

(4) "Physician assistant" means an individual to whom duties are delegated by a licensed physician under the rules and regulations of the State Board of Medical Examiners.

(5) "Primary care" means family practice, general internal medicine, and general pediatrics.

(6) "ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATION" MEANS AN INSTITUTION, INCLUDING A LICENSED HOSPITAL, NURSING HOME, ADULT DAY CARE CENTER, PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY, HOME HEALTH AGENCY, OR OTHER ORGANIZATION AUTHORIZED BY THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE.

(7) "ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION" MEANS AN INSTITUTION OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION:

(I) APPROVED TO OPERATE BY THE MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION; AND

(II) THAT AWARDS NURSING DEGREES OR DIPLOMAS.

(8) "NURSING SHORTAGE AREA" MEANS A RECOGNIZED AREA OF NURSING SERVICE OR SPECIALIZATION DETERMINED BY THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE TO BE AN AREA WHERE THERE EXISTS A SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED NURSES IN ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS.

(9) "NURSING STUDENT" MEANS A STUDENT ENROLLED IN A POSTSECONDARY NURSING EDUCATION DEGREE OR DIPLOMA PROGRAM AT AN ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION.

[(b) The General Assembly finds that:

(1) There are not enough primary care practitioners in this State, particularly in the rural and inner city areas;

(2) One way to alleviate this problem is to increase the efficiency of providers by using physician assistants and nurse practitioners;

(3) Another way to alleviate this problem is by increasing the supply of physician assistants and nurse practitioners in this State as demonstrated by the successful pilot training programs currently operating in this State where the graduates are functioning effectively in the medical care system in areas of need;

(4) This State has recognized through the establishment of the Maryland family practice residency programs and legislation permitting physicians to delegate tasks to physician assistants and nurse practitioners that it has an important role in assuring that primary care resources are available;