

Center for Health Workforce Planning

Issue Brief: Data Collection for Health Workforce

Access to high quality, affordable, safe health care requires a well-trained, available health workforce. State governments influence this workforce in several ways including licensure, credentialing, and funding streams for secondary education and professional training programs. State public health departments are also charged with the assurance of access to a competent health care workforce for the population.

To do this, states must develop policies which will create and sustain education and employment opportunities for a well-trained and diverse health workforce. Successful policies are predicated upon an accurate assessment of health workforce supply and demand through systematic data collection. The National Center for Health Workforce and Analysis calls for states to track and report workforce data (e.g., supply, demand, distribution, education and utilization) that assist state planners and policy makers to address issues relating to health workforce issues. Many factors influence the supply and demand of health workforce and need to be accounted for when planning to stem cyclical workforce shortage and surplus. Variables include population demographics, health care utilization patterns, education and training opportunities, work place environment and the economy.

Iowa's licensed health workforce is tracked by the Iowa Department of Public Health through the boards of dentistry, medicine, nursing and pharmacy, and the Bureau of Professional Licensure. In addition, Iowa's Department of Inspections and Appeals maintains a registry of certified nursing assistants. Vital to the health workforce, but not presently tracked in a centralized fashion, are the numerous unlicensed health workers. Current counts of health care workers whose supply is systematically tracked, and who directly impact access to health care by vulnerable populations exceed 102,000 workers. A minimum data set must be collected on each health care worker in order to accurately project supply. Some of the data fields recommended but not presently collected by all licensing entities include: employment status, field/place of employment, zip code of primary employer, and average hours worked per week.

In addition to tracking workforce supply, Iowa's planning efforts must include assessment of demand data. It is difficult to overstate the importance of demand in workforce planning. Iowa outpaces much of the



nation in the aging of its population, yet HRSA projections for Iowa's nursing workforce failed to show a shortage of full-time equivalent registered nurses in Iowa beyond the year 2005 (National Center for Health Workforce Information & Analysis, 2002). This is due largely to the omission from the HRSA model of the growth of Iowa's aging population and the resulting increase in demand for health care services.

Actions Recommended by the Center for Health Workforce Planning in 2003-2004

- Profile Iowa's health workforce by defining position title, description, education/training, places of employment, wages and key contact for information.
- Collect minimum data required for accurate supply projections.
- Develop and pilot a tracking system that yields an annual inventory (the supply) of registered nurses in a regional workforce, with the capacity to forecast future supply when sufficient data is available.
- Develop an annual measure of demand for additional registered nurses across all potential employers in the selected region of the state.
- Create partnerships for data collection and sharing to maximize resources.
 - Iowa Board of Nursing – source of registered nurse and licensed practical nurse data
 - Iowa CareGivers Association – source of certified nursing assistant and other direct care worker data
 - Iowa Department of Economic Development – source of employment opportunity data
 - Iowa Department of Education – source of education and career data
 - Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals – source of supply data on certified nursing assistants and other direct care workers
 - Iowa Department of Public Health, Bureau of Professional Licensure – source of supply data for other licensed health professions
 - Iowa Hospital Association – source of vacancy, wage and other Iowa hospital data
 - Iowa Workforce Development – source for vacancy and wage data by occupation and employment setting
- Enhance technology infrastructure at Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals to improve the Nursing Assistant Registry database.
- Participate in national and regional efforts to identify shortage areas for all health workers.

The Center for Health Workforce Planning was created in the Iowa Department of Public Health, Bureau of Health Care Access, to assess and forecast health workforce supply and demand, address barriers to recruitment and retention, support strategies developed at the local level that prevent shortages, and engage in activities that assure a competent, diverse health workforce in Iowa. Funding for the center, fueled through the efforts of U.S. Senator Tom Harkin, is administered through the Bureau of Health Professions, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

http://www.idph.state.ia.us/hpcdp/workforce_planning.asp