## <u>Iowa Guidance for Sites Applying for NHSC Site Approval</u>

This document provides guidance for qualified entities in Iowa seeking to apply for approval as a National Health Service Corps (NHSC) site.

The Iowa Primary Care Office (PCO) welcomes clinics, hospitals and other entities' applications to become NHSC sites. The NHSC program is an important component to assuring that health services are accessible to Iowans.

In 2011, the NHSC updated the process for sites to apply and become approved. Now, the application process is online. Site applications are submitted to a portal, and the system notifies the PCO when a new application is made. The PCO reviews the application to assure that all requirements to be a NHSC site are met by the applying entity. After the PCO review, the application is reviewed by NHSC for a final determination about its approval.

The PCO makes this document available to guide sites through the portal application process.

### Key Tips:

- When you enter your application in the portal, you will need to upload several items. The
  upload process is straight forward, but having the documents ready in an electronic format
  makes it much easier and faster. Have each individual document saved separately to aid in the
  upload process.
- 2. Submitting your application in the portal without uploading the requested items will slow down the approval process for your application.
- 3. It is important to know whether your entity is already an approved site. If you are already an approved site, and it is time for your site to renew, you will need to follow the link to <u>recertify</u>. If you accidently fill out a new application, instead of a recertification, you will need to start over with a new application in the portal. So, it's best to check this ahead of time.
- 4. If your site does not currently meet the requirements to be a site, or if you aren't sure, please do not apply at this time. This results in delays.

# **Background Information**:

All sites, including sites that are applying for recertification, must meet all requirements. All site applications, including re-certifications, will be fully reviewed. Even if a site was previously approved, continued approval won't be granted if the site doesn't meet the requirements.

Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) are subject to all of the same requirements as other sites.

As an **initial step**, potential sites should visit the National Health Service Corps website at <a href="www.nhsc.hrsa.gov">www.nhsc.hrsa.gov</a> and click on "Sites" at the top of the page or on "Learn more" under "NHSC Sites" at the middle of the page. Scroll down until the title "Become an NHSC Site" is visible, and click on "Learn more".

Read all of the information on this page. Along with other critical information, this is the page
that shows you where to create an account on the online portal.
Follow and make note of the instructions on the webpage, including available information in
drop-downs within each category.
DO READ the Service Site Reference Guide.
Please also find the Discounted/Sliding Fee Scale Information Package, available by typing its
title into an internet search engine, by typing its title into the Search box on the NHSC website,
or by going to this URL: http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/downloads/discountfeeschedule.pdf.

### Here are **additional critical points** of information:

- 1. A site MUST be in a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) to be eligible to become an NHSC site. Sites wishing to provide primary care services must be in a primary care HPSA; sites providing mental health services must be in a mental health HPSA; and sites providing dental services must be in a dental HPSA. There are NO EXCEPTIONS to this criterion. In the event that a site wants IDPH to review their location to determine whether it qualifies for a HPSA, please be advised that this process can take several months and may not be completed within a current loan repayment application cycle. The contact person for determinations of shortages is Lloyd Burnside at <a href="mailto:loyd.burnside@idph.iowa.gov">loyd.burnside@idph.iowa.gov</a> or 515-242-6879.
- 2. A site MUST have a sliding fee schedule that has been in use for 12 months and meets ALL of the requirements of the NHSC. These are described best in the Discounted/Sliding Fee Scale Information Package mentioned above. Some key items include:

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Patients below 100% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL) pay nominal fee or no fee
Patients between 100%-200% of the FPL are discounted
No patient is denied services due to inability to pay
Non-discriminatory
Notice posted in a clearly visible location
The site must apply the discounted/sliding fee schedule equally, consistently, and on a continuous basis to all recipients of services in your site and/or location, without rega to the particular clinician that treats them

If your site is not in a HPSA, or if the site's sliding fee schedule (or charity care policy) doesn't meet these requirements, it's not time to apply yet. Work to address these requirements, and come back to the application process after these are addressed.

## **Steps within the Application Portal:**

The following are things to know and have ready when you apply:

The portal asks for the Children's Health Insurance Program number. In Iowa, this is the *hawk-i* program. You may use the number you use to bill *hawk-i*, or you may enter "hawk-i" in the field.

### These items must be uploaded:

Please gather these items prior to beginning your application in the portal. Save these items electronically to a convenient location on your computer or network. If possible please save in .pdf format. (While the portal indicates that you may fax or send these items to the PCO, this is intended only for those rare instances in which a site doesn't have the equipment or means to upload documents.)

The portal will reject applications that do not have an upload for each of the required categories. When you upload documents, upload each document one-by-one. Prior to uploading each document, select the type of document by clicking in the appropriate check box. This helps assure that your application won't kick out of the portal when the PCO submits its recommendation to NHSC.

	A <u>summary</u> of 12 months of billing, showing payer mix, including use of sliding fee schedule and breakouts of Medicaid, Medicare, and <i>hawk-i</i> . In the portal, choose the option for other items requested by Primary Care Office, and title the item "Billing Summary". Please assure that <u>no</u> patient-identifying information is included.
	Sliding fee schedule.
	Policy/procedure ensuring access to ancillary, inpatient, and specialty referrals (aka, referral policy).
	(The types of referrals will differ depending on the type of services offered (physical primary care, dental, or mental health.)
	Proof of practice (such as ONE of the following examples)
	☐ Business license
	☐ Articles of Incorporation
	☐ Commercial lease agreement
	☐ State Facilities License
	☐ JCAHO accreditation certification
	☐ Association of Ambulatory Health Care accreditation
Pri	vate practices (solo/group) also must upload:
	☐ Patient billing history for prior 12 months from sliding fee schedule, Medicare,
	Medicaid, and <i>hawk-i</i> . Please assure that <u>no</u> patient-identifying information is included.
	Curriculum Vitae for each member of the practice
	☐ Current license to practice

#### These items must also be verified by the PCO:

The PCO is also required to verify the following items. These items, along with others, will be verified by the site administrator's signature on an affidavit that will be sent to the site following review of submitted items.

The site has sound fiscal management practices. Here are some examples of items that
help verify this. Please consider uploading one of these.
The site uses a provider credentialing process when hiring. This may be a
policy/procedure on the steps your entity takes when hiring. For physicians, the process
is called credentialing. In this case your entity may contract with a credentialing firm,
and a copy of that contract would be a potential item that could meet this criterion.
Evidence that your site uses/checks the National Provider Data Bank is another example.

# **Thank You**

Thank you for your consideration of these steps toward a smooth and efficient application process. The lowa PCO seeks to improve and update this document as necessary to continue to provide assistance to potential sites. In the event that you have ideas for improvement, questions or need further information, please contact:

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