

State

PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE

Request: It has been documented that any comprehensive program to attract and retain physicians in underserved areas must contain the following elements:

1. Pipeline program to attract students from the underserved area
2. Medical School curriculum that is tailored toward giving students experiences in underserved area
3. An admissions process specifically for the underserved area curriculum
4. Loan forgiveness/debt reduction package for students

AMS requests that the State develop a comprehensive planning process to determine where such programmatic elements are currently being provided within the State, and to facilitate the cooperation and coordination of such programs throughout the State.

In addition, AMS requests the development of a loan forgiveness/debt reduction package for medical students who agree to practice in medically underserved areas—both rural and urban. The program would provide a sliding scale that encourages physicians to remain in the shortage areas by repaying larger amounts of loan in later years.

An example of such a sliding scale could be forgiveness of student loans based upon the following annual percentages:

First year	10%
Second year	15%
Third year	20%
Fourth year	25%
Fifth year	30%

Background: NYS is facing a physician shortage due to a change in the supply of and demand for physicians. It will peak in 2020, when the ‘baby-boom’ generation will have reached retirement age. Factors predicting this shortage include:

- The growing number of people over age 65;
- The retirement by 2020 of one-third of active physicians
- Flat medical school enrollment from 1980 - 2005.

It has been documented that access to health care is affected by where physicians choose to locate. The tendency to practice in affluent areas creates access barriers for people in rural and inner city areas.

There is documented evidence that underserved areas in NYS lack sufficient physicians, both generalists and specialists. *The Supply and Distribution of Physicians in NY, 2004* reviews by county and region the change from 2000 to 2004 in the number of full time practicing physicians. For the review, the state was divided into ten regions. Four of the NYS regions experienced a significant decline in primary care physicians and three regions find a significant decline in specialists.

Strong and broad support among constituents and lawmakers will be essential to alleviate the burden of the impending physician shortage.