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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 29, 2013

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### Translating veterans' medical skills into nursing careers

Today, at the White House Forum on Military Credentialing and Licensing, Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced a new program to help military veterans with health care experience or training, such as medics, pursue nursing careers. The program is designed to help veterans get bachelor's degrees in nursing by building on their unique skills and abilities.

Administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) at HHS, the Veterans' Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program will fund up to nine cooperative agreements, of up to \$350,000 a year. Funding of \$3 million is expected to be awarded by the end of fiscal year 2013 (September 30).

"The Veterans' Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program recognizes the skills, experience and sacrifices of our veterans, while helping to grow our nursing workforce," Secretary Sebelius said. "It helps veterans formalize their skills to get jobs, while strengthening Americans' access to care."

Program funding will go to accredited schools of nursing to increase veterans' enrollment in and completion of baccalaureate nursing programs, and to explore ways to award academic credit for prior military health care experience or training. The institutions will also train faculty to provide mentorships and other supportive services.


"Through this innovative program, veterans with valuable medical expertise can now help fill the ranks of nurses across the nation," said HRSA Administrator Mary K. Wakefield, Ph.D., R.N.


This new program is an important step forward in addressing needs identified in the February 2013 White House report, "The Fast Track to Civilian Employment: Streamlining Credentialing and Licensing for Service Members, Veterans, and Their Spouses."

For information on applying for this funding opportunity, visit [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

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Note: All HHS press releases, fact sheets and other press materials are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/news>.

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Follow HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius on Twitter @Sebelius .

Last revised: April 29, 2013

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Health Resources and Services Administration**

Bureau of Health Professions  
Division of Nursing

***Nurse Education, Practice, Quality and Retention  
Veteran's Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing Program***

**Announcement Type: New  
Announcement Number: HRSA-13-256**

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) No. 93.359**

**FUNDING OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT**

Fiscal Year 2013

**Application Due Date: June 7, 2013**

**PLEASE NOTE:**

**References to the Veteran's Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing Program-Coordinating Center (HRSA-13-275) have been revised on pages ii and 4, and removed from pages 2, 5, 14, 25 & 28**

*Ensure your Grants.gov registration and passwords are current immediately.  
Deadline extensions are not granted for lack of registration.  
Registration may take up to one month to complete.*

**Release Date: April 29, 2013**

**Issuance Date: April 29, 2013**

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Authority: Title VIII, sections 831 and 831a of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 296p and 42 U.S.C.296p-1), as amended and added by section 5309 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, Public Law 111-148.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Nurse Education, Practice, Quality and Retention (NEPQR)** program has broad statutory authority with three targeted priority areas: education, practice and retention. The retention priority area specifically provides support for career ladder projects designed to promote career advancement for individuals including, advanced education nurses, licensed practical nurses, licensed vocational nurses, certified nurse's assistants, home health aides and diploma degree or associate degree nurses to become baccalaureate prepared registered nurses.

The **Nurse Education, Practice, Quality and Retention - Veterans to BSN (VBSN) FY2013** funding opportunity announcement (FOA) solicits four-year cooperative agreement applications for programs that lead to the attainment of baccalaureate nursing degrees. The target population for this FOA is military veterans who aspire to pursue professional nursing careers. The FOA seeks projects that will build upon the unique leadership skills, abilities, and training that military veterans possess in order to reduce the burden of transitioning into professional nursing careers. VBSN awards will cover a four-year project period.

For the purposes of the funding opportunity announcement the term "veteran" refers to former military service members who received an honorable or general discharge from one of the branches of the United States Armed Services.

**Eligible applicants** include an accredited school of nursing, as defined in Section 801(2), a health care facility, as defined in Section 801(11) or a partnership of such a school and facility.

**Eligible program participants** include honorably or generally discharged service members (including reservists) with prior medical training, who have not yet earned BSN degrees. In addition to being veterans, eligible program participants must be U.S. citizens, non-citizen-nationals, or foreign nationals who possess visas permitting permanent residence in the United States. Individuals on temporary student visas are not eligible.

The purpose of the VBSN program is to increase veterans' enrollment in and completion of baccalaureate nursing (BSN) programs through career ladder projects.

The goals are to equip all program participants with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to succeed in passing the National Council Licensing Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN); and to provide innovative means of awarding nursing academic credit to those veterans for prior military medical training and experience. The methods for awarding credit for prior medical training and experience may include challenge or competency exams and other innovations as applicable.

The awarded VBSN applications will complement the collaborative efforts of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the Department of Defense (DoD), and the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) to:

- Reduce barriers that prevent veterans' from transitioning into nursing careers;
- Develop BSN career ladder programs targeted to the unique needs of veterans;

- Explore innovative educational models to award academic credit for prior health care experience/training or other relevant military training;
- Address the growing national demand for BSN prepared Registered Nurses; and
- Improve employment opportunities for veterans through high demand careers training as outlined in the Veterans Opportunity to Work under the *VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011*, [www.benefits.va.gov/VOW](http://www.benefits.va.gov/VOW).

The Department of Defense (DoD) has instituted measures to protect veterans and ensure that their education benefits are used wisely. In order for military veterans to be able to use their federal education benefits, VBSN applicants are strongly encouraged to apply for Servicemember Opportunity Colleges (SOC) status by signing a memorandum of understanding with the DoD prior to receiving VBSN awards. This process may take up to three months to complete. **If the applicant organization is unable to meet the requirements to become a SOC, an MOU agreement must be signed with the DoD agreeing to abide by protections of military members prior to receiving a VBSN award.** The DoD-MOU process may take up to several weeks to complete. For information on the DoD-MOU process or how to become a Servicemember Opportunity College, click on the following links: <http://www.dodmou.com> and <http://www.soc.aascu.org>.

Throughout the grant period, VBSN award recipients will be expected to work with HRSA – either directly or through an awarded designee – to provide information needed for evaluating project outcomes. Such evaluations may assess the effectiveness of VBSN career ladder training programs to increase veterans’ enrollment in and completion of baccalaureate nursing (BSN) programs, including mechanisms for translating military acquired medical skills into professional nursing practice (e.g., awarding of academic credit for military experience).

All applicants must demonstrate that on or before January 31, 2014, projects will have resources and program staff in place to operationalize the VBSN nursing career ladder program. Please provide this documentation in the Workplan section of the application. It is estimated that up to nine new competitive awards will be awarded with a maximum annual funding level of **\$350,000** per awardee. The application due date is June 7, 2013 in Grants.gov.

This funding opportunity announcement is subject to availability of appropriated funds. If associated funding is not available, this announcement will be withdrawn and the cooperative agreements will not be awarded.

As provided in section 805 of the Public Health Service Act, a **funding preference** shall be granted to applicants with projects that will **substantially benefit rural or underserved populations, or help meet public health nursing needs in State or local health departments.**

### **Technical Assistance Webinar**

A VBSN technical assistance webinar has been scheduled to help applicants understand the requirements for preparing and submitting this cooperative agreement application. **The webinar is scheduled for May 8, 2013 from 02:00 pm until 03:30 pm EST.**