

**Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
Primary Health Care team
Underserviced Area Program**

Tuition Support Program for Nurses Guidelines

OBJECTIVE

To attract nurses from rural and remote communities to practice in eligible underserviced areas across the province.

DEFINITION

The Ministry's Tuition Support Program for Nurses (TSPN) offers tuition reimbursement to new graduate nurses from rural and remote communities who choose to do a return-of-service (ROS) in an eligible underserviced community. The program is open to nurse practitioner, registered nurse and registered practical nurse graduates who have recently graduated as of April 1, 2006, from a Canadian University or College. Applicants must be Canadian citizens or landed immigrants, eligible to work in Ontario and must live or have gone to high school within 100kms from the community they choose to locate to.

The length of service required under the program matches the number of years tuition is reimbursed (i.e., year for year). Employment can be full-time or permanent part-time (casual employment is not eligible). For applicants who cannot find full-time employment, Return of Service (ROS) will be based on 1500 hours per year. Funds will be flowed once the applicant has started their ROS in the community they choose.

ELIGIBILITY

In order to be eligible for the Tuition Support Program, an applicant must meet all of the following requirements:

1. Be a recent (since April 1, 2006) nursing graduate of a Canadian college or university;
2. Be registered with the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO): temporary registration does not qualify, (all applicants must apply to the program within one year following their graduation and registration with the CNO);
3. Have a permanent residence located no more than 100 kms from the underserviced community in which they wish to return service; or attended high school, for at least one full year, no more than 100 kms from the underserviced community in which they wish to locate to return service;
4. Provide proof of tuition fees paid for each academic year from nursing school attended;
5. Commit to and sign a return-of-service agreement requiring one year (minimum 1500

hours) of service in an eligible underserved community for each year of tuition reimbursed;

6. Comply with the Return-of-Service Final Approval Process and begin return-of-service within three months of securing employment in an eligible community, and
7. Hold Canadian citizenship or landed immigrant status.

HOW TO APPLY FOR THE TUITION SUPPORT PROGRAM for NURSES

To apply for the program, the following documents are required:

1. a completed Application,
2. proof of tuition paid for each academic year grant is applied for,
3. Copy of CNO Registration Card,
4. Copy of CNO wall certificate,
5. a signed Return-of-Service Agreement indicating number of years grant applied for,
6. a signed Acceptance of Ministry Offer and Consent to Collection & Disclosure of Personal Information,
7. a blank voided cheque for the bank account in which direct bank deposits will be made,
8. a signed Confirmation of Employment (to be submitted within three months of Conditional Application Approval), and,
9. Copies of Nursing Certificate/Diploma/Degree from graduated College or University

The application must be completed and approved in writing by the Underserved Area Program prior to commencing employment. The Return-of-Service Agreement and the Confirmation of Employment must be obtained within three months of the conditional application approval.

Applications will not be approved retroactively.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Regarding Your Eligibility

Any nurse (RN(EC), RN or RPN) who has registered with the College of Nurses of Ontario since April 1, 2006, has graduated from a Canadian university or college in the past year, and is a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant is eligible to apply to the Tuition Support Program for Nurses. For information regarding registration with the College of Nurses of Ontario please contact the following:

The College of Nurses of Ontario
101 Davenport Road
Toronto, ON M5R 3P1
Telephone: (416) 928 0900
Toll free: 1 800 387 5526
Fax: (416) 928 6507

Email: cno@cnomail.org

Website: www.cno.org

Employment Status of Nurse

A successful return-of-service applicant of the TSPN is not a civil servant, but is an employee of the hospital, facility or agency where s/he finds work.

How the program can help you locate an eligible community

Nurses interested in the program are encouraged to contact the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Underserviced Area Program, and an application package will be sent including the Tuition Support Program for Nurses Guidelines which outlines all required documents, copies of the required agreements, and a copy of the eligible communities. Applicants can also refer to the TSPN website link at:

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/ministry/recruit/tuition/html>

Lead Time Required

It takes at least four to six weeks to process an application after the applicant has provided all the necessary information. Nurses interested in the program are encouraged to provide as much lead-time as possible to ensure that everything is in order.

For more information please call (705) 564-7280, 1-866-727-9959 fax (705) 564-7493 or write to:

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
Primary Health Care Team
Underserviced Area Program
159 Cedar Street
4th Floor, Suite 402
Sudbury ON P3E 6A5

Questions and Answers

How does the Tuition Support Program for Nurses work?

Recent graduates from a Canadian University or College in one of the nursing programs (RN(EC)s, RNs and RPNs) who are registered with the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) and choose to locate to an eligible underserved community are eligible to apply to this program. Applicants must apply to the program within one year following their registration with the CNO.

Eligibility is restricted to nurses who live or went to high school within 100kms of the eligible community they wish to locate to.

If eligible, applicants will be notified of acceptance into the program within 4-6 weeks of receipt of the application. Once approved, applicants have 3 months to find employment in an eligible community. Return-of-service must commence within 3 months of finding employment in an eligible community. Tuition reimbursement funds will be flowed to the applicant once their return-of-service begins.

Recipients must complete one year of return of service for each year of tuition paid in a nursing position that provides direct patient care in a government funded agency (e.g. hospital, long-term care facility, community nursing for CCAC clients, public health nursing). Applicants must provide services in an eligible underserved community.

Return-of-service obligation must be confirmed on an annual basis. The recipient is required to provide proof of the number of hours they have worked (letter from their employer) confirming at least 1500 hours per year for each year of completed ROS.

All applications will be processed on a first-come-first-served basis. The tuition reimbursement is subject to personal income tax.

Who is eligible to apply?

The program is available to recent nursing graduates of Canadian colleges and universities, who are registered with the College of Nurses of Ontario, who are from a rural or remote community in Ontario and who are Canadian citizens or landed immigrants.

How does an interested candidate apply?

The Tuition Support Program for Nurses Application Form is available on the web site at http://www.gov.on.ca/MOH/english/forms/forms/uap_fm.html, or you may contact :

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care,

**Tuition Support Program for Nurses
Primary Health Care Team, Underserved Area Program
March 2006**

Primary Health Care Team
Underserved Area Program
159 Cedar Street, Suite 402,
Sudbury, Ontario P3E 6A5
Tel: (705) 564-7280
1-866-727-9959
Fax: (705) 564-7493.

Why is the Tuition Support Program available only to graduated nurses fully registered with the College of Nurses of Ontario?

Graduated nurses with full college registration are qualified to practice in Ontario, ready to start their career and are more certain of where they want to live and work.

How long does it take to process the application?

It takes at least four weeks to process an application after the applicant has provided all the necessary information. Nurses interested in the program are encouraged to provide as much lead-time as possible to ensure that everything is in order.

How will funds be paid?

All payments will be made by direct bank deposit. At the time of application, candidates will be asked to include a blank, voided cheque for the account they wish to be used for payment. Should banking information change, the candidate will need to advise the Ministry as soon as possible to ensure deposits are not delayed.

Are there any tax implications?

The funds provided through the Tuition Support Program for Nurses are subject to federal and provincial income tax.

Will the Tuition Support Program for Nurses affect eligibility for OSAP?

No. A student's eligibility for OSAP (Ontario Student Assistance Plan) is not affected when the tuition amount is reimbursed after the final year of studies or later in graduate training.

How will the length of return-of-service be determined?

Upon successful application to the program recipients will be required to find employment in a MOHLTC funded nursing position in an eligible community on the Tuition Support Program for Nurses Eligible Community Listing.

The length of service will match the number of years tuition is reimbursed (i.e., year for year), for a minimum of one year to a maximum of four years.

Am I eligible for maternity leave?

Yes. Nurses are eligible for maternity leave benefits as outlined under the relevant Employment Insurance Programs. Maternity leave does not count against ROS obligation and the leave time will be added to the ROS required.

Which designated communities are eligible for return-of-service?

Funding for this program has been targeted to those rural and remote underserved communities who traditionally have had the most difficulty recruiting and retaining nurses. A rurality index was used to rank the underserved communities into groups from most rural to least rural. The eligible communities identified on the Tuition Support Program for Nurses Eligible Community Listing are the most rural or remote according to this rurality index. This list will be reviewed periodically to assess additional community eligibility.

The eligible community listing is available on the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's website under the Underserved Area Program at www.health.gov.on.ca. This list of communities will also be provided in the application package. The candidate must also currently live or have gone to high school within 100kms of the community they wish to return service.

The candidate is expected to find and confirm employment in an eligible community within 3 months of acceptance into the program and they must begin their return-of-service within three months of finding employment.

Why does the Ministry require me to currently live or have gone to high school within 100kms of the community I choose to locate to?

The funding for this program has been targeted to rural and remote underserved communities who traditionally have had the most difficulty recruiting and retaining nurses. Choosing applicants who have a long-term link to the community will enhance the effectiveness of the program in recruiting and retaining nurses to those communities in greatest need.

Is there other help available to me to find a job in an eligible community?

To further assist you in your search for a compatible community you may also wish to contact the Community Development Officers (CDO) for southwestern, southcentral, eastern, northern, northwestern and northeastern Ontario for more information on communities looking for nurses. Contact information for each CDO is available on the Underserved Area Program's website at www.health.gov.on.ca:

When do I have to apply?

Candidates must apply to the Tuition support Program prior to starting employment. Applications will not be approved retroactively.

New graduate nurses can apply to the program anytime up to one year after obtaining their registration with the College of Nurses of Ontario but prior to starting employment.

When does return-of-service start?

The term of the return-of-service will be equal to the number of years tuition was reimbursed and shall begin at a time mutually agreed upon (by the candidate and the community/employer), within three (3) months of finding and accepting employment in an eligible community.

Can return-of-service be done on a part-time basis?

The nursing position can be full time or permanent part time, but not casual. For positions that are not full time, return of service will be calculated on the basis of hours worked (1500 hours is equivalent to one year).

What happens if there is more Tuition Support Program for Nurses candidates interested in a community/facility than there are practice opportunities?

The community/facility has the right to choose the nurses it determines would best meet the needs of the community/facility.

What happens if a candidate decides s/he would prefer to return service in another community or facility?

Eligibility is restricted to nurses who live or went to high school within 100kms of the eligible community they choose to locate to, however, should an applicant decide they would like to locate to another eligible underserviced community or facility that meets the distance criteria, they must inform the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) as soon as possible of their intention to leave their current employment. The ROS agreement is between you and the MOHLTC and is transferable within 3 months of termination of employment with your original employer. You may begin to work in another eligible community/facility within 3 months of leaving your original employment as long as all other criteria are met including the 100kms distance restriction.

What are the consequences for breaching the return-of-service agreement?

A recipient who breaches the return-of-service agreement will be required to pay back the tuition reimbursement, pro-rated to recognize completed years of service, plus interest and an administration fee. The interest rate will be equivalent to the Ontario Student Assistance Plan (currently prime +1%). An administrative fee of 10% of the original principal will also be applied.

Why is the Ministry applying an administrative fee on top of the interest rate for breaching the return-of-service contract?

Tracking participants over several years, in various locations over an extended period of time, is extremely complex and labour intensive. For this reason, an administrative fee to offset these costs for candidates who breach their return-of-service contract is applied.

How will funds be recovered if a candidate breaches his/her contract?

Should an applicant breach his/her contract, s/he will be advised in writing of the amount owed. At that time, the nurse will be provided with details where to mail a cheque in the amount owing. If the amount owing is not received within 3 months, the file will be turned over to a collection agency for collection.

Do candidates need to ensure the Ministry has current addresses and phone numbers?

It is your responsibility to keep the Ministry informed of your change of address as long as you are in the program. Please contact the Underserviced Area Program, at Tel: (705) 564-7280 , 1-866-727-9959 or by fax at (705) 564-7493.