Tuition Support Program for Nurses Guidelines

OBJECTIVE

To attract nurses from rural and remote communities to practice in eligible communities 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 community with a rurality index score (RIO) score of 40 or greater**. The program is open to nurse practitioner, registered nurse and registered practical nurse graduates who apply within one (1) year of having graduated from a Canadian University or College. Applicants must be Canadian citizens or landed immigrants, eligible to work in Ontario and must live or have attended high school within 100kms from the community they choose to locate to.

*** Note: To find out if a community is eligible, please contact the UAP.*

The length of the return of service required under the program is based on the number of years' tuition that is reimbursed. For every year of tuition that is reimbursed, the applicant must work a minimum of 1500 hours within a 12 month period when working on a full-time basis, or within 24 months if the applicant is working in a permanent part-time position. If the 1500 hours is attained prior to the end of the 12 or 24 months, the applicant must work to the end of the 12 or 24 months to complete their return of service obligation. Casual employment is not eligible. 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.   The applicant must be a recent graduate from a Canadian college or university;
2.   Be registered with the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO): temporary registration does not qualify;
3.   Applicants must submit their Application and supporting documentation to the program upon securing full-time or permanent part-time employment and within one

(1) year following their graduation;

4. Have a permanent residence located no more than 100 kms from the eligible 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 eligible community in which they wish to locate to return service;

5. Provide proof of tuition fees paid for each academic year from nursing school attended;

6. Commit to and sign a return-of-service agreement requiring one (1) year (minimum 1500 hours) of service in an eligible community for each year of tuition reimbursed;

7. Comply with the Return-of-Service Approval Process and begin return-of-service within three (3) months of securing employment in an eligible community, and

8. 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 (Note: T2202A's are not acceptable as proof of tuition),

3. Copy of Certificate of Registration with the College of Nurses of Ontario,

4. a signed Return-of-Service Agreement indicating number of years grant applied for,

5. a signed Acceptance of Ministry Offer and Consent to Collection & Disclosure of Personal Information,

6. a blank voided, imprinted cheque for the bank account in which direct bank deposits will be made,

7. a signed Confirmation of Employment (to be submitted within three (3) months of securing full-time or permanent part-time employment) and,

8. Copies of Nursing Certificate/Diploma/Degree from graduated College or University.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Regarding Your Eligibility

Any nurse (RN(EC), RN or RPN) who has registered with the College of Nurses of Ontario, is a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant and has graduated from a Canadian university or college within one (1) year of applying to the Tuition Support Program for Nurses is eligible to apply.

For information regarding registration with the College of Nurses of Ontario please contact:

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. Applicants can also refer to the TSPN website link at: http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/ministry/recruit/tuition_nurs.html

Lead Time Required

It takes at least six to eight 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
402 - 159 Cedar Street
Sudbury ON P3E 6A5

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 community are eligible to apply to this program. Applicants must apply to the program upon securing full-time or permanent part-time employment and within one (1) year following graduation from a Canadian college or university.

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 six to eight weeks of receipt of the application. Return-of-service must commence within three (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 (1) year of return of service (12 or 24 months) and a minimum of 1500 hours for each year of tuition paid, in a nursing position that provides direct patient care in a Provincially 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 community.

Return-of-service obligation must be confirmed on an annual basis. The recipient will be requested by the UAP on an annual basis to provide proof of the number of hours they have worked (Confirmation of Return of Service form) confirming at least 1500 hours per year for each year of completed ROS. Hours worked towards the return of service obligation are not cumulative.

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.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/forms/form_menus/uap_fm.html, or you may contact:

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care,
Primary Health Care Team
Underserviced Area Program
402 - 159 Cedar Street
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 can take six to eight 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.

What is acceptable proof of tuition?

T2202A's are not acceptable as proof of tuition since the amounts reflected include more than tuition costs, i.e. education, textbook fees, etc. A letter from the College or University setting out only tuition costs or a copy of the applicant's on-line account setting out the detailed charges (clearly identifying details of tuition charges) are acceptable as proof of tuition.

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, imprinted cheque for the account they wish to use 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?

According to Revenue Canada, 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.

Will Grant funding be deducted from the total tuition costs?

Since the funding received through the Program is intended to reimburse actual tuition costs incurred by the candidate, any funding received by the candidate towards their tuition costs that is not a loan, will be deducted from the total reimbursable tuition costs. This would include any grant funding from the federal, provincial or municipal government.

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 provincially funded nursing position in an eligible community.

The length of return of service will match the number of years tuition is reimbursed (i.e., year for year), for a minimum of one (1) year to a maximum of four (4) 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 communities are eligible for return-of-service?

Funding for this program has been targeted to those rural and remote communities which traditionally have had the most difficulty recruiting and retaining nurses. A rurality index (RIO) was used to rank Ontario communities into groups from most rural to least rural. Any community with a RIO score of 40 or greater is eligible. This index may be reviewed periodically to assess additional community eligibility. To find out if a community is eligible, the candidate should contact the Underserviced Area Program.

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 prior to applying to 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 communities which 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.

When do I have to apply?

Candidates must apply to the Tuition Support Program prior to starting employment.

New graduate nurses can apply to the program upon securing full-time or permanent part-time employment and up to one (1) year after graduating from a Canadian college or university.

When does return-of-service start?

The term of the return-of-service will be equal to the number of years tuition was reimbursed. Depending on the specific circumstances of the applicant, return of service shall begin on either the date the Application and supporting documents are received by the Underserviced Area Program, the date on the CNO Certificate of Registration, or the date the applicant commences their employment.

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, the meeting of an applicant's return of service obligation will be calculated on the basis of hours worked within each 12 or 24 month period, following the start of the return of service. Hours worked towards a candidate's return of service obligation are not cumulative, i.e. there is still a requirement to provide service for 12 or 24 months even if 1500 hours as been attained in a lesser period of time.

What happens if there are 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 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 three (3) months of termination of employment with your

original employer. You may begin to work in another eligible community/facility within three (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 of $500.00. Interest will be calculated as simple interest and charged monthly on the outstanding principal, on the first day of each month, at a rate periodically charged by the Province of Ontario on accounts receivable.

Why is the Ministry applying an administration 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 administration 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 applicant will be provided with details where to mail a cheque in the amount owing. If the amount owing is not received within 30 days of terminating the contract, the file may 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, by fax at (705) 564-7493 or by writing to:

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Primary Health Care Team
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