



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
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October 7, 2022

Michael J. Rodrigues, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
State House; Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

Aaron Michlewitz, Chair
House Committee on Ways and Means
State House; Room 243
Boston, MA 02133

Cindy F. Friedman, Chair
Committee on Healthcare Financing
State House; Room 313
Boston, MA 02133

John J. Lawn, Chair
Committee on Healthcare Financing
State House; Room 236
Boston, MA 02133

Julian Cyr, Chair
Committee on Mental Health,
Substance Use and Recovery
State House, Room 312E
Boston, MA 02133

Adrian C. Madaro, Chair
Committee on Mental Health
Substance Use and Recovery
State House, Room 33
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairs:

Section 2A of Chapter 102 of the Acts of 2021, within account 1599-2026, requires that the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) or an organization under contract with EOHHS administer a Behavioral Health and Primary Care loan repayment program in accordance with the below terms.

“provided further, that funds in this item shall be expended for a loan repayment assistance program, which shall be administered by the executive office of health and human services or by an organization under contract with the executive office; provided further, that funds for the program shall be expended to enhance existing loan repayment assistance programs, if appropriate; provided further, that the loan repayment assistance program shall include: (i) not less than \$21,000,000 for psychiatrists to provide assistance of up to \$300,000 per individual; (ii) not less than \$12,000,000 for psychologists and primary care physicians to provide assistance of up to \$150,000 per individual; (iii) not less than \$35,000,000 for master’s degree-level mental health and primary care professionals including, but

not limited to, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, advance practice registered nurses, pediatric clinical nurse specialist, and licensed behavioral health providers to provide assistance of up to \$50,000 per individual; (iv) not less than \$20,000,000 for bachelor's degree-level mental health and primary care professionals including, but not limited to, community health workers, recovery coaches and family partners to provide assistance of up to \$30,000 per individual; (v) not less than \$14,000,000 for in-patient psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners to provide assistance of up to \$100,000 per individual; and (vi) not less than \$8,000,000 for in-patient mental health workers to provide assistance of up to \$40,000 per individual; provided further, that said program shall prioritize the recruitment and retention of a culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse workforce; provided further, that to be eligible for loan repayment assistance under this item, an individual shall: (a) work in a community health center, a community mental health center, a psychiatric unit in an acute care hospital or an in-patient psychiatric hospital; (b) have outstanding educational debt; (c) not participate in any other loan repayment program; and (d) be required to enter into a contract with the commonwealth for not less than 4 years; provided further, that the amounts of assistance per individual shall be pro-rated for individuals working on a part-time basis; provided further, that the executive office shall promulgate regulations for the administration and enforcement of the loan repayment assistance program under this item which shall include penalties and repayment procedures if a participating individual fails to comply with the program requirements; provided further, that not less than 45 days prior to the obligation of funds for the loan repayment assistance program, the executive office shall submit a comprehensive program plan to the executive office for administration and finance, the house and senate committees on ways and means, the joint committee on mental health, substance use and recovery and the joint committee on health care financing."

The Behavioral Health and Primary Care loan repayment program, outlined above, aims to address the shortage of behavioral health care and primary care providers in the CHC, CMHC, and acute inpatient psychiatric settings. Substance use treatment providers who do not work in a CHC, CMHC, psychiatric unit in an acute care hospital, or an in-patient psychiatric hospital are excluded from the loan repayment initiative outlined above. To address this gap the Opioid Recovery and Remediation Fund Advisory Council on June 28, 2022, recommended spending \$15,000,000 from the Opioid Recovery and Remediation Trust Fund to support loan repayment for providers who work in a substance use treatment provider site.

On July 11, 2022, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) issued a Request for Response ([RFR](#)) from qualified Bidders to implement, maintain, and support the Loan Repayment Program for Health and Human Service professionals. The administration costs for the loan repayment initiative authorized under line item 1599-2026 will be paid out of the appropriation in line item 1599-2026 of section 2A of Chapter 102 of the Acts of 2021.

The RFR outlines that the vendor will:

1. Implement the loan repayment program, including but not limited to the design of all documents in coordination with EOHHS (e.g., program applications, FAQs, scoring materials, applicant communications, loan servicer communications, timelines and operational processes, and report templates);
2. Develop and implement a public awareness campaign in coordination with EOHHS;
3. Provide ongoing operations and management support, detailed below; and
4. Support loan applicants in all facets of the application process, award process, and loan repayment process, including phone and email-based support.

The RFR responses were due on August 12, 2022. EOHHS is currently engaged in contract negotiations with the selected vendor.

EOHHS expects that individuals will be able to apply for loan repayment funds by the end of this year. Through a single application process, individuals will be able to apply for funds from: line item 1599-2026 of section 2A of Chapter 102 of the Acts of 2021; funds from line 4513-2020 of Chapter 24 of the Acts of 2021 (\$5M for Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists); and \$15M from the Opioid Recovery and Remediation Trust Fund.

Under the terms of the contract, the vendor will be required to operate the program in accordance with the below terms.

Contractor Responsibilities:

The Contractor must ensure that the Behavioral Health & Primary Care Loan Repayment Initiative (the Initiative) meets the requirements outlined in line 1599-2026 of chapter 102 of the acts of 2021. Specifically, contractor must ensure:

1. Applicants demonstrate that: a) they are employed by a CHC (Community Health Center), CMHC (Community Mental Health Center), inpatient psychiatric hospital, or psychiatric unit in an acute care hospital, as defined above, at the time of the application, an offer letter with a start date in the future is sufficient to demonstrate employment; b) their official role/job title is consistent with the eligible worker category (column 3 of table 1 below) for the award track they are pursuing; c) their role is either full-time or part-time; d) if they are licensed by a Massachusetts board, their license is in good standing; and e) they have been awarded a qualifying degree, as detailed in column 6 of Table 1, at the time of their application; provided, however, that applicants applying for award track 6, in-patient mental health workers may satisfy subsection (e) by demonstrating that they are enrolled in school with an expected graduation date on or before March 1, 2025.

Table 1

1.Award Track	2.Legislative Language from Statute	3.Eligible Category of Clinician/Worker	4.Max Award (fulltime)	5.Partial Award (parttime)	6.Qualifying Degrees
1	Psychiatrist	• Psychiatrist	\$300K	\$150k	MD, DO, MBBS
2	Psychologist and Primary Care Physician	• Psychologist, • Primary care physician	\$150K	\$75K	PsyD, PhD, MD, DO
3	Master's Level MH and Primary Care Professionals	• Registered nurse • Nurse practitioner • Physician assistant • Advance practice registered nurse • Pediatric clinical nurse specialist • Supervised, Master's prepared non-licensed behavioral health provider • Social worker • Licensed or certified behavioral health providers	\$50K	\$25K	MA, MS, MSN, MSW, MED
4	Bachelor's degree-level mental health and primary care professionals	• Registered nurse • Social worker • Community health workers • Substance use counselors • Case managers • Recovery specialists • Recovery coaches • Family partners • Certified Peer Specialist • Licensed alcohol and drug counselor I or II • Certified alcohol and drug counselor I	\$30K	\$15K	BA, BS, BSN, BSW
5	Inpatient psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners	• In-patient psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners	\$100K	\$50K	MSN

6	Inpatient mental health workers	• Mental health technician • Mental health worker • Mental health specialist • Mental health counselor • Certified nursing assistant • Family partners • Certified peer specialists	\$25K	\$12.5K	N/A
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Award tracks 1-4 are open to applicants who work in a CHC, CMHC, psychiatric unit in an acute care hospital, or an in-patient psychiatric hospital. Award tracks 5 and 6 are open to applicants who work in a psychiatric unit in an acute care hospital, or in an in-patient psychiatric hospital.

2. Applicants agree to fulfill the 4-year service obligation. The vendor will recoup funds, with interest (as set forth in the awardee agreement), from applicants who fail to fulfill their service obligation.
3. Applicants may aggregate employment at 2 separate employers to satisfy the service obligation. A maximum of 2 employers can be aggregated to fulfill the service obligation.
4. Applicant cannot participate in any other loan repayment programs concurrently with this loan repayment program. The applicant's service obligation can only count towards this repayment Initiative, except applicant may participate in the public service loan forgiveness program and count the service obligation period towards the federal public service loan forgiveness program.
5. Applicant has outstanding educational debt that accrued prior to the application date, except, inpatient mental health workers may accrue educational debt during calendar years 2023, 2024, and 2025; provided, that said educational debt is for a degree in nursing, social work or other behavioral health discipline. Applicant must demonstrate they have applied or been accepted to a program at the time of application.

Contractor must ensure that awards will be made to applicants who satisfy the minimum eligibility criteria plus one or more of the following priority criteria before awards are made to individuals who only meet the minimum eligibility criteria:

Priority Criteria

1. Applicant can communicate with patients and provide care in a language other than English and that skill matches the needs of the site where the applicant works.
2. Applicant has demonstrated a commitment to providing clinical care to historically medically underserved patients.
3. Applicant works in a designated Community Behavioral Health Center.

Award Value

Contractor must ensure that the award value does not exceed the value of the outstanding educational debt. If an awardee's outstanding educational debt is less than the expected award value, then the outstanding educational debt will be the maximum award. **All awards shall be paid directly to the applicant's loan servicer**; provided, awardee appropriately submits all necessary documents. To qualify for the maximum award, the awardee must work full time, in an approved setting, as detailed in Table 1 above. Partial awards will be awarded for part time employment, as detailed in Table 1 above.

Ongoing Operations and Management Support

Contractor will provide ongoing operations and management support for the Initiative including but not limited to:

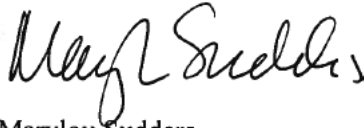
1. issuing applications;
2. screening and scoring applications;
3. contracting with awardees;
4. ensuring awardees comply with their service obligation and validating documentation;
5. providing oversight for and executing payments to loan service providers;
6. recouping funds from recipients who do not meet their service obligation;
7. complying with reporting requirements under this task order, as well as, state and federal reporting requirements; and
8. engaging in regular communication with EOHHS to ensure the Initiative's effectiveness and ongoing improvement.

Applicant Support: Contractor will support loan applicants in all facets of the application process, award process, and loan repayment process, via a call center and through email-based support.

Taxability: The Contractor will assist EOHHS and take all necessary steps to administer this Initiative in a manner where, to the maximum extent authorized by law, loan repayments made directly to the loan servicer or otherwise are **not** treated as awardee income.

EOHHS looks forward to and appreciates our continued partnership with the legislature on these important workforce retention initiatives. Should you need additional information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marylou Sudders". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Marylou" and last name "Sudders" clearly distinguishable.

Marylou Sudders

Cc: Senate President Karen Spilka
Speaker of the House Ronald Mariano
Secretary Michael J. Heffernan