



ANCHORAGE NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH CENTER

4951 Business Park Boulevard • Anchorage, AK 99503 • ANHC.ORG • 743-7200

March 27, 2019

SHARP Advisory Council
Co-Chairs Eric Boyer & Rachel Gearhart

Subject: Letter of Intent for SHARP 3

Dear Co-Chairs:

As a recruitment and retention tool, SHARP has been vital to the Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center (ANHC). Our organization firmly believes in the value of the SHARP model in enabling the provision of high-quality care to our state's citizens through an equitable distribution of health professionals throughout Alaskan organizations.

We see SHARP-3 as a program that will provide an important mechanism to support health workforce recruiting and retention in Alaska communities. This program would provide clear opportunities to expand loan repayment, as well as funding partnership opportunities and setting a standard program administration fee. Additionally, by expanding eligibility from their definitions in SHARP-1 and SHARP-2, SHARP-3 will allow an increase to the number and variety of health professionals and sites, like ours, who participate.

At ANHC, we have seen competition for providers continue to increase, due to retirements and growth in community demand. With this increase in challenges to recruit and retain high-quality providers, SHARP-3 provides our organization with a competitive edge. It allows nonprofits like us to have support in sharing the load when offering the important incentive of loan repayment for our providers, which is something that we would be unlikely to afford otherwise. In many cases, it is a substantial factor in obtaining service commitments that keep our highly talented providers here in the state, and we have heard that it is also a factor in recruiting new providers to Alaska.

As such, our agency is prepared to utilize SHARP-3 as soon as it is available. We do not see the 100% match requirement as a barrier, as we are committed to utilize our community partnerships to fund this match as needed.

We're eager to continue the momentum of SHARP and to support workforce development efforts in Alaska with this invaluable program.

Respectfully,

Scharla K. Baker, SHRM-CP
Chief Human Resources Officer
Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center



CAMAI COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

To: SHARP Advisory Council
C/O Robert Sewell, SHARP Program Manager
Eric Boyer Co-Chair
Rachel Gearhart, Co-Chair

From: Peter Tallman
Behavioral Health Director
Camai Community Health Center
2 School Road, PO Box 211
Naknek, AK 99633
Cell: (907) 469-1111

RE: Letter of Support for SHARP Funding

SHARP Advisory Council,

I am writing to offer my support for the SHARP program. I am a former SHARP recipient (Dec. 1st, 2012 to Nov. 30th, 2014). I received the SHARP loan repayment while I was a child therapist in Dillingham. At the time I was a freshly licensed social worker with a large debt hanging over my head from a top ranked and top priced, graduate program. To me SHARP was an absolute win/win. I was able to pay down a portion of my graduate school debt while working in a community with a high cost of living and with great need. The communities I served benefited from having a well-trained, motivated and well supported clinician who felt committed to giving full effort. It felt like a fair deal to me and I hope those I served felt the same.

In my current position in another Bristol Bay community I can say that the greatest challenge for our program is the recruitment and retention of qualified and talented mental health professionals. There isn't even a close second. It is extremely difficult to recruit providers from out of state, especially if you expect them to understand and connect with the unique circumstances of rural Alaska, and it seems nearly impossible to convince clinicians on the road system to venture off it for a while. As an example I have a behavioral health position that's been unfilled for two years.

I support SHARP because to me it's a fair deal for everyone. Alaska gets providers where we need them most, and providers get the practical support they need to be able to focus on their work and the reasons they entered their respective fields to begin with. SHARP is a good deal for providers and a great deal for Alaska.

Sincerely,

Peter Tallman, LCSW, CDC-I

Mission Statement: *Camai Community Health Center promotes and provides compassionate medical care for the health and well-being of our communities.*

Values: *Professionalism, honesty, respect, integrity, responsiveness, and trust.*

www.camaichc.org

Rachael Woods
P.O. Box 211015
Auke Bay, AK 99821
March 28, 2019

Dear Rachel:

I am writing to tell you of my experience as a SHARP recipient and why I think this is a valuable program. I am a recipient of the SHARP-2 grant and continue to encourage colleagues to apply for the SHARP-3 in the hopes that they will have as positive an experience as I did.

Because of the SHARP-2, I was able to pay the remainder of my student loan from graduate school. This was a tremendous benefit as it enabled me to allocate more money towards my family and relieved the stress of this financial burden I had been carrying since I graduated in May 2000. An additional benefit was the support I received from Robert Sewell who was my contact for the SHARP-2. He made himself available to me whenever I had questions and helped me to problem-solve issues with the agency where I was working.

As well as encouraging colleagues to apply for this grant I have encouraged the agency where I work to use it for recruiting clinicians. The SHARP program is a great benefit both to those who receive the grant and to those who benefit from practitioners being made available to them.

Please feel free to call me at (907) 523-6631 with any follow up questions.

Sincerely,

Rachael Woods
Teen Health Center Clinician



**MAT-SU HEALTH
FOUNDATION**

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March 25, 2019

Senator David Wilson
Senator John Coghill
Senator Gary Stevens
Senator Cathy Giessel
Senator Tom Begich

Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK. 99801

Dear Senator Wilson and Members of the Senate Health and Social Services Committee,

Please accept this letter of support from the Mat-Su Health Foundation for SB 93, SHARP-3 Medical Provider Incentives, Loan Repayment. Mat-Su Health Foundation (MSHF) is the official business name of Valley Hospital Association, which shares ownership in Mat-Su Regional Medical Center (MSRMC). MSHF invests its share of the profits back into the community through grants and scholarships to improve the health and wellness of Alaskans living in the Mat-Su.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is the fastest growing region in Alaska. Our current population of 104,168 people is projected to grow to 167,500 by 2045. One of our fastest-growing demographics is older Alaskans, who have a higher need for healthcare services than many other populations. Along with this growth comes the need for more health care workers. The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development stated in the October 2018 issue of Alaska Economic Trends magazine that that of the 25 Alaska occupations expected to grow the most in the next 10 years, 23 are related to health and human services.

Workforce Development is a key Mat-Su Health Foundation focus area, and we are committed to filling gaps in the community's healthcare workforce through programs that include scholarships, professional development opportunities, and support of SHARP. SHARP provides incentive for clinicians to work in Alaska by offering student loan repayment for designated providers in high-need healthcare settings. As a public/ private partnership, SHARP-3 requires no monetary investment at the State level, but it does require this legislation to pass. The Mat-Su Health Foundation invested \$25,000 over the last three years to support seven new healthcare practitioners in Mat-Su: five in Behavioral Health and two in nursing. Since the inception of the SHARP program our community has benefited from 45 practitioners who may not have been here otherwise.

The Mat-Su Health Foundation fully supports SB 93 and the SHARP-3 program. We're eager to continue the momentum of SHARP and we respectfully ask you to move this vital piece of legislation forward.

Sincerely,

Chief Executive Officer

"Improving the health and wellness of Alaskans living in the Mat-Su!"

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you today about my experience with the SHARP Program in hopes that it will convince you to vote for SB-93.

I first came to Bethel, Alaska as a pharmacy student for one of my final clinical rotations. The first day I arrived, several pharmacists told me they were in desperate need of pharmacists. They proceeded to tell me all the benefits of working and living in Bethel, including the potential of securing a SHARP loan repayment contract.

In case you are not aware, SHARP is a support-for-service program to help offset the cost of student loans and rural living for healthcare professionals providing care to the state's residents. This program, which requires zero general funds, helps keep practitioners within the state of Alaska.

During the rest of my clinical rotation, the pharmacists continued to recruit me, using SHARP as a tool. It worked! I was back after graduation working hard and applying for the SHARP contract. That year, I was the only full-time professional to receive the 2-year SHARP-II award at my facility. And, for the next year, I watched several pharmacists (and other professionals) come and go because they weren't awarded the SHARP contract. The staffing issue made my job very difficult, and there were many times I wanted to quit, but I stayed due to my contractual obligation to SHARP. And, thankfully I "had" to stay, because a few months later I met my husband, who was a SHARP-I recipient at the time, and we are both still living and serving the people of Bethel almost 5 years after moving here! When our contracts ended, we decided not to reapply because we wanted to share the opportunities we had with other professionals looking to move to rural Alaska.

Please vote for SB-93 to give other professionals the opportunity I had to fall in love with Alaska and its people.

Thank you for your time,

Kathryn Reynolds, PharmD



Alaska Native Health Board

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March 25, 2019

SHARP Council
Co-Chairs, Eric Boyer and Rachel Gearhart

RE: Letter of Support for the SHARP 3 Program

Dear Co-Chairs,

The Alaska Native Health Board (ANHB) is writing in support of the SHARP 3 Program.

ANHB was established in 1968 with the purpose of promoting the spiritual, physical, mental, social, and cultural well-being and pride of Alaska Native people. ANHB is the statewide voice on Alaska Native health issues and is the advocacy organization for the ATHS, which is comprised of tribal health programs that serve all of the 229 tribes and over 175,000 Alaska Natives and American Indians throughout the state. As the statewide tribal health advocacy organization, ANHB assists tribal partners, state and federal agencies with achieving effective communication and consultation with tribes and their tribal health programs.

ANHB has been a long-time supporter of the SHARP Programs. SHARP, as a recruitment and retention tool, has been vital to Alaska's Tribes and Tribal Health Organizations who work in some of the state's most remote locations. ANHB firmly believes in the value of the SHARP program and model in providing high quality care to our state's citizens through an equitable distribution of health professionals throughout Alaska. With SHARP 3 there is a clear ability to expand (1) loan repayment, (2) partnership funding, and (3) establish a standard program administration fee. The strategy is to expand practitioner and site eligibilities beyond the strictures of SHARP 1 and SHARP 2, and thereby increase the number and variety of health professionals and sites, like our members', who participate.

SHARP 3 provides valuable state infrastructure, without additional state general funds, and will provide ANHB's members the ability to expand the benefits of SHARP by allowing the recruitment of health care professional types in very short supply in our rural communities, which are not currently allowed under SHARP 1 and 2.

ANHB sees SHARP 3 as an important extension of Alaska's workforce development programming, and we want to continue the forward momentum of this program. If you would like to have further dialogue on this issue, please contact ANHB at (907) 562-6006 or anhb@anhb.org.

Sincerely,

Andrew Jimmie
Chairman
Alaska Native Health Board