

# Psych NP Scholarship Program Program Guidelines

## Program Purpose

*To increase the number of licensed Nurse Practitioners (NPs) with advanced behavioral health training practicing in Virginia.*

## Scholarship Overview

The Virginia Health Care Foundation's (VHCF) special Psych NP Scholarship Program underwrites the cost of tuition and required fees\* for Nurse Practitioners (NP), who return to school to obtain a post-Masters Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (*Psych NP*) Certificate. Only courses to fulfill Certificate requirements will be paid for by VHCF (up to \$26,000).

\*Fees may vary by university. VHCF will pay those standard fees required by the program, such as academic support services, administrative fees, computer/technology fees, malpractice insurance (*if mandatory*), or laboratory fees. Examples of fees/expenses not included in scholarship: books, travel, parking, health insurance, life insurance, accident insurance, educational association fees, tuition and fees for elective courses, late charges/penalty fees, and attorney fees.

Upon completion of the Psych NP Certificate, scholarship recipients must fulfill a Service Commitment by working as a Psych NP in a preferred organization serving uninsured and/or medically-underserved Virginians for two years (*or 4,000 hours*) Upon licensure as a Psych NP, recipients must work as a Psych NP at a preferred organization serving medically-underserved Virginians for 2-years (*4,000 hours*). Service Commitments may be fulfilled in any Virginia locality – they are all federally-designated mental health professional shortage areas.

- Preferred organizations: federally qualified health centers, free or hybrid/charitable clinics, publicly-supported organizations (*community services boards, state facilities, military or Veterans Affairs facilities*), or a practice/entity with a large portion of patients/clients enrolled Medicaid and/or Medicare.

## Application Process

1. Nurse Practitioners (NPs) apply the School of Nursing (SON) accredited by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission or the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education of his/her choice for admission to a post-Masters Psych NP Certificate program.
2. Once admitted to an accredited School of Nursing, the interested NP applies to VHCF's Psych NP Scholarship Program.
3. The Foundation reviews the candidate's application and all required supporting materials (*e.g., evidence of admission from the SON, including the student's start date/semester*) and interviews the candidate. The application determination is made by a review team.

## Eligibility Criteria

### The applicant must:

1. Be a licensed Nurse Practitioner in Virginia in “good standing” (*verified through the Virginia Department of Health Professions’ License Lookup*).
2. Be accepted into a post-Masters Psych NP Certificate program at an accredited School of Nursing.
3. Intend to enroll in the Certificate program full-time **or** following the school’s typical plan of study to complete the program in the shortest time possible (*as defined by the SON*).
4. Be eligible to work in the US for any employer without Visa sponsorship.
5. Be free from judgements arising from federal or state debt.
6. Have an agreement with his/her employer(s) to provide a flexible work schedule, as needed, while enrolled in the Certificate program.
7. Sign a release of information form for VHCF to receive grade reports; arrange for the college/university to issue invoices to VHCF; and for the Foundation to make payments and communicate with program faculty/staff, as needed.
8. Agree to the following via written contract (*part of the scholarship application*):
  - Maintain licensure and good standing as a nurse practitioner in Virginia for the duration of the Certificate program and Service Commitment.
  - Maintain good academic standing while enrolled in the Certificate program
  - Within four (4) months after completing the Certificate program, take the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) or American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) exam within 2 weeks of completing my Certificate program and, upon passing it, update his/her license with the Board of Nursing.
  - Fulfill an obligation to practice as a Psych NP in a preferred organization serving uninsured and/or medically-underserved Virginians for 2 years (4,000 hours) upon licensure.
    - ✓ Preferred organizations: federally qualified health centers, free or hybrid/charitable clinics, publicly-supported organizations (*community services boards, state facilities, military or Veterans Affairs facilities*), or a practice/entity with a large portion of patients/clients enrolled Medicaid and/or Medicare.
  - Stay in compliance with the Psych NP contract/Attestation Agreement for the duration of the scholarship and Service Commitment.

**Note:** NPs who are enrolled in or plan to enroll in a doctoral nursing program (*DNP*) concurrently or have an existing service obligation (*e.g., National Health Service Corps or other state or federal loan/scholarship programs*) should not apply, as the scholarship Service Commitment must begin immediately after Certificate program completion and licensure as a Psych NP.

### ***Preferences and More Favorable Consideration***

The applicant will be given preference if s/he:

1. Is accepted to and plans to enroll in a Virginia post-Masters Psych NP Certificate program – George Mason University, Liberty University, Old Dominion University, Radford University, University of Virginia or Virginia Commonwealth University.
  - Non-Virginia Schools of Nursing may be considered after verifying the SON has an accredited post-Masters Psych NP Certificate program.
2. Is an NP with 3+ years' work experience as an NP.
3. Is or has been employed or volunteered as a clinician in a health safety net setting (*must submit verification of employment or volunteer status*). Health safety net employment (*or volunteer status*) is not required to be considered for a Psych NP scholarship.
  - Health safety net is defined as free or hybrid/charitable clinic; Federally Qualified Health Center; health department; and, other organization which routinely provides health services to a significant number of uninsured and/or medically underserved Virginians.
4. Resides in Virginia.

### **A. Conditions: During the post-Masters Psych NP Certificate Program**

#### **The Scholarship Recipient must:**

1. Maintain full-time enrollment, as defined by the SON for its post-Masters Psych NP Certificate program (*or follow a course of study which allows the student to complete the program as expeditiously as possible*).
2. Confirm which courses are required by the SON for Certificate program completion with his/her SON Advisor/appropriate faculty/administrator. Only courses required for Certificate program completion will be paid for by VHCF. Scholarship recipients may take elective courses at his/her own expense (*tuition and fees*).
3. Provide to VHCF's Psych NP Program Manager in writing (*email acceptable*) the name and course number for the class(es) in which s/he is enrolled no later than the first day of each semester.
4. Document acceptable progression in Certificate program from semester-to-semester for VHCF to pay tuition and fees the next semester (*B or better in academic courses; pass for all clinical courses and satisfactory Preceptor evaluations*).

Unofficial grade reports (*screen shots are acceptable*) must be emailed to VHCF's Psych NP Program Manager by the student within 2 weeks of the end of each semester and scholarship recipients must direct the university to send official transcripts to VHCF via US Mail as soon as available each semester.

5. Notify the Psych NP Program Manager in writing (*email acceptable*) of any changes in personal information (*email, address, name, employment*) within 2 weeks of the change.
6. Notify the Psych NP Program Manager in writing (*email acceptable*) of any issues that could affect the student's enrollment/timely progression within two (2) weeks of the issue arising. Advance notification, when feasible, is appreciated.

Issues include, but are not limited to: (a) need to repeat any course work; (b) change in Certificate program completion date; (c) leave of absence approved by SON; (d) withdrawal or dismissal; (e) change in enrollment status/course of study; (f) withdrawal from any course; (g) significant family or personal health issue; (h) other life event (*birth or adoption of child, caregiver responsibilities, relocation*); or (i) call to active military status.

7. Maintain good standing with the Virginia Board of Nursing.
8. Have a portrait taken by VHCF's selected photographer when requested and allow use of portrait to help promote the scholarship program.
9. Help market the scholarship, as requested.

## **B. Conditions: Service Commitment**

**Upon completing the Certificate program, the scholarship recipient must become licensed as a Psych NP in Virginia and fulfill a Service Commitment. S/he must:**

1. Work full-time as a Psych NP in a preferred organization serving uninsured and/or medically-underserved Virginians for 2-years (*or 4,000 hours*) after graduating and obtaining licensure as a Psych NP in Virginia (*graduation is the date the student receives written notice from the university that all course requirements are successfully completed*). Service Commitments may be fulfilled in any Virginia locality – they are all federally-designated mental health professional shortage areas.
  - Preferred organizations: federally qualified health centers, free or hybrid/charitable clinics, publicly-supported organizations (*community services boards, state facilities, military or Veterans Affairs facilities*), or a practice/entity with a large portion of patients/clients enrolled Medicaid and/or Medicare.

**Note:** In limited circumstances, scholarship participants may work less than 40 hours a week to fulfill the Service Commitment (*a minimum of 20 hours/week*). In such cases, the equivalent of 4,000 hours/2-years full-time employment may be worked over a period of up to, but no longer than, 48 months. Scholarship recipients must make this request in writing to the Program Manager, and include justification for the proposed work schedule.

2. Practice only in the capacity of a Psych NP to fulfill the Service Commitment.
3. Apply to the ANCC or AANP to take the ANCC or AANP Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner certification exam within 2 weeks of completing the Certificate program.

4. Apply to the Virginia Board of Nursing for licensure as Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner or to add the a Psychiatric-Mental Health specialty to his/her NP license within 2 weeks of receiving notification from the ANCC or AANP that s/he is Board Certified as a Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner.
5. Notify VHCF's Psych NP Program Manager within 2 weeks of passing the ANCC or AANP exam. Should a recipient need to retake the exam, s/he must notify the Foundation's Psych NP Program Manager within 2 weeks of learning s/he must repeat the exam.
6. Notify VHCF's Psych NP Program Manager when s/he applies for licensure as a Psych NP/updates his/her license with the Virginia Board of Nursing.
7. Begin his/her job search for a Psych NP position to fulfill the Service Commitment no later than 4 months after completing the post-Masters Certificate program. The scholarship recipient will stay in regular communication with VHCF's Psych NP Program Manager during the job search process regarding successes and challenges.

**Note:** Before accepting an offer of employment, the scholarship recipient will confirm with VHCF's Psych NP Program Manager that the potential employer meets the Service Commitment criteria.

8. Document the official Service Commitment start date with VHCF by providing written employer verification of the date of employment (*use VHCF Service Commitment Form*). The Service Commitment will be completed after 4,000 hours of service in an approved organization as a Psych NP.
9. Be absent from work no more than a total of 35 full-time days (*280 hours*) per year for vacation, sick, personal, or professional leave without obtaining a Temporary Suspension of the Service Commitment from VHCF (*See below for information about the Temporary Suspension*).
10. Report service hours to VHCF on a semi-annual basis during the Service Commitment period (*use VHCF Report of Service Hours Form*).
11. Notify VHCF's Psych NP Program Manager in writing (*email acceptable*) of any changes in personal information (*email, address, name, employment*) within 2 weeks of the change.
12. Notify VHCF's Psych NP Program Manager in writing (*email notification is acceptable*) of any issues that could affect the timely completion of the Service Commitment within two (2) weeks of the issue arising.

Issues include, but are not limited to: (a) job transition or change in work status (*e.g., reducing hours*); (b) significant family or personal health issue; (c) other life event (*e.g., birth or adoption of child, caregiver responsibilities, relocation*); or (d) call to active military status.

**Note:** Advance notification, when feasible, is appreciated.

13. Maintain good standing with the Board of Nursing.

## **C. Conditions: Variances, Breach of Contract & Repayment**

*While the Foundation expects all Psych NP Scholarship recipients to complete his/her Certificate program and fulfill his/her Service Commitment, VHCF recognizes unanticipated life events may arise that may impact an individual's ability to fulfill all Psych NP Scholarship requirements in a timely fashion.*

*Should a Psych NP Scholarship recipient experience a life event requiring a pause or discontinued participation in the program, the participant may apply for a Temporary or Permanent Suspension from the program without incurring any financial penalty.*

### **Temporary Suspension of Recipient Obligations**

Acceptable reasons for requesting a Temporary Suspension may include: (a) leave of absence for medical or personal reasons (*up to one year*); (b) maternity/paternity/adoption leave (*up to 12 weeks*); and, (c) call to active duty military status.

If a recipient needs to postpone completion of his/her Certificate program **or** service obligation for a limited period of time, s/he must request and follow procedures related to applying for a Temporary Suspension from the Certification component or Service Commitment (*use VHCF Temporary Suspension Form*).

### **Permanent Suspension or Elimination of Recipient Obligations**

A Permanent Suspension relieves the recipient of all or part of the Psych NP Scholarship participation requirements. It may be granted on a case-by-case basis, only if the recipient demonstrates that the condition causing the need to withdraw from the program is permanent (*e.g., diagnosis of a life-long, debilitating condition or terminal disease*) and that requiring compliance with his/her obligation would be unconscionable.

If extraordinary circumstances beyond the scholarship recipient's control result in the need to terminate completion of the Certificate program **or** service obligation, the recipient must request and follow procedures related to applying for a Permanent Waiver in program enrollment or Service Commitment (*use VHCF Permanent Suspension Form*).

### **Repayment Penalties for Failure to Perform**

*In the event that a Psych NP Scholarship Recipient fails to fulfill his/her Certificate program requirements or complete the Service Commitment as set forth in the Program Guidelines and his/her contract with VCHF, the scholarship recipient must repay all tuition and fees expended on his/her behalf, as described below.*

A scholarship recipient who does not complete his/her Psych NP Certificate program **or** does not fulfill Certificate program requirements any time prior to graduation from the Certificate program, must repay all of the tuition and fees expended by VHCF on his/her behalf with interest set at the prime rate on the date of default, within three (3) years.

A scholarship recipient who does not fulfill the service obligation requirements during or any time prior to completing the Service Commitment must repay all of the funds for tuition and fees expended by VHCF on his/her behalf. IN ADDITION, liquidated damages must be paid, equal to 50% of the total amount of the tuition and fees paid by the Foundation on his/her behalf, with interest set at the prime rate on the date of default. The total amount (*tuition, fees, liquidated damages, interest*) must be paid within three (3) years.

**Note:** If any portion of the Service Commitment is completed, the repayment of expenses will be pro-rated to account for the number of Service Commitment hours completed.

If a scholarship recipient does not pay what is owed within 3 years (*or the agreed upon timeframe*), the debt will be considered delinquent, reported to a commercial credit reporting agency, and may be referred to a collection agency for follow-up.

A scholarship recipient must pay for any collection and/or legal costs incurred by the Foundation to collect any unpaid debt related to the failure to meet the obligations cited and agreed to by signing the Attestation Agreement (*part of the scholarship application*).