



**Ontario
Health**

Health Human Resources (HHR)

Recruitment and Retention Programs
Available to the Primary Care Sector

Health Workforce Strategy & Implementation
November 2024

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Introduction

Ontario Health and the Ministry of Health administer a suite of **health human resources (HHR) recruitment and retention programs** responding to health system trends, expanding the provincial health workforce and maximizing its equitable distribution across the communities and sectors in greatest need.

Primary care is an essential pillar of Ontario's health care system, and attachment to a regular primary care provider has ample benefits, including continuity of care and improved health outcomes associated with the prevention, early detection and treatment of health issues.

The purpose of this Guide is to provide up-to-date information on programs that can support the recruitment and retention of health care professionals who deliver primary care, including in **interprofessional care settings**.

The Guide is divided into the following sections:

- **Physicians** | Page 2
- **Nurses** | Page 6
- **Physician Assistants** | Page 10
- **Travel Reimbursement Programs** | Page 11

A **brief description** is included for each program, as well as **eligibility criteria**, **key contact information** and **online resources** where additional details are available.

This Guide will be updated regularly to reflect the most up-to-date **program information** and **availability**.



Northern and Rural Recruitment & Retention Initiative (NRRRI)

For more information, including detailed program eligibility criteria, please visit the program website or e-mail program administration.

HHR Recruitment and Retention Programs Available to the Primary Care Sector

Physicians

Primary care physicians are often an individual's first point of access into Ontario's health care system. Several provincial programs are in place to attract physicians, trained in Canada or abroad, to communities where they are needed most and to support them once their practice is established.

Description

The NRRRI offers taxable financial recruitment incentives to each eligible physician who establishes a full-time practice in an eligible community of the province. Grants range between **\$84,718** and **\$124,730**, paid over a four-year period.

Eligibility

Physicians must:

- Be Canadian citizens or permanent residents.
- Commit to relocate to, and practice in, a community with a [Rurality Index for Ontario \(RIO\)](#) score of 40 or greater (or a designated Northern metropolitan area).
- Hold hospital privileges and agree to provide emergency department coverage, unless an exemption is provided by the community or hospital and approved by the Ministry of Health.
- Have earned required regulatory certificates and hold Canadian Medical Protective Association membership.
- Not have previously received Free Tuition Program and/or an incentive grant through the Northern Health Programs for a full four-year duration.

Program Information

E-Mail: NHP@ontario.ca

Website: [Northern and Rural Recruitment & Retention Initiative](#) (Ontario.ca)

Northern Physician Retention Initiative (NPRI)

For more information, including detailed program eligibility criteria, please visit the program website or e-mail program administration.

Description

Provides eligible physicians in Northern Ontario with the equivalent of a **\$7,460.95** retention incentive, paid at the end of each fiscal year in which they continue to practice full-time in Northern Ontario.

Physicians cannot receive support from NRRRI and NPRI simultaneously; the NPRI is designed to commence upon conclusion of the NRRRI's four-year duration. Physicians who have been in practice in Ontario for more than 25 years and meet all other eligibility criteria may also access the program.

Eligibility

Physicians must:

- Have completed their four-year NRRRI commitment and continue to practice full-time in Northern Ontario.
- Maintain a full-time fee-for-service practice, work full-time as a hospitalist, in a Community Health Centre, or under an alternate payment plan arrangement.
- Hold an Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) billing number and required regulatory certificates.
- Hold current active hospital staff privileges.
- Not receive simultaneous funding through the Northern and Rural Recruitment & Retention Initiative (NRRRI).

Program Information

E-Mail: NPRI@ontario.ca

Website: [Northern Physician Retention Initiative](https://www.ontario.ca/npri)
(Ontario.ca)

Rural Family Medicine Locum Program

For more information, including detailed program eligibility criteria, please visit the program website or e-mail program administration.

Description

Provides short-term locum coverage for practising rural family physicians to maintain access to primary care in eligible Ontario communities.

Eligibility

Communities must meet one of the following criteria:

- Have a [Rurality Index of Ontario \(RIO\)](#) score of 75 or greater.
- Have a RIO score between 40 and 75 with seven or fewer family physicians.
- Be eligible for the Rural Northern Physician Group Agreement under the Physician Services Agreement.

Practicing Physicians must:

- Be working full-time based on community definition.
- Spend at least 50% of practice time providing primary care.

Locum Physicians must:

- Be eligible to practice family medicine in Ontario.
- Have an active OHIP billing number.
- Have a valid Canadian Medical Protective Association membership.

Program Information

E-Mail: rfmlp@ontariohealth.ca

Website: [Rural Family Medicine Locum Program](#)

Practice Ready Ontario

Description

Practice Ready Ontario provides a pathway for internationally-trained physicians to become licensed in Ontario if they have completed postgraduate training and obtained appropriate clinical practice experience outside Canada. Program participants complete a 12-week clinical field assessment under the supervision of an experienced physician assessor.

Upon finishing the program, successful candidates fulfill a three-year return of service as a family physician in a rural high needs community with a [Rurality Index for Ontario \(RIO\)](#) score of 40 and above, or within a Northern Urban Referral Centre (Timmins, North Bay, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay).

Eligibility

Internationally-Educated Physicians must have:

- A medical degree from a recognized program.
- Canadian citizenship or permanent residence and demonstrated English language competence.
- Two or more years of postgraduate training in family medicine or general practice and demonstrate completion of seven core rotations, or equivalent experience (described on [website](#)).
- A total of 48 months of training and practice experience as a general or family physician and 960 hours of clinical practice as a general or family physician in the last three years.
- Successfully passed specific Medical Council of Canada examinations (described on [website](#)).

To host a Return of Service, Primary Care Organizations must have:

- A location within a Northern Urban Referral Centre or a community with a [RIO score](#) of 40 or above.
- At least one physician practicing on-site to provide supervision.
- Sufficient clinic space to add a new physician.
- Available physician funding, if the primary care organization operates on a salaried model (e.g. Community Health Centre).
- Patient volumes supporting a full-time comprehensive care practice.

Program Information

E-Mail: Program Inquiries: pro.info@tsin.ca

Community Inquiries: practiceontario@ontariohealth.ca

Website: [Practice Ready Ontario](#)
(Touchstone Institute)

For more information, including detailed program eligibility criteria, please visit the program website or e-mail program administration.



Community Commitment Program for Nurses

For more information, including detailed program eligibility criteria, please visit the program website or e-mail program administration.

HHR Recruitment and Retention Programs Available to the Primary Care Sector

Nurses

Nurses serve a crucial role in primary care. Registered Nurses (RNs) and Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs) are core members of interprofessional care teams, and for many Ontarians, a Nurse Practitioner (NP) is their primary care provider. Ontario Health and the Ministry of Health administer a number of initiatives designed to grow the nursing workforce in primary care.

Description

Provides \$25,000 to eligible nurses who make a two-year employment commitment to a high-need employer. Grants of \$10,000 are also available to nurses who relocate to Northern Ontario from 100+ km away, and/or commit to a Northern Ontario employer. Employers are entitled to \$1,500 in education funding for existing nursing staff.

Eligibility

Nurses must:

- Commit to two years of full-time employment by an eligible employer;
- Have registration in good standing with the College of Nurses of Ontario.
- Begin employment between April 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025.
- For six months prior to hire, not have worked as a nurse in Ontario.
- Not simultaneously receive funding from the Tuition Support Program for Nurses;
- Not be hired through the Nursing Graduate Guarantee program.

Employers must:

- Provide publicly-funded nursing services.
- Offer a full-time position or full-time hours to an eligible nurse.
- Complete the program application process, which includes attestations that appropriate hiring practices have been followed.

Program Information

E-Mail: info-hfo@ontariohealth.ca

Website: [Community Commitment Program for Nurses](#)

Nursing Graduate Guarantee

For more information, including detailed program eligibility criteria, please visit the program website or e-mail program administration.

Description

Provides full-time employment opportunities to Registered Nurses and Registered Practical Nurses who are within 12 months of registering with the College of Nurses of Ontario.

Funding is provided to employers to cover the nurse's transition into practice (12 weeks) and professional development for existing frontline nurses (8 weeks).

Eligibility

Nurses must:

- Have graduated with a baccalaureate degree in nursing or a diploma from a practical nursing program in Canada;
- For six months prior to participating in the program, not have been employed as a nurse in Ontario.
- Be willing and legally eligible to accept full-time employment (or full-time hours) after completing their transition to practice.
- Not be hired through the Community Commitment Program for Nurses (CCPN).

Employers must:

- Provide publicly-funded nursing services.
- Offer a full-time position or full-time hours to an eligible nurse.
- Have the infrastructure to support successful implementation of the program (e.g., physical infrastructure, nursing education, professional development and management supports).

Program Information

E-Mail: NGGMOHLTC@ontario.ca

Website: [Nursing Graduate Guarantee program](#)
(Ontario.ca)

Guidelines: [Nursing Graduate Guarantee](#)
(Ontario.ca)

Tuition Support Program for Nurses

Description

Offers tuition reimbursement to recent nursing graduates from rural and remote communities who are new College of Nurses of Ontario registrants and choose to complete a return of service in an eligible underserviced community.

Eligibility

Nurses must:

- Be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident.
- Apply within a year of graduation from a Canadian university or college and provide proof of tuition paid in each academic year.
- Have a permanent residence, or have attended at least one year of high school, within 100 kilometres of the community in which they wish to complete their return of service.
- Commit to working a minimum of 1,500 full-time hours within a 12-month period (or 1,500 part-time hours within a 24-month period) for every year of tuition reimbursed.
- Not be hired through the Community Commitment Program for Nurses (CCPN).

Program Information

E-Mail: NHP@ontario.ca

Website: [Guidelines for Application to the Tuition Support Program for Nurses](#)
(Ontario.ca)

For more information, including detailed program eligibility criteria, please visit the program website or e-mail program administration.

Learn and Stay Grant

For more information, including detailed program eligibility criteria, please visit the program website.

Description

Administered by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, the Learn and Stay Grant provides funding directly to students who are enrolled in priority postsecondary programs, including nursing, in underserved and growing communities. Students are required to work in the region where they complete their studies. Cost coverage is available for tuition, books, compulsory fees, supplies and equipment.

Eligibility

Nursing Learners must:

- Be a Canadian citizen, permanent resident or protected person and a resident of Ontario;
- Make a formal commitment to working in their region of study upon graduation;
- Enroll in the first or second year of an eligible program, institution and region (described on [website](#)); and
- Not receive simultaneous funding from Ontario's Skills Development Fund, Better Jobs Ontario or the Bridging Educational Grant in Nursing (BEGIN) initiative.

Program Information

Website: [Ontario Learn and Stay Grant](#)
(Ontario.ca)

Grow Your Own Nurse Practitioner

For more information, including detailed program eligibility criteria, please visit the program website or e-mail program administration.

Description

Allows a health care organization with a funded, vacant Nurse Practitioner (NP) position to repurpose this funding to support a Registered Nurse in completing a post-graduate Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner (PHCNP) training program.

Eligibility

Nurses must:

- Live within 125 kilometres of a vacant NP position.
- Have been accepted as a full-time student to a PHCNP training program, entering Year 1 or Year 2.
- Enter into a return of service agreement with the sponsoring organization to fill a vacant NP position.
- Not simultaneously receive funding from the Tuition Support Program for Nurses or Nursing Education Initiative, administered for Registered Nurses, NPs and Registered Practical Nurses by the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO), Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario (NPAO) and WeRPN, respectively.

Employers must:

- Receive Government of Ontario funding for a PHCNP position.
- Have an NP position that has been vacant for six months.
- In communities with a [Rurality Index of Ontario \(RIO\)](#) score of 60 or greater, have an NP position that has been vacant for three months.

Program Information

E-Mail: GYONP@ontario.ca

Website: [Grow Your Own Nurse Practitioner Initiative](#)
(Ontario.ca)

Guidelines: [Grow Your Own Nurse Practitioner Initiative - Program Guidelines](#)
(Ontario.ca)



Physician Assistant (PA) Career Start

For more information, including detailed program eligibility criteria, please visit the program website or e-mail program administration.

HHR Recruitment and Retention Programs Available to the Primary Care Sector

Physician Assistants

Physician Assistants (PAs) are health care providers who work under the supervision of a registered physician. Support is available to primary care organizations committed to recruiting a PA and sustaining that PA role in the long-term.

Description

Connects new PA graduates with employers seeking to create a long-term PA position within their organization, and provides one-year funding of up to \$46,000.

For PA positions in communities with a [Rurality Index for Ontario \(RIO\)](#) score of 40 or greater, or a Northern Urban Referral Centre (Timmins, North Bay, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay), PAs may be eligible for two years of funding (\$46,000 per year) and a \$10,000 grant contingent on completion of their first year.

The annual application deadline is posted on the [program website](#).

Eligibility

Employers must:

- Commit to employ a newly-graduated PA full-time.
- Demonstrate plans for the long-term sustainability of the PA position following the conclusion of program funding.
- Fund a six-week, full-time PA position for PAs whose positions are not sustained beyond the funding term.
- Ensure PAs have adequate physician supervision.
- Adhere to financial and progress reporting requirements.
- Not be a Family Health Team (FHT); FHTs seeking to hire a PA must use their annual budget submission process.

Program Information

E-Mail: pacareerstart@ontario.ca

Website: [Physician Assistants](#)
(Ontario.ca)



Community Assessment Visit Program

For more information, including detailed program eligibility criteria, please visit the program website or e-mail program administration.

HHR Recruitment and Retention Programs

Travel Reimbursement Programs

Providing opportunities to visit rural, remote and Northern communities is a key recruitment strategy for attracting health care professionals to practice in these areas of Ontario. Reimbursing these travel costs can be an effective way of facilitating this type of travel, and resulting recruitment outcomes.

Description

Reimburses travel and accommodation expenses within Ontario, incurred by health care professionals and their spouse, for the purpose of assessing practice opportunities in an eligible community. Funding is available to approved physicians, nurses and rehabilitation professionals including occupational therapists, speech language therapists and physiotherapists who are practicing in publicly-funded settings.

Eligibility

Health Care Professionals must:

- Obtain prior travel approval from the Ministry of Health.
- Hold a valid certificate of registration to practice medicine in Ontario, or be registered with the governing body of Ontario of their discipline.
- Produce evidence that they are eligible to obtain a certificate of registration, within one year of the visit date, subject to the rules and regulations of the governing body of Ontario of their discipline.
- During an assessment visit to an eligible community, meet with the community representative responsible for the recruitment of health care professionals.

Program Information

E-Mail: NHP@ontario.ca

Website: [Community Assessment Visit Program](#)
(Ontario.ca)

[Community Assessment Visit Program \(Nursing\)](#)
(Ontario.ca)



HHR Recruitment and Retention Programs

At a Glance

Program	For More Information...
Physicians	
Northern & Rural Recruitment and Retention Initiative	E-Mail: NHP@ontario.ca Website: Click Here
Northern Physician Retention Initiative	E-Mail: NPRI@ontario.ca Website: Click Here
Rural Family Medicine Locum Program	E-Mail: rfmlp@ontariohealth.ca Website: Click Here
Practice Ready Ontario	E-Mail: pro.info@tsin.ca (Program) practiceontario@ontariohealth.ca (Community) Website: Click Here
Nurses	
Community Commitment Program for Nurses	E-Mail: info-hfo@ontariohealth.ca Website: Click Here
Tuition Support Program for Nurses	E-Mail: NHP@ontario.ca Website: Click Here
Learn and Stay Grant	Website: Click Here
Nursing Graduate Guarantee	E-Mail: NGGMOHLTC@ontario.ca Website: Click Here Guidelines: Click Here
Grow Your Own Nurse Practitioner	E-Mail: GYONP@ontario.ca Website: Click Here Guidelines: Click Here
Physician Assistants	
Physician Assistant Career Start	E-Mail: pacareerstart@ontario.ca Website: Click Here
Travel Reimbursement Programs	
Community Assessment Visit Program	E-Mail: NHP@ontario.ca Website: Click Here

Need this information in an accessible format? 1-877-280-8538,
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Document disponible en français en contactant
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