

Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Workforce Education & Training (WET) Suggested Changes to WET Regulations

January 26, 2015

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WET Regulations

- ✓ OSHPD staff conducted a review of all MHSA WET Regulations that impact the WET program to determine suggested regulation changes
- ✓ OSHPD reviewed all feedback received and OSHPD continues to gather feedback from stakeholders
- ✓ Purpose of this meeting is to gather stakeholder thoughts on the suggested changes that will be presented today and any other changes that are suggested by stakeholders

Overview of Suggested Changes

OSHPD is suggesting three changes to the WET regulations. The suggested changes do not change funding levels for WET programs and do not create new programs. The changes would:

- Allow the Mental Health Loan Assumption Program (MHLAP) to pay the awardee directly
- Allow for flexibility to increase the yearly maximum award amount (MHLAP)
- Allow for flexibility to increase the total maximum award amount for eligible awardees (MHLAP)

Mental Health Loan Assumption Program (MHLAP) Background Information

- **Background:** MHLAP was created by the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). The MHSA provides funding for a loan forgiveness program in order to retain and hire qualified professionals working within the Public Mental Health System (PMHS). Through the Workforce Education and Training component of the MHSA, \$10 million is allocated yearly to loan assumption awards. Currently an award recipient may receive up to **\$10,000** to repay educational loans in exchange for a 12-month service obligation in a hard-to-fill or retain position within the County PMHS.
- **Eligible Professions:** Counties determine which professions are eligible for their County's hard-to-fill or retain positions. Some of the eligible professions include, but are not limited to, Registered or Licensed Psychologists, Registered or Licensed Psychiatrists, Postdoctoral Psychological Assistants, Postdoctoral Psychological Trainees, Registered or Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, Registered or Licensed Clinical Social Workers, Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors, Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor Interns, Peer Support Specialists and Registered or Licensed Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners in California. Support, managerial and/or fiscal staff may also be eligible dependent on a County's needs.

Pay the Awardee Directly

- **Current regulation requirement:** Payment must be made directly to the lending institution on behalf of awardee
- **Suggested change:** Payment must be made directly to the awardee who shall apply it to their educational loans
- **Justification:**
 - Allow for streamlined processes
 - Awardees will be able to disburse the funds more efficiently to their lender/educational loans (lender of their choice, issue to sub-loans, etc.)
 - Lending institutions change often leading to OSHPD receiving returned checks and/or refunds further delaying payment to the awardee or loss of payment
 - MHLAP is administered through the Health Professions Education Foundation, where there are 12 other financial incentive programs that pay the awardee directly

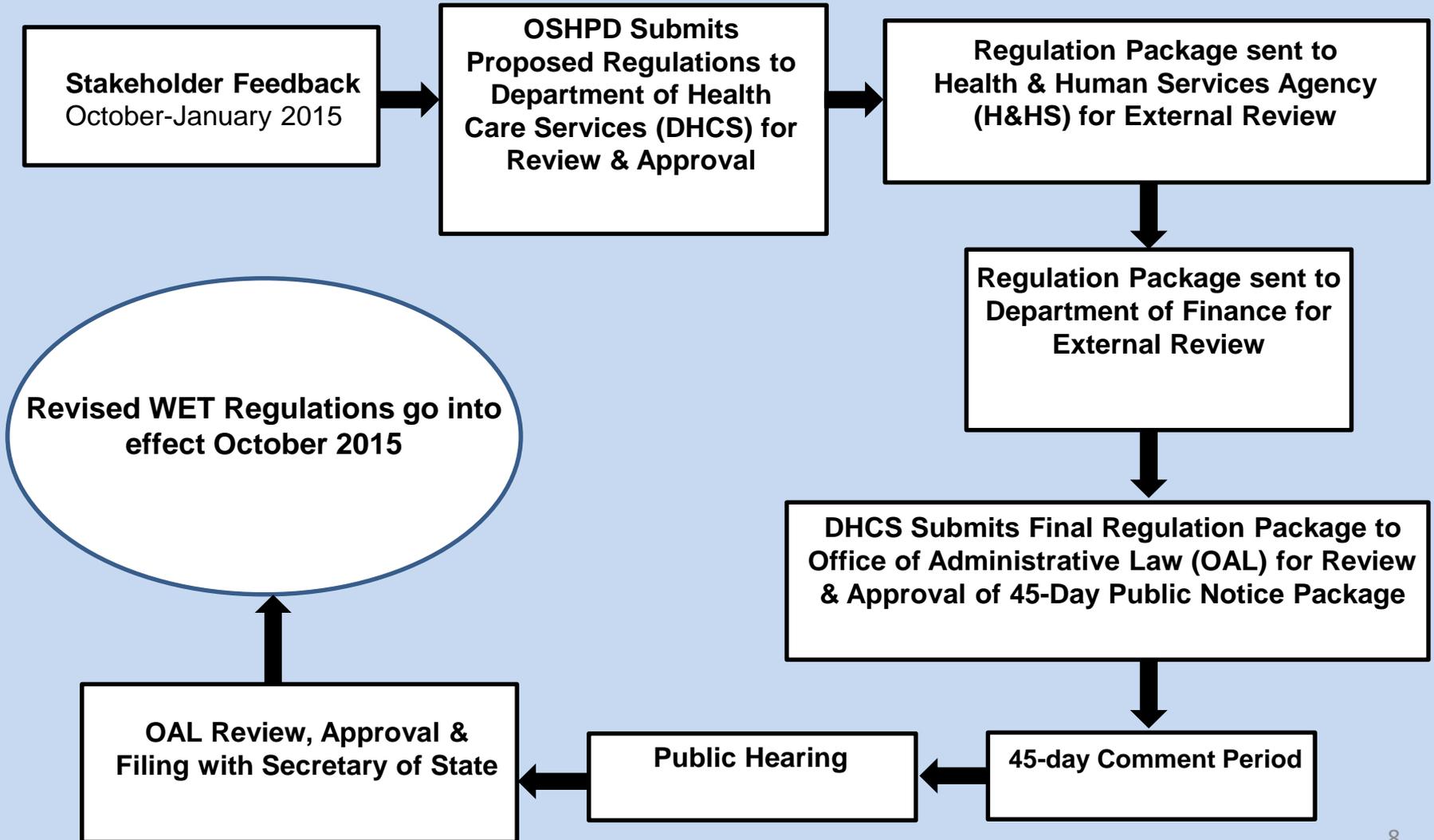
Flexibility to Raise the Award Amount

- **Current regulation requirement:** Award recipients are limited to receiving up to \$10,000 per year
- **Suggested change:** Raise the maximum amount of an award to \$25,000 per year
- **Justification:**
 - Further incentivizes mental health professionals to go into and/or continue working in the Public Mental Health System
 - Provides MHLAP the flexibility of keeping or raising the award amount to help counties retain or recruit staff of their highest need and expend all yearly allotted funds
 - Aligns with the trend of increasing debt loads of mental health professionals

Raise the Maximum Amount

- **Current regulation requirement:** Award recipients are capped at \$60,000 for the awardees lifetime
- **Suggested change:** Raise the lifetime cap to \$150,000
- **Justification:**
 - Allows individuals to continue to participate in the program so long as they continue to meet the requirements of working in the Public Mental Health System and have verified current debt
 - Provide MHLAP the flexibility of continuing to award individuals up to a higher maximum amount which can help counties retain staff in positions of highest need
 - Allows for a more efficient use of program funds
 - Aligns with the trend of increasing debt loads of mental health professionals and need to cover more of their debt

WET Regulations Timeline



Contact Information

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<http://oshpd.ca.gov/hwdd/WET.html>