

CRITICAL PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITY:

Colorado Families Need More Primary Care Providers



DEMAND FOR HEALTH CARE SERVICES EXPECTED TO RISE AS SHORTAGE OF HEALTH CARE WORKERS INCREASES

Demand for health care services is expected to increase due to our aging population and expanded insurance coverage, as mandated by the Affordable Care Act. At the same time, Colorado faces a shortage of 1,000 primary care physicians over the next 15 years.¹ As well, the proportion of older health care workers 55 years of age and older who can be expected to retire in 10 years is between 16% to 24%, while health care jobs are expected to grow by 20% over the same 10 year period (2005 to 2015).²

Currently, more than one in five Coloradans live in a community without enough health care providers, including doctors, nurses,

nurse practitioners, physician assistants, dentists, dental hygienists and mental health workers.³ Nearly 83% of Colorado counties are designated as “Health Professional Shortage Areas,” which means it is difficult for many people to find providers to care for them, regardless of their income or insurance status (*only Broomfield, Chaffee, Cheyenne, Douglas, Eagle, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Pitkin, San Juan, Summit and Teller counties do not have the federal designation of being a health professional shortage area*).

IMPACT ON THE HEALTH OF COLORADANS

Adequate access to health care has been shown to reduce preventable deaths, decrease the use of the emergency department, and provide better detection and reduced incidence of certain types of cancer.⁴ More health care providers means shorter wait times, more choices of providers and greater access to health care services.

IMPACT ON COLORADO'S ECONOMY

One in nine Colorado employees is from the health care and social assistance sector, accounting for \$11 billion in annual wages.⁵ Studies show that one primary care physician can generate up to \$1.5 million in revenue, nearly \$1 million in payroll and create 23 jobs in physician clinics and hospitals.⁶

PRIORITIES FOR 2012 COLORADO LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The Colorado Health Professions Workforce Policy Collaborative (*members listed on back*) recommends the following actions be taken by Colorado's Legislature:

- **COLLECT ADDITIONAL DATA.** Require the collection of additional workforce data for all regulated health care professions (while ensuring privacy and confidentiality of the data) as part of the health care professional licensing process in Colorado to better understand the nature and location of the gaps in Colorado's health care workforce.
- **INCENTIVIZE BETTER, MORE COST-EFFECTIVE CARE.** Support the development of new payment models that encourage greater access, reduce waste and recognize the value of primary care services across provider types, and help implement coordinated and integrated care.
- **ENSURE ADEQUATE REIMBURSEMENTS.** Make reimbursement to primary care providers a top priority in the state budgeting process, avoid additional cuts and restore the cuts to previous levels. Reimbursement levels for primary care providers are currently at such low levels that they threaten access to care for the publicly insured and the viability of many health care practice settings.



An in-depth report on these and other Colorado legislative priorities recommended by the Collaborative are detailed in *Addressing Colorado's Primary Care Provider Shortage: 2011 Public Policy Agenda* (<http://bit.ly/n98jvo>).

COLORADO HEALTH PROFESSIONS WORKFORCE POLICY COLLABORATIVE

The Colorado Health Professions Workforce Policy Collaborative studies, develops and advocates for public policy to accomplish the vision of a competent, diverse health care workforce sufficient to assure that all residents have access to health care that is effective, efficient, safe, equitable, timely and patient-centered. The independent, non-partisan collaborative is supported by grant funding from The Colorado Trust.

Adams County Education Consortium
Area Health Education Centers – Centennial
Area Health Education Centers – Central Colorado
Area Health Education Centers – San Luis Valley
Area Health Education Centers – Southeastern Colorado
Area Health Education Centers – Western Colorado
Caring for Colorado Foundation
Center for Improving Value in Health Care
Center for Research Strategies
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
ClinicNET
Colorado Academy of Family Physicians
Colorado Area Health Education Centers Program
*Colorado Area Health Education Centers –
University of Colorado Health Sciences Center*
Colorado Behavioral Health Network
Colorado Center for Nursing Excellence
Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved
Colorado Community College System
Colorado Community Health Network
Colorado Dental Association
Colorado Department of Labor and Employment
*Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment,
Office of Primary Care*

*Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment,
Office of Health Disparities*
Colorado Academy of Family Physicians
Colorado Health Foundation
Colorado Health Institute
Colorado Hospital Association
Colorado Medical Society
Colorado Nurses Association
Colorado Rural Health Center
Colorado Society of Osteopathic Medicine
Denver School of Nursing
Kaiser Permanente
Mental Health America of Colorado
Red Rocks Community College Physician Assistant Program
Regis University Loretto Heights School of Nursing
Regis University School of Physical Therapy
San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center
The Colorado Trust
University of Colorado College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
University of Colorado College of Nursing
*University of Colorado School of Medicine,
Physician Assistant Program*
University of Colorado School of Medicine
University of Colorado School of Dental Medicine
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Presentation: 2009 Colorado Health Professions Summit: Estimating the future supply and demand for Colorado's health care workforce. Colorado Health Institute. October 22, 2009.
- ² Hall A. *Colorado's health care labor market*. Colorado Department of Labor. Presentation to Colorado's Health Professions Workforce Policy Collaborative. July 30, 2008
- ³ Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Primary Care Office. <<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/primarycare/index.html>> Accessed July 10, 2009.
- ⁴ Prado-Gutierrez, A. *Framing the medical home: A key to accessibility, affordability and personal responsibility in health care*. Denver, CO. Commission on Family Medicine. 2005.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ National Center for Rural Health Works. *The economic impact of a rural primary care physician and the potential health dollars lost to out-migrating health care services*. <<http://www.ruralhealthworks.org>>. Accessed July 10, 2009.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Visit the Colorado Rural Health Center website, <http://www.coruralhealth.org/programs/collaborative/> or call The Colorado Trust at 303-837-1200.