



Overview

In 2003, the Idaho Legislature created the Idaho Rural Physician Incentive Program (RPIP) to encourage primary care physicians to practice in medically underserved areas of the state. The law established the Rural Physician Incentive Fund, which is funded by fees assessed to all Idaho students participating in the WWAMI and University of Utah state supported medical education programs. Eligible physicians can apply to receive a RPIP award for qualified medical education debt repayment.

Collection of the funds from WWAMI and University of Utah medical students started in the fall of 2003 with disbursement of funds for loan repayment to begin in July 2010. In April 2010, four physicians were selected to receive an inaugural award through this program. Two physicians were selected in April 2011.

The rural physician incentive fee is assessed to, and required to be paid by, all state-supported medical students who are preparing to be physicians. The fee is equal to 4% of the average annual medical support fee paid by the State on behalf of each student. For the 2011-2012 academic year, the fee will be \$1,638.

Benefits and Obligations

Program awards allow payment of up to \$50,000 in total toward qualified educational loans of participating physicians over a five year period of service in an eligible area of need.

Payments are disbursed directly to a physician's lending institution(s) in six-month increments over their designated service period. Disbursements are in the amount of \$10,000 for each year of service.

These benefits are in addition to any salary or other compensation received by the physician until the obligation is satisfied. If an individual is receiving funds from a federal loan repayment program, payments from the Idaho RPIP will not begin until the federal funds have been exhausted. State and federal loan repayment benefits may not run concurrently.

Eligibility Criteria

1. During the period covered by the award, the physician must be a rural physician providing primary care medicine in an eligible area;
2. The physician must be a Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.) and have completed an Accreditation Council of Graduate Medical Education or American Osteopathic Association residency;
3. The physician must be Idaho Medical Board certified/Board eligible, hold an unrestricted Idaho medical license, and be able to meet the medical staffing requirements of the sponsoring organization when applicable; and

4. The physician must be eligible to care for Medicare and Medicaid patients within the scope of the physician's primary care medicine practice.

Eligible Practice Locations

The intent of the program is to provide assistance for those communities of rural Idaho which demonstrate difficulty in attracting and maintaining enough physicians to serve their population. An eligible area under the program is defined as a medically underserved area designated by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services as a Health Professions Shortage Area (HPSA).

The granting of an award under this program requires the support of a community sponsoring organization (i.e. hospital, medical clinic or other medical organization) in an eligible area that has experienced physician recruiting difficulties and that can demonstrate broad support for this program from the medical community and community leaders located in the eligible area.

Selection and Approval Process

Applications are made jointly by a physician and a community sponsoring organization located in the rural community in which the physician wishes to practice. Applications are reviewed for program eligibility by an Oversight Committee and prioritized based on community physician needs and availability of funds. Applications recommended for program participation are submitted to the State Board of Education for final approval. Funding priority is given to Idaho-sponsored WWAMI or University of Utah graduates who have paid into the Rural Physician Incentive Fund, but physicians who were Idaho-residents prior to completing medical school out of the state and who did not contribute to the fund, and physicians from other states who were not Idaho-residents may also apply.

Oversight Committee

The law authorizes the State Board of Education to appoint an Oversight Committee to administer the Idaho RPIP. The membership of the Oversight Committee has representatives from the following primary constituent groups:

1. Idaho Hospital Association
2. Idaho Medical Association
3. Idaho Osteopathic Association
4. Idaho Office of Rural Health and Primary Care
5. The Idaho Area Health Education Center
6. Medical Student Program Administrator
7. Each Idaho Physician Residency Program receiving State appropriated funding
8. Other appropriate organizations

Idaho State Board of Education's IRPIP Web Address
www.boardofed.idaho.gov/public_col_univ/rural_phys.asp