rules and regulations is to establish procedures for awarding student loans under the Act.

1-002 DEFINITIONS: For the purpose of these rules and regulations, the following definitions apply:

Act means the Rural Health Systems and Professional Incentive Act.

Approved dental specialty means general practice, pediatric dentistry, and oral surgery.

Approved medical specialty means family practice, general practice, general internal medicine, general pediatrics, general surgery, obstetrics/gynecology, and psychiatry.

Approved mental health practice program means an approved educational program consisting of a master's or doctorate degree with the focus being primarily therapeutic mental health and meeting the educational requirements for licensure in mental health practice or psychology by the Department.

Commission means the Nebraska Rural Health Advisory Commission.

Department means the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health.

Doctorate-level mental health student means a graduate student enrolled in or accepted for enrollment in an approved mental health practice program leading to a doctorate degree and meeting the educational requirements for licensure in psychology by the Department.

Fiscal year means July 1 through June 30.

Health care means both somatic and mental health care services.

Master's-level mental health student means a graduate student enrolled in or accepted for enrollment in an approved mental health practice program leading to a master's degree and meeting the educational requirements for licensure in mental health practice by the Department.

Nebraska resident is defined by Neb. Rev. Stat. § 85-502 and the rules and regulations of the educational institution, which under Neb. Rev. Stat. § 85-501 determines resident status at the time of registration.

Part-time master's-level mental health student means a student who will complete a minimum of 12 but fewer than 18 credit hours per fiscal year.

Rural means located within any county in Nebraska having a population of less than 15,000 inhabitants and not included within a metropolitan statistical area as defined by the United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

1-003 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS: An individual, in order to be eligible for a student loan, must:

1. Be enrolled or accepted for enrollment in an accredited medical education program, dental education program, physician assistant education program, or an approved graduate-level mental health practice program in Nebraska;
2. Be a Nebraska resident and, for the purpose of complying with Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 4-108 to 4-114, attest that s/he is a U.S. citizen or a qualified alien lawfully present in the U.S.
3. Submit an application containing information specified by the Commission;
4. Grant an interview, if requested, by members of the Commission as part of the application process. The interview will be limited to matters relevant to determining the likelihood that the applicant will practice in a health profession shortage area. Interviews will be conducted as soon as possible after June 1, but no later than July 15;
5. Have motivation and preference to practice in a shortage area of the State of Nebraska as designated by the Commission;
6. If a medical or physician assistant student, have motivation and preference to practice an approved medical specialty upon completion of formal professional training, which may include up to five years of residency training;
7. If a dental student, have motivation and preference to practice an approved dental specialty upon completion of formal professional training, which may include up to five years of residency training; and
8. Sign an agreement with the State of Nebraska.

1-003.01 Doctorate-level students will not be awarded more than four loans through the program, and master's-level students will not be awarded more than two loans through the program.

1-003.02 Credit hours must be completed during the fiscal year for which the loan was granted.

1.003.03 A part-time master's level mental health student must complete a minimum of 12 credit hours during the fiscal year for which the loan was granted.

1-004 SUPPLEMENTAL SCREENING FACTORS: In consideration of granting loans, the prioritizing of applicants will include, as a minimum, whether the applicant has incurred any other service obligations which might influence his or her choice of a practice area.

In addition, the following factors may be considered as positive indicators of motivation to practice in a health profession shortage area:

1. Demonstration of a background of residence in a rural area or health profession shortage area;
2. Demonstration of a background of education in a rural area or health profession shortage area;
3. Demonstration of family ties to a rural area or health profession shortage area; or
4. Demonstration of a work history involving health care in a rural area or health profession shortage area.

1-005 DESIGNATION OF HEALTH PROFESSION SHORTAGE AREAS: The Rural Health Advisory Commission will designate an area as being a health profession shortage area if, in addition to the factors mentioned in the Act, the following two criteria are met:

1. The area is a rational area for the delivery of health care services; and
2. One of the following conditions prevails within the area:
 - a. The area's population-to-practitioner ratio exceeds the acceptable ratio set by the Commission; or
 - b. The area's population-to-practitioner ratio is within a range set by the Commission and the area has one or more high need indicators as set by the Commission.

1-006 APPLICATION PERIOD: Applications will be accepted annually between April 1 and June 1. Applications must be postmarked no earlier than April 1 or later than June 1. Applications postmarked prior to or on June 1 must be received no later than June 5. Applications will not be accepted prior to April 1 or after June 5. Faxed applications must be sent no earlier than April 1 or later than June 1.