

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Ohio Dentist Loan Repayment Program and Ohio Dental Hygienist Loan Repayment Program



Background

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) operates the Ohio Dentist Loan Repayment Program (ODLRP) and the Ohio Dental Hygienist Loan Repayment Program (ODHLRP) to recruit and retain general and pediatric dentists and dental hygienists in underserved areas of Ohio. In exchange for loan repayment assistance, recipients commit to a minimum of two years of practice at an eligible site in a dental health resource shortage area, to accept Medicaid, and to otherwise see patients regardless of their ability to pay.

ODH enters into contracts with recipients and distributes funding for loan repayments for up to four years. For the first two-year contract, selected applicants may receive up to \$25,000 annually for repayment of outstanding dental or dental hygiene school debt. Those who maintain program eligibility may receive up to \$35,000 annually for the third and fourth years of service.

This report provides information on specific issues as required by Ohio Revised Code section [3702.94](#) and section [3702.966](#).

Note: For purposes of the ODLRP and the ODHLRP, dental health resource shortage areas include areas designated by ODH using state-developed criteria and areas designated by the federal Health Resources & Services Administration as dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs). Federal HPSAs may be specific facilities, specific geographic areas, or specific population groups in a geographic area.

1 The number of requests received for designation of dental health resource shortage areas:

Requests for state designation as a dental health resource shortage area are processed by ODH in response to requests for loan repayment through the ODLRP and the ODHLRP and in response to requests for use in other dental workforce programs. In 2024, there were no requests for dental health resource shortage area designation.

2 The dental health resource shortage areas that are designated and the priorities assigned to them:

As of December 31, 2024, there were five state-designated dental health resource shortage areas, prioritized by the ratio of low-income population to dentists. In addition, there were 170 federally designated dental HPSAs in Ohio, including 73 geographic areas and population group HPSAs, and 97 facility HPSAs. For scoring the severity of shortage in each dental HPSA, the federal government reviews the population-to-provider ratio, the percentage of the population living below 100% of the federal poverty level, water fluoridation status, and travel time to the nearest source of care outside of the service area.

3 The number of applications received for the ODLRP and the ODHLRP:

Application cycles for the ODLRP and ODHLRP were open from Oct. 11, 2023, through Nov. 30, 2023. During the application cycle, 11 applications were received for the ODLRP and six were received for the ODHLRP.

4 The number of dentists and dental hygienists assigned to dental health resource shortage areas and the payments made on behalf of them under the ODLRP and ODHLRP:

During calendar year 2024, 23 dentists were serving in dental health resource shortage areas through the ODLRP. A total of \$62,500 in ODLRP funds were paid on their behalf during the calendar year. These state dollars were leveraged by utilizing funds from the federal Bureau of Health Workforce State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) for 20 dentists (\$520,000 SLRP funds). To qualify for federal funds, a provider must be a U.S. citizen and work in a safety net dental clinic, located in a federally designated dental HPSA.

During calendar year 2024, five dental hygienists were serving in dental health resource shortage areas through the ODHLRP. A total of \$17,840 in ODHLRP funds were paid on their behalf. Federal SLRP funds were used for all five dental hygienists' contracts in 2024 (\$36,379.50 SLRP funds).

5 The dental health resource shortage areas that have not been matched with an adequate number of dentists:

There are five state-designated dental health resource shortage areas and 170 federally designated dental HPSAs in Ohio. Each area needs at least one additional dentist to meet federal or state guidelines for minimally acceptable population-to-dentist ratios.

6 The number of dentists and dental hygienists failing to complete their service obligations, the amount of damages owed, and the amount of damages collected:

One dentist and zero dental hygienists failed to complete their service obligation in 2024. No damages are owed to ODLRP or the ODHLRP, and no damages were collected. The dentist that failed to complete their service obligation was granted a waiver of the service obligation due to personal hardship.