HRSA - Bureau of Health Workforce
Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Program

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Advisory Committee on Interdisciplinary, Community-Based Linkages (ACICBL) Meeting

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Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Program

Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP)

Centers of Excellence (COE) Program
The Health Careers Pipeline Branch (HCPB) serves as the focal point for:

- Health career pipeline programs supporting disadvantaged and under-represented minority students; and the
- Recruitment and training of clinicians in rural and medically underserved communities.
**Purpose:** To enhance access to high quality, culturally competent health care, through academic-community partnerships, by improving:

- Supply
- Distribution
- Diversity
- Quality

of the health professions workforce, specialty primary care; and addressing the health care needs of medically underserved communities and populations.

**Eligibility:** Schools of medicine or in states with no medical school, schools of nursing

**Legislative Requirements and More:**
- Health professions recruitment and training
- Interprofessional education and training
- Continuing education
- Rural health workforce initiatives, community health workers, health information technology, veterans mental health, Affordable Care Act provider education, etc.
Stakeholders

Local

State

Federal HRSA

Universities
53 Programs

AHEC Program

Communities
248 Regional AHEC Centers

AHEC Center

AHEC Center

AHEC Center

AHEC Program- FY2014
Expand **primary care workforce** supply, capacity, and distribution through stronger education and training opportunities, with an emphasis in rural and medically underserved communities.

- Promote **interprofessional education** (IPE), training and team-based practice to assure quality care.

- Improve health workforce **diversity** to reflect the population it serves.

- Conduct **evaluations** to assess short and long term program performance and effectiveness.
Current Activities

Legislative Requirements and More
• Recruitment, Health Professions training, CE
• Interprofessional education and training
• Rural health workforce initiatives, CHW/Outreach Workers

Health Care Reform – ACA
• Outreach and Education
• Provider education

Special Initiatives
• CHW-Behavioral Health Primary Care Integration Pilot Project
• Nursing Workforce Capacity-Building in USAPI
• Veterans Mental Health
Community Health Worker-Behavioral Health Integration into Primary Care-Pilot Project

**Grantee:** The University of Texas Medical Branch - Texas AHEC East (TAE)

**Project Period:** 9/1/2012-8/31/2016

**Partners:** HRSA, SAMHSA, HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health

**Purpose:** To develop a CHW BH curriculum to prepare CHWs to effectively enhance BH services within the primary care setting. Includes both didactic in-classroom training and onsite hands-on experience in a primary care setting. The project follows an apprenticeship “learn while you earn” model.

**Multiple Phases Over Four Years:**

- **Phase 1:** Development and evaluation of the training curriculum specific to behavioral health
- **Phase 2:** Small scale pilot utilizing trained CHWs within local primary care systems in Texas
- **Phase 3:** Dissemination including a multi state pilot project
Nursing Workforce Capacity: Improvement Initiative in the U.S. Affiliated Pacific Islands

Grantee: University of Guam School of Nursing and Health Sciences - Guam/Micronesia AHEC Program

Project Period: 9/1/2012-8/31/2014

Partners: HRSA/BHW, U.S. Department of the Interior

Purpose: To support strategic nursing workforce and infrastructure development activities that focus on strengthening nurse training programs and the nursing leadership pipeline in the USAPI.

Objectives:
• Improve the foundational skills of nursing students in the areas of math, science, and English.
• Improve the regional nursing education infrastructure in the USAPI.
• Enhance nursing faculty capacity through increased knowledge and skills in teaching and learning, curriculum development, and evaluation.
• Improve the existing career pathways for nursing professional advancement through development of articulation agreements and increased accessibility to advanced educational programs.
Strengths

– Implement activities that are **responsive** to the evolving needs of their respective geographic regions;
– Significant **national infrastructure** with extensive capabilities to **reach** into pockets of underserved rural and urban areas;
– Strong **partnerships and collaborations** with academia, community health centers, rural health clinics, and various other organizations at the local, state, and national levels; and
– Function as neutral agents and **conveners**.

Challenges

– Varying degrees of **capabilities and resources** across the country;
– Significant **variations** on programmatic strategies, making it difficult to assess outcomes and impact of the entire AHEC Program;
– Inconsistent **funding**; and
– **Broad roles** of AHECs which contribute to a perception of lack of focus and dilution of core AHEC values.
• Prioritize and focus on fewer but impactful programs;

• Incorporate evidence-based/evidence-informed models or using established competencies and minimal standards; and

• Strengthen program evaluation in the short and long-term.
In Summary

• AHEC fosters community-academic and government partnerships to improve the recruitment, training and retention of a diverse health workforce to serve rural and underserved communities.

• There is an AHEC near you – with 53 programs, and 248 regional AHEC centers in 45 states, plus – there are opportunities for collaboration.

• AHECs are responsive to the community’s needs and have significant expertise and experience to reach rural and urban underserved communities.
Contact Information

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