



# Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

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## Dental Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program

The Virginia Department of Health, Division of Dental Health, under the direction of the Commissioner of Health in cooperation with Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry, administered a Dental Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program, as enacted by the Virginia State Legislature (Section 32.1-122.9) until 2009. The dental scholarship part of the program began in 1952 and was enacted by the legislature because of the difficulty of obtaining dental care in the rural areas of the Commonwealth. The loan repayment portion of the program was enacted in 2000 and offered dentists, wishing to relocate in a shortage area in Virginia, funds to assist in the establishment of his/her office and have the funds forgiven by service in the community. Budget cuts in 2009 resulted in the termination of both dental scholarships and loan repayments at the state level. A limited amount of grant funding continues to support loan repayment through FY15. Presently, the program grants a one-year loan repayment award to qualified dentists with outstanding student loan obligations. A dentist may be awarded one renewal award for a total of two years of repayment. For each year of loan repayment obtained, the dentist must serve one year in an underserved area that is a Federally Designated Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). They must also agree to treat Medicaid and low-income patients. The dentist may elect employment with a state agency, or federally qualified health center that provides dental treatment in lieu of private practice. Preference is given to dentists who are employed in a public health setting or by a dental safety-net provider. The program currently receives \$80,000 annually in grant funds and provides four, \$20,000 awards each year. Failure to fulfill contract obligations carries a 3:1 payback penalty. Well over a hundred and fifty individual dentists have benefited from the scholarship and loan repayment programs in Virginia.

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**Contact Person(s) for Inquiries:** Tonya Adiches, RDH, Dental Health Programs Manager, Dental Health Program, Virginia Department of Health, 109 Governor Street, Richmond, VA 23219, Phone: 804-864-7774, Fax: 804-864-7783, Email: [tonya.adiches@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:tonya.adiches@vdh.virginia.gov)