

RCW 28B.115.020 Definitions. Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter.

(1) "Approved nursing program" means a nursing educational program that leads to a degree or licensure in nursing that is approved by the *nursing care quality assurance commission under RCW 18.79.070 and is located at an institution of higher education that is authorized to participate in state financial aid programs under chapter 28B.92 RCW.

(2) "Council" means the Washington state forensic investigations council created in chapter 43.103 RCW.

(3) "Credentialed health care profession" means a health care profession regulated by a disciplining authority in the state of Washington under RCW 18.130.040 or by the pharmacy quality assurance commission under chapter 18.64 RCW and designated by the department in RCW 28B.115.070 as a profession having shortages of credentialed health care professionals in the state.

(4) "Credentialed health care professional" means a person regulated by a disciplining authority in the state of Washington to practice a health care profession under RCW 18.130.040 or by the pharmacy quality assurance commission under chapter 18.64 RCW.

(5) "Department" means the state department of health.

(6) "Eligible education and training programs" means education and training programs approved by the department that lead to eligibility for a credential as a credentialed health care professional.

(7) "Eligible expenses" means reasonable expenses associated with the costs of acquiring an education such as tuition, books, equipment, fees, room and board, and other expenses determined by the office.

(8) "Eligible student" means a student who has been accepted into an eligible education or training program and has a declared intention to serve in a health professional shortage area upon completion of the education or training program.

(9) "Forgiven" or "to forgive" or "forgiveness" means to render health care services in a health professional shortage area, an underserved behavioral health area, or as a nurse educator in the state of Washington in lieu of monetary repayment.

(10) "Health professional shortage areas" means those areas where credentialed health care professionals are in short supply as a result of geographic maldistribution or as the result of a short supply of credentialed health care professionals in specialty health care areas and where vacancies exist in serious numbers that jeopardize patient care and pose a threat to the public health and safety. The department shall determine health professional shortage areas as provided for in RCW 28B.115.070. In making health professional shortage area designations in the state the department may be guided by applicable federal standards for "health manpower shortage areas," and "medically underserved areas," and "medically underserved populations."

(11) "Identified shortage areas" means those areas where qualified forensic pathologists are in short supply because of geographic maldistribution or where vacancies exist that may compromise death investigations. The council, with assistance from the department, shall determine shortage areas.

(12) "Loan repayment" means a loan that is paid in full or in part if the participant:

(a) Renders health care services in a health professional shortage area or an underserved behavioral health area as defined by the department;

(b) Teaches as a nurse educator for an approved nursing program;
or

(c) Renders services as a qualified board-certified forensic pathologist as determined by the department.

(13) "Nonshortage rural area" means a nonurban area of the state of Washington that has not been designated as a rural physician shortage area. The department shall identify the nonshortage rural areas of the state.

(14) "Nurse educator" means an individual with an advanced nursing degree beyond a bachelor's degree that teaches nursing curriculum and is a faculty member for an approved nursing program.

(15) "Office" means the office of student financial assistance.

(16) "Participant" means:

(a) A credentialed health care professional who has received a loan repayment award and has commenced practice as a credentialed health care provider in a designated health professional shortage area or an underserved behavioral health area;

(b) A nurse educator teaching in an approved nursing program;

(c) An eligible student who has received a scholarship under this program; or

(d) A board-certified forensic pathologist who has commenced working in or is committed to working in identified shortage areas in the state of Washington for the pathologist's required service obligation.

(17) "Required service obligation" means an obligation by the participant to:

(a) Provide health care services in a health professional shortage area or an underserved behavioral health area for a period to be established as provided for in this chapter;

(b) Teach as a nurse educator for a period to be established as provided for in this chapter; or

(c) Provide services as a board-certified forensic pathologist in identified shortage areas as determined by the council.

(18) "Rural physician shortage area" means rural geographic areas where primary care physicians are in short supply as a result of geographic maldistributions and where their limited numbers jeopardize patient care and pose a threat to public health and safety. The department shall designate rural physician shortage areas.

(19) "Satisfied" means paid-in-full.

(20) "Scholarship" means a loan that is forgiven in whole or in part if the recipient renders health care services in a health professional shortage area or an underserved behavioral health area.

(21) "Sponsoring community" means a rural hospital or hospitals as authorized in chapter 70.41 RCW, a rural health care facility or facilities as authorized in chapter 70.175 RCW, or a city or county government or governments.

(22) "Underserved behavioral health area" means a geographic area, population, or facility that has a shortage of health care professionals providing behavioral health services, as determined by the department. [2023 c 442 § 2; 2022 c 276 § 1; 2019 c 302 § 2; 2013 c 19 § 46. Prior: 2011 1st sp.s. c 11 § 204; 2011 c 26 § 1; 1991 c 332 § 15; 1989 1st ex.s. c 9 § 717. Formerly RCW 18.150.020.]

***Reviser's note:** The reference to "nursing care quality assurance commission" was changed to "board of nursing" by 2023 c 123.

Intent—2023 c 442: "Forensic pathologists are medically trained doctors who perform autopsies. For the last decade, there has been a persistent shortage in forensic pathologists both locally and nationally and this problem has only grown worse. It is the intent of the legislature to incentivize people to enter the profession by alleviating the student loan burden for medically trained forensic pathologists." [2023 c 442 § 1.]

Effective date—2011 1st sp.s. c 11 §§ 101-103, 106-202, 204-244, and 301: See note following RCW 28B.76.020.

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