



Washington, D.C. update

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Primary care workforce grants

Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius recently announced \$130.8 million in grants to strengthen and expand the health professions workforce. Six areas are targeted: (1) primary care workforce training, (2) oral health workforce training, (3) equipment to enhance training across the health professions, (4) loan repayments for health professionals, (5) health careers opportunity programs for disadvantaged students, and (6) patient navigator outreach and chronic disease prevention in health disparity populations. The grants include \$88.7 million in funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Expanding the primary care workforce

Training programs in primary care (\$42.1 million [\$31.5 million Recovery Act])

These grants will support family medicine, general internal medicine, and general pediatrics programs, including curriculum development, faculty development, didactic and community-based education, and training in underserved areas for primary care residents, predoctoral students, interdisciplinary and interprofessional graduate students, and physician assistant students.

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Oral health (\$23.9 million [\$6.7 million Recovery Act])

This funding will target workforce development programs for pre- and postdoctoral training for dental residents; dental faculty; loan repayment for faculty who teach primary care dentistry; and training for practicing dentists, or other approved dental trainees in general, pediatric, and public health dentistry, and dental hygiene programs. Funding also includes \$4.3 million to states to provide nine new grantees the opportunity to address their state's unique oral health workforce needs in underserved urban and rural areas. Grants are designed to strengthen the delivery of multidisciplinary comprehensive oral health care, integral to quality primary care.

Equipment for state-of-the-art learning

Equipment to enhance training for health professionals (\$50.5 million (Recovery Act))

This funding will provide 208 awards to assist with purchasing equipment for training current and future health professionals across disciplines at the undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate education levels. Awardees include academic health centers, area health education centers, centers of excellence, and other educational institutions that serve underserved and uninsured patient populations, rural communities, and minorities. Equipment purchases will expand current training capabilities by replacing outdated equipment and technology or purchasing equipment that previously was unaffordable.

Types of equipment to be purchased include e-learning tools such as video, audio, and interactive learning systems that provide more distance learning opportunities; human

patient simulators that give students the opportunity to improve clinical judgment and critical thinking; and mobile dental vans that provide training in delivering care to diverse segments of the population while bringing basic routine dental treatments to families unable to access care. It is estimated that more than 200,000 individuals will be trained, including health professions students, faculty, and clinical practice providers.

Priming the workforce pipeline

Loan repayment (\$8.3 million)

Twenty-nine grants will be given to states that provide matching funds to assist health professionals in repaying their educational loans. In return, these individuals agree to provide full-time primary health services in federal health professional shortage areas for a minimum of two years. Health professionals eligible to receive funding include physicians, dentists, nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, physician assistants, psychologists, and social workers.

Health careers opportunity program (\$2.1 million)

Three grantees will receive funding to increase diversity in the health professions by developing an educational pipeline to enhance the academic performance of economically and educationally disadvantaged students, and prepare them for careers in the health professions. Eligible applicants included schools of medicine, public health, dentistry, pharmacy, allied health, and graduate programs in behavioral or mental health.

Patient navigator (\$3.8 million)

Funding will support 10 grants for patient navigator outreach and chronic disease prevention programs to develop and operate patient navigator services that improve health care outcomes for individuals with cancer or other chronic diseases, with specific emphasis on health disparity populations. Grant recipients recruit, train, and employ patient navigators with direct knowledge of the communities they serve to coordinate care for patients with chronic illnesses. Eligible applicants include federally qualified health centers, health facilities operated through Indian Health Service contracts, hospitals, rural health clinics, and academic health centers.

Also last month, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius has announced \$320 million in grants under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to strengthen the health care workforce. Of those grants, \$253 million will go to improve and expand the primary care workforce under the Prevention and Public Health Fund of the ACA. Another \$67 million in Health

Profession Opportunity Grants will provide low-income individuals with education, training, and supportive services that will help them prepare to enter and advance in careers in the health care sector.

Prevention and public health fund workforce grants

The \$253 million in prevention and public health fund grants are awarded under six health professions programs administered by HHS' Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The programs are designed to build the primary care workforce and provide community-based prevention. States will receive funding to support comprehensive workforce planning and implementation strategies that best address local current and projected workforce shortages.

"These grants are the most comprehensive yet in addressing our nation's shortage of key health professionals," said Mary K. Wakefield, PhD, RN, administrator of the HRSA. "They will provide much-needed support for increasing primary care capacity by expanding training programs for primary care providers, increasing access to patient care clinics, strengthening state-level workforce planning, and providing training for personal home health care aides. All are vital to our future healthcare workforce."

Primary Care Residency Expansion (PCRE) (\$167.3 million)

The PCRE program funds 82 accredited primary care residency training programs to increase the number of residents trained in general pediatrics, general internal medicine, and family medicine. Grantees will use the five-year grant to provide stipend support for new enrollees in three-year primary care residency training programs. By 2015, the program will support the training of 889 new primary care residents over the number currently being trained, and more than 500 of these residents will have completed their training.

State Health Workforce Development (\$5.6 million)

Twenty-six states will receive funding to begin comprehensive health care workforce planning or implementation. Planning grants (limited to one year and \$150,000 + 15% matching funds) assess a state's current health workforce and include activities such as gathering and analyzing data; examining current resources, policies, and practices; and identifying ways to remove barriers at the state and local levels. Implementation grants (limited to 2 years with 25% matching funds) allow states to convene stakeholders at the

state and regional levels to develop and implement development plans that address workforce needs. These activities are expected to result in a 10% to 25% increase in the primary care health workforce over a 10-year period.

Personal and Home Care Aide State Training (PHCAST) (\$4.2 million)

Direct care workers provide an estimated 70% to 80% of the paid hands-on long-term care and personal assistance to Americans who are elderly or living with disabilities or other chronic conditions. The PHCAST program is a demonstration project that supports states in developing and evaluating a competency-based uniform curriculum to train qualified personal and home care aides (PHCAs). PHCAs are projected to be the fourth fastest growing direct care occupation in the United States between 2008 and 2018. The six state grantees participating in the three-year project anticipate that they will train more than 5100 PHCAs by 2013.

Health Profession Opportunity Grants

The Health Profession Opportunity Grants, administered by the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance, will provide 32 grants to entities in 23 states. These grants will provide low-income individuals with successful training programs for a variety of health care professions including home care aides, certified nursing assistants, medical assistants, pharmacy technicians, emergency medical technicians, licensed vocational nurses, registered nurses, dental assistants, and health information technicians. Grantees will also provide additional supportive services such as transportation, dependent care, and temporary housing. A broad range of entities will receive grants, including five Native American and tribal organizations, as well as nonprofit organization, state and local governments, and community colleges.

"The absence of qualified workers in the health care field threatens the quality and availability of medical care, and the economic stability and growth potential of local communities," said David A. Hansell, acting Assistant Secretary for the Administration for Children and Families. "The training initiatives will provide low-income families the opportunity for economic independence and a better life for themselves and their children while helping to strengthen our health care workforce."

"TANF recipients and other low-income individuals want to succeed in the workplace but sometimes lack the skills to do so," said Earl Johnson, director for the Office of

Family Assistance. "The Health Profession Opportunity Grants will offer quality training and an opportunity to enter a dynamic job sector with real opportunities for career advancement."

Health Profession Opportunity Grants award tables listed by state are available at http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2010pres/09d/state_charts.html.

Summary of grants

- \$253 Primary Care Workforce
 - \$167.3 million—Primary Care Residency Expansion Program
 - 82 new programs
 - 900 new primary care physicians by 2015
 - 500 new primary care physicians by 2013
 - \$30.1 million—Physician Assistant Training Program
 - 28 new programs
 - 700 new physician assistants by 2015
 - \$31 million—Advanced Nursing Education Expansion
 - 26 new programs
 - 1300 new nurses over 5 years/600 nurse practitioners
 - \$14.8 million—Nurse Managed Health Clinics
 - \$5.6 million – State Workforce Planning Grants
 - 26 states
 - 1-year planning grants/2-year implementation grants
 - \$4.2 million—Home Care Aide State Training Grants
- \$67 million—Health Profession Opportunities Grants (HCOP)

Electronic prescribing

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recently announced important information about accessing 2009 Electronic Prescribing (eRx) Incentive Program feedback reports, which are posted on the CMS's eRx webpage at <http://www.cms.gov/ERXincentive/>.

The 2009 eRx Incentive Program feedback reports became available in November 2010 after the 2009 eRx incentive payments were distributed. Feedback reports are compiled at the Taxpayer Identification Number (Tax ID Number, or TIN) level, with individual-level reporting (by National Provider Identifier or NPI level) information for each Eligible Professional (EP) who reported at least one valid eRx quality-data code (QDC) on a claim submitted under that TIN for services furnished during the reporting period.