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CHAPTER 1. HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

1.01 PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to set forth Health Professional Scholarship Program policies for participants required to fulfill service obligation in VA health care facilities. Scholarship Program participants hereafter will be identified as participants.

1.02 AUTHORITY

Authority is contained in 38 U.S.C. 4311-4336, and 38 CFR 17.600 through 17.612.

1.03 RESPONSIBILITY

a. The ACMD (Assistant Chief Medical Director) for Academic Affairs (143B) is responsible for monitoring participants during academic training.

b. Monitoring participants during service obligation is a joint responsibility of the ACMD for Academic Affairs and facility Director where participants are assigned for service obligation.

1.04 DEFINITIONS

The following definitions describe participants in the Health Professional Scholarship Program:

a. Full-time Scholarship Program participant means an individual who received a scholarship for full-time study leading to an associate degree in nursing, or a baccalaureate or designated master's nursing, occupational therapy, or physical therapy degree.

b. Part-time Scholarship Program participant means an individual who was a full-time VA health care employee permanently assigned to a VA health care facility and who received a scholarship for part-time study leading to a baccalaureate nursing degree.

1.05 SERVICE OBLIGATION FOR SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

a. Requirements

(1) A full-time participant must provide a minimum of 1 year of full-time employment as a professional nurse, or occupational therapist, or physical therapist at a VA health care facility designated by the Secretary. An additional year of service is required for each year or any part of a year a participant receives scholarship benefits.

(2) A part-time scholarship participant must provide a minimum of 1 year of full-time employment as a professional nurse at a VA health care facility in return for 1 year or any part of a year of scholarship support. Additional years of required service are calculated in accordance with the number of credit hours carried during an academic period(s) in the calendar year as these hours bear to the number of credit hours that are required to be carried by a full-time student in the same program during the same academic period(s) in the calendar year.

(3) A facility Director will be informed of the length of each participant's service obligation by ACMD for Academic Affairs or designee.

b. Beginning Date for Service Obligation

Obligated service begins on the date when a participant has accomplished all of the following:

(1) Completed all requirements of the degree for which the scholarship was awarded,

(2) Attained licensure as a registered nurse or physical therapist in a State, Territory, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or in the District of Columbia; or certification as an occupational therapist from the American Occupational Therapy Association, and

(3) Assigned as a registered nurse or licensed physical therapist under authority of 38 U.S.C. 4114(a)(1)(A) or 4104(1) and 4104(3) in full-time employment status.

c. Placement of Participants

(1) The ACMD for Academic Affairs or designee periodically will seek information from facility Directors concerning need for employment of participants during service obligation.

(2) The ACMD for Academic Affairs or designee will solicit location preferences for service obligation from participants.

(3) The ACMD for Academic Affairs or designee will notify the facility Director when a participant is interested in being employed at the facility for service obligation.

(4) The participant is responsible for contacting Nursing Service/Rehabilitation Medicine Service at the VA medical center to arrange for employment.

(5) The ACMD for Academic Affairs will establish the beginning date for service obligation as the date the participant was assigned as a full-time registered nurse or licensed physical therapist. The facility Director will submit this information to the Scholarship Program (143B), through the appropriate Regional Director (10BA ___/143B).

d. Appointment Procedures

(1) Participants are employed using facility FTEE and funds, and are centralized to the Chief Medical Director for the period of service obligation under provisions of VHS&RA (Veterans Health Services and Research Administration) Supplement, MP-5, part I, chapter 250.

(2) Participants will be appointed for obligated service under authority of 38 U.S.C. 4104(1) and 4104(3) on a full-time basis in accordance with provisions of MP-5, part II, chapter 2 and VHS&RA Supplement thereto.

(3) A facility Director may request reimbursement from the Office of Resource Management (10A2) for travel and transportation expenses of a participant to the facility for service obligation in accordance with provisions for centralized positions shown in VHS&RA Supplement, MP-4, part VII.

(4) The local Nurse Professional Standards Board or Standards Boards for Physical Therapy will act on appointments, advancements, and probational reviews of registered nurse participants in accordance with provisions of VHS&RA Supplement, MP-5, part II, chapters 2, 4, and 5, and VHS&RA Supplements thereto. Standards Board for occupational therapists and physical therapists will act on appointments and advancements of participants in these occupations in accordance with MP-5, part II, chapters 2 and 5, and VHS&RA Supplements thereto. Probationary review of occupational therapists and physical therapists will be conducted in accordance with the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 3321, and MP-5, part I, chapter 315.

e. Completion of Service Obligation

The ACMD for Academic Affairs or designee will notify the facility Director and the participant when the period of service obligation is completed.

f. Graduate Nurse Technician, Graduate Occupational Therapy Technician or Graduate Physical Therapy Technician

A participant who has completed degree requirements and is pending registration in a State or certification from the American Occupational Therapy Association may apply to any VA health care facility for employment as a graduate nurse, graduate occupational therapist, or physical therapist technician. Participants accepted for such appointments will serve under authority of 38 U.S.C., chapter 73, in accordance with provisions of MP-5, part II, chapter 2, and VHS&RA Supplement thereto. Such work experience will not be credited toward fulfilling the service obligation of the Scholarship Program.

g. Changes in Employment Status

A participant must be employed full-time during the entire period of service obligation. The facility Director will notify the Scholarship Program (143B) immediately when there is a significant change in employment status such as: a participant is considering resignation, being considered for separation, transferring to another facility, or requesting part-time employment.

h. LWOP (Leave Without Pay)

LWOP may not be credited toward the period of service obligation. Any LWOP granted to a scholarship participant will be reported immediately to the Regional Director (10BA___/143B).