



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NUMBER: 19-02

DATE: July 11, 2019

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DHCS TO PAY \$10.5 MILLION IN STUDENT LOANS FOR 40 DENTISTS WHO COMMIT TO SERVE MEDI-CAL PATIENTS

SACRAMENTO – Today the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) announced its commitment to pay \$10.5 million in student loans for 40 dentists under a new program designed to expand access to dental care for Medi-Cal patients.

Nearly 240 dentists applied to the [CalHealthCares](#) loan repayment program, which pays up to \$300,000 in debt relief in exchange for meeting certain criteria, including maintaining a patient caseload with at least 30 percent Medi-Cal patients for 5 years.

“Dentists with significant student loan debt may find it more difficult financially to commit to care for the Medi-Cal population,” said DHCS Director Jennifer Kent. “Helping them to pay off their debt will make that commitment possible.”

The awards are intended to improve access to care for low-income patients by creating economic incentives for physicians and dentists to provide care to Medi-Cal beneficiaries. DHCS [announced](#) earlier this month that 247 physicians were awarded \$58.6 million in student loan relief.

The awardees will provide services to Medi-Cal patients in 20 counties throughout California. Most of the awardees are general dentists and nine are specialty dental providers. Additionally, the awardees have varied practice settings, including community clinic or Federally Qualified Health Centers, academic settings, group practice, and private practice.

A total of \$340 million, including \$50 million for dentists, has been allocated to the CalHealthCares program from Proposition 56 revenue. The recent announcement of awardees is the first of at least five rounds of funding.

In 2018, SB 849 established the Proposition 56 Medi-Cal Physicians and Dentists Loan Repayment Act Program and appropriated \$220 million for the loan assistance program for recently graduated physicians and dentists. An additional \$120 million was added to the program in Governor Gavin Newsom’s revised 2019-20 budget.

DHCS administers the CalHealthCares program and Physicians for a Healthy California is contracted to manage the daily activities.

CalHealthCares will accept applications for its next round of awards in January 2020.

All awardees must:

- Have an unrestricted license and be in good standing with their licensing board
- Be an active enrolled Medi-Cal provider without suspensions, disbarments or revocations; or have submitted an application to DHCS to become a Medi-Cal provider
- Have graduated from dental school, a dental/physician residency program and/or completed a fellowship within the past five years (on or after January 1, 2014)
- Not currently be participating in another loan repayment program
- Practice in California
- Have existing educational loan debt incurred while pursuing a medical or dental degree (those applying for the loan repayment program)
- Have an existing dental practice and expand and/or relocate to a targeted county (those applying for the practice support grant)
- Maintain a patient caseload of 30 percent or more Medi-Cal beneficiaries

For more information, go to <http://www.calhealthcares.org>.

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