

The Public Health Preparedness Workforce Development Act of 2008
Section-by-Section Legislative Description

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE

- Names the legislation the “Public Health Workforce Preparedness Workforce Development Act of 2008.”

SECTION 2. FINDINGS

- Makes a number of different findings about the impending public health workforce shortage in the United States, clearly illustrating the need for incentives to encourage public health graduates to enter the federal public health workforce.

SECTION 3. PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PROGRAMS

- Amends part E of title VII of the Public Health Service Act (dealing with the health professions workforce) by adding the following sections:

“Section 780. Public Health Workforce Scholarship Program

- Establishes the Public Health Workforce Scholarship Program that *may only provide scholarships to students who enter the public health workforce for either two years or for as many years as they received scholarship assistance.*
- Clearly stipulates the terms under which the Health and Human Services Department may enter into a binding contract with scholarship recipients.
- Allows scholarship recipients to postpone their obligated service in the public health workforce so long as these students complete an approved internship, residency, or public health preparedness advanced training program.
- Authorizes \$35 million annually for this scholarship assistance program through 2014.

Section 781. Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program

- Establishes the Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program to assist public health students in defraying liability for loans incurred during pursuit of public health degrees.
- Limits loan repayment availability to public health students or graduates who have either accepted employment in a Federal, State, local, or tribal public health agency, or who have been employed by such an agency and who graduated within the last ten years.
- Requires loan repayment beneficiaries to serve at least three years in the public health workforce; gives HHS the ability to agree to contracts with loan repayment recipients that extend this period of service in exchange for proportional loan repayment increases.
- Creates an incentive for loan repayment recipients to relocate to high-priority service areas in exchange for an additional 20-percent repayment award per academic year, so long as the total loan repayment provided by the government in any given year does not exceed one-third of the student’s loan balance.

- Allows loan repayment recipients to petition HHS to delay their period of obligated service while the recipient completes an approved internship, residency, or other relevant public health preparedness advanced training program.
- Authorizes \$195 million annually for this loan repayment assistance through 2014.

Section 782. Grants for State and Local Programs

- Authorizes the awarding of grants to State and local entities that receive public health preparedness cooperative agreements from HHS, effectively creating an incentive for States and local jurisdictions to set up their own loan repayment programs.
- Requires State and local loan repayment programs receiving grants to be modeled after the Federal program established in Section 781.
- Clarifies that nothing in this section limits the ability of State, local, or tribal governments from operating their own independent or supplemental public health workforce development programs.

Section 783. Training for Mid-Career Public Health Professionals

- Authorizes HHS to award scholarships to mid-career professionals already employed in public health positions at the Federal, State, local, or tribal level who want to engage in additional public health training or education.
- Limits scholarship eligibility to enrollees in the fields of infectious disease science, medicine, public health, veterinary medicine, or other discipline influenced by bioterrorism or emerging infectious disease.
- Authorizes \$30 million annually for this mid-career scholarship program through 2014.

Section 784. Catalogue of Federal Public Health Workforce Employment Opportunities

- Requires the Office of Personnel Management to create and retain an online catalogue of public health workforce employment opportunities in the Federal Government.

Section 785. Academic Health Departments Grant Program”

- Establishes the Academic Health Departments Grant Program to award competitive grants to partnerships—consisting of State or local public health departments and either accredited schools of public health or accredited public health degree programs—that create academic health departments.
- Requires grant recipients to submit annual reports on the results and outcomes of grant-funded public health instruction activities.
- Requires HHS to submit to Congress a report every three years on the results and outcomes of the Academic Health Departments Grant Program.
- Requires HHS to submit to Congress a program evaluation five years after the date the Academic Health Departments Grant Program is established.
- Authorizes \$4 million annually for this Academic Health Departments Grant Program through 2014.