## **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. 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).

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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> More health care providers means shorter wait times, more choices of providers and greater access to health care services.

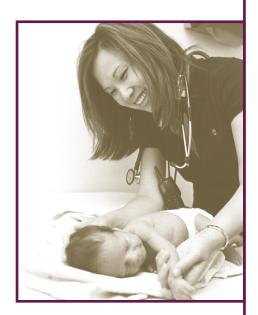
#### **IMPACT ON COLORADO'S ECONOMY**

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**

- <sup>1</sup> Presentation: 2009 Colorado Health Professions Summit: Estimating the future supply and demand for Colorado's health care workforce. Colorado Health Institute. October 22, 2009.
- <sup>2</sup> 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. <a href="http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/primarycare/index.html">http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/primarycare/index.html</a> Accessed July 10, 2009.
- <sup>4</sup> 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.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> 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*. <a href="http://www.ruralhealthworks.org">http://www.ruralhealthworks.org</a>. 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.