

CHAPTER 43-29.1 VETERINARIAN LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM

43-29.1-01. Loan repayment program - Veterinarians - Maximum amount of funds.

Each year the state health council, in consultation with the state board of animal health, shall select qualified applicants to participate in a loan repayment program, as provided for in this chapter. Each applicant must be a veterinarian and must agree to provide food animal veterinary medicine services to communities in this state. The selected applicants are eligible to receive up to eighty thousand dollars in loan repayment funds. The number of applicants that the council may select for participation in the loan repayment program is limited only by the moneys available to support the program, as provided for in this chapter.

43-29.1-02. Loan repayment program - Veterinarians - Powers of state health council.

The state health council may:

1. Determine the eligibility and qualifications of an applicant for loan repayment funds under this chapter;
2. Identify communities that are in need of a veterinarian and establish a priority ranking for participation in the program by the selected communities;
3. Create and distribute a loan repayment application;
4. Determine the amount of the loan repayment funds for which an applicant may be eligible under this chapter and, in making this determination, examine any outstanding education loans incurred by the applicant;
5. Establish conditions regarding the use of the loan repayment funds;
6. Enter a nonrenewable contract with the selected applicant and the selected community to provide to the applicant funds for the repayment of education loans in exchange for the applicant agreeing to actively practice in the selected community;
7. Receive and use funds appropriated for the program;
8. Enforce any contract under the program;
9. Cancel a contract for reasonable cause;
10. Participate in federal programs that support the repayment of education loans incurred by veterinarians and agree to the conditions of the federal programs;
11. Accept property from an entity; and
12. Cooperate with the state department of health to effectuate this chapter.

43-29.1-03. Veterinarian selection criteria - Eligibility for loan repayment.

1. In establishing the criteria regarding eligibility for loan repayment funds under this chapter, the state health council shall consider the applicant's:
 - a. Training in food animal veterinary medicine, ability, willingness to engage in food animal veterinary medicine, and the extent to which such services are needed in a selected community;
 - b. Commitment to serve in a community that is in need of a veterinarian;
 - c. Compatibility with a selected community;
 - d. Date of availability for service to the selected community; and
 - e. Competence and professional conduct.
2. An applicant selected to receive loan repayment funds under this chapter:
 - a. Must have graduated from an accredited college of veterinary medicine;
 - b. Must be licensed to practice veterinary medicine in this state; and
 - c. Must be employed full-time in the private practice of veterinary medicine.
3. A selected applicant shall contract to provide full-time veterinary medicine services for two, three, or four years in one or more selected communities.

43-29.1-04. Community selection criteria.

1. In selecting a community with a defined need for the services of a veterinarian, the health council shall consider:
 - a. The size of the community and give priority:

- (1) First to rural communities having a population under five thousand;
 - (2) Second to communities having a population between five thousand and ten thousand; and
 - (3) Third to communities having a population greater than ten thousand.
 - b. The number of veterinarians practicing in the community and the surrounding area.
 - c. The access by residents to veterinarians practicing in the community and the surrounding area.
 - d. The degree to which residents support the addition of a veterinarian within the community.
2. The state health council shall give priority for participation to a community that demonstrates a need for a veterinarian.
 3. In evaluating communities for participation in this program, the state health council may consult with public and private entities and visit the communities.

43-29.1-05. Eligible loans.

The state health council may provide for loan repayment funds to a veterinarian who has received an education loan. The council may not provide funds for the repayment of a loan that is in default at the time of the application. The amount of the repayment must be related to the veterinarian's outstanding education loans.

43-29.1-06. Release from contract obligation.

1. The state health council shall release a veterinarian from the veterinarian's loan repayment contract without penalty if:
 - a. The veterinarian has completed the service requirements of the contract;
 - b. The veterinarian is unable to complete the service requirement of the contract because of a permanent physical disability;
 - c. The veterinarian demonstrates to the state health council extreme hardship or shows other good cause justifying the release; or
 - d. The veterinarian dies.
2. A decision by the state health council not to release a veterinarian from the veterinarian's loan repayment contract without penalty is reviewable by district court.

43-29.1-07. Loan repayment.

1.
 - a. Upon completing six months of the first year of service, as required by the contract, the veterinarian is eligible to receive a loan payment in an amount up to fifteen thousand dollars.
 - b. Upon completing a second year of service, as required by the contract, the veterinarian is eligible to receive a loan payment in an amount up to fifteen thousand dollars.
 - c. Upon completing a third year of service, as required by the contract, the veterinarian is eligible to receive a loan payment in an amount up to twenty-five thousand dollars.
 - d. Upon completing a fourth year of service, as required by the contract, the veterinarian is eligible to receive a loan payment in an amount up to twenty-five thousand dollars.
2. All payments under this section must be made on the veterinarian's behalf to the issuer of the student loan.
3. A veterinarian is not entitled to receive more than eighty thousand dollars under this section.
4. If an individual fails to complete an entire year of service, the amount repayable under this section for that year must be prorated.
5. If any moneys remain in the state veterinary loan repayment account after the health council has met all statutory and contractual obligations established under this chapter,

the health council may use the moneys to increase the number of veterinarians participating in the loan repayment program.

43-29.1-08. Gifts, grants, and donations - Continuing appropriation.

1. The state health council may accept any conditional or unconditional gifts, grants, and donations for the purpose of providing moneys for the repayment of veterinarians' education loans. However, if an entity desires to provide moneys to the state health council for the location of a veterinarian in or at a specific site, the entity shall commit to provide the full amount required under this program for a period of four years.
2. The state health council may contract with a public or private entity and may expend any moneys available to the council to obtain matching funds for the purposes of this chapter.
3. All moneys received as gifts, grants, or donations under this section are appropriated on a continuing basis to the state health council for the purpose of increasing the number of veterinarians participating in the loan repayment program under this chapter.