



Nebraska Health Workforce

June 2010

Shortages

- In 2004, the state's ratio of health care providers to population for physicians, nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists, and certified nurse midwives was below the national average.
- Over one-third of the physicians, practicing nurses and pharmacists in Nebraska are older than 50 years.
- Approximately one-half of practicing dentists in Nebraska are older than 50 years.
- Over 35% of actively practicing psychiatrists in Nebraska are older than 55 years.
- About 42% of nurse practitioners and 22% of physician assistants are older than 55 years.
- About 40% of behavioral health professionals (including psychologists, mental health practitioners, alcohol and drug counselors, and certified compulsive gambling counselors) are older than 55 years.
- Nebraska is projected to have a shortage of 5,300 RNs by 2020.
- Nebraska is estimated to experience a shortage of 380 physicians in 2010.

Federally designated Health Care Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) in Nebraska

- Mental health – 88 counties
- Primary care – 51 counties (MD, DO, NP, & PA)
- Nursing – 45 counties
- Dental – 25 counties

Distribution of Health Workforce in Nebraska

- 15 counties do not have healthcare providers
- 18 counties have no physicians
- 8 have no Registered Nurses
- 20 have no dentists
- 37 have no behavioral health professionals

Dual-Degree Programs

One way to address workforce shortages is through dual degree or dual-licensing programs, which enable individuals to receive training in more than one specialty. This is beneficial for allied health professionals practicing in rural areas.

Incentives to Enhance Nebraska's Primary Care Workforce

Federal Incentives

Encouraging States to Address Workforce Needs – The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is offering grants for states to expand their primary care workforce by 10 to 25% over 10 years.

Creating additional primary care residency slots – HRSA is providing grant funds to train more than 500 new primary physicians nationwide by 2015.

Supporting physician assistant training in primary care – HRSA is supporting the development of more than 600 new physician assistants nationwide who are trained in a shorter time period than physicians.

Encouraging students to pursue full-time nursing careers – To address nursing shortages, HRSA is encouraging 600 nursing students to attend school full-time.

Establishing new nurse practitioner-led clinics – HRSA is supporting the operation of 10 nurse-managed health clinics nationwide, which provide comprehensive primary care services to the medically underserved.

Loan Repayment Tax Exclusion - The Internal Revenue Code was amended to allow health profession borrowers to exclude from their gross income for tax purposes any amount received under the National Health Service Corp (NHSC) loan repayment program or a state loan repayment or loan forgiveness programs intended to increase the availability of health care services in underserved areas.



Nursing Student Loan Program – The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) increases the loan amounts schools may make for the student nursing loan program up to \$17,000 (a nearly 30% increase).

Pediatric Specialist Loan Repayment Program - PPACA creates a pediatric specialty loan repayment program for individuals who agree to work full-time for at least two years in a pediatric medical specialty, pediatric surgery, or child and adolescent mental and behavioral health care. The program would pay up to \$35,000 for up to three years for individuals who work in a medically underserved area.

Federally Supported Student Loan Funds for Medical Students – PPACA eases current criteria for medical students to qualify for loans, shortens payback periods, and eases compliance to make the primary care student loan program more attractive. Medical students will have more flexibility to repay the loan by committing to practice in primary care for 10 years or until the loan is repaid.

Allied Health Workforce Recruitment and Retention Programs – Under PPACA, allied health professionals employed full-time in a federal, state, local and tribal public health agency are eligible for student loan forgiveness.

Public health students and workers - HHS will pay up to one-third of loans incurred by a public health student in exchange for work for a public health agency for three years.

Enhanced Medicaid Payment

PPACA includes bonus payments for both Medicare and Medicaid primary care evaluation and management services and a rural bonus. The law provides 100% federal funding for the incremental costs to states of meeting these requirements.

UNMC Programs

- The **College of Nursing** has increased enrollment by 30% since 2002, including the admission of 325 new students in 2009, and increasing the number of accelerated nursing and nurse faculty programs. Through a U.S. DHHS grant, UNMC is educating 43 individuals to become psychiatric nurse practitioners in Nebraska.
- The **College of Medicine** has already begun increasing enrollment, and offers accelerated family medicine and primary care residency programs.
- The **Rural Health Opportunities Program (RHOP)** guarantees UNMC admission for a number of students who successfully complete pre-professional studies at Chadron State College or Wayne State College who intend to practice in rural Nebraska communities. Since its creation in 1990, 356 students have graduated from the RHOP program and more than 60 percent are practicing in rural communities. UNMC has expanded the RHOP to the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

Source: *A Critical Match: Nebraska's Health Workforce Planning Project, September 2009*:
<http://www.unmc.edu/rural/documents/NebraskaWorkforceProjectFinal091509.pdf>