

Maine Health Workforce Forum Fall 2012 Regional Meetings

Highlights/Summary of 2012 Regional Meetings

During October and November the Forum held regional meetings from Presque Isle to Portland with over 180 people attending including health employers; educators from all levels; representatives from MDOL, DHHS, economic development, public housing and other social service agencies. The purpose of these meetings was to bring people together to provide them: some background information about the health employment needs in their region, an opportunity to network and then help initiate some action steps to address some of the needs that were identified. In their evaluation of the meetings, participants stated they really liked being able to network and hearing from employers and then brainstorming to solve problems. The charge to participants at each meeting was to identify issues that they wanted to work on to resolve in the next 12 – 18 months. Following are some of the issues and/or action steps* identified at each meeting that different groups were going to pursue, with the initial assistance and support of the DOL grant funded regional coordinators in their areas. A summary of survey responses from registering participants is provided at the end of this document.

Lewiston – October 3, 2012 – 40 people attended

- An Elder Care Specialist credential that can be replicated and is recognized by the Maine Health Care Association
- Strengthening the health care career pipeline
- Providing information about available resources and trainings on a new website
- Restoring capacity at St. Mary's Hospital to offer clinical slots for close to 800 student/trainees

Washington County – Calais and Machias – October 12, 2012 – 12 people attended

- Need funds for an electronic medical record training
- Need an ICD 10 training for Washington County health care employers
- Exploring the development of a distance education CNA course

Bangor – October 16, 2012 – 57 people attended

- Identify who has implemented and incorporated nursing informatics into their curriculum and share with others
- Address shortage of physical therapists and occupational therapists possibly through an articulation agreement - 3+3 year program between UMO and Husson
- Development of a entry level clerical career pathway

Presque Isle – November 8, 2012 - 21 people attended

- Lack of physical therapists -> connect with Bangor Husson/UMO initiative
- Shortage of CNA instructors
- Need for well trained/dependable employees
- Reduce high turnover rate of CNAs

Portland – November 27, 2012 – 46 people attended

- Limited availability of in-state training for laboratory technicians
- Need for accurate and timely information regarding available training resources to be provided at CareerCenters
- Determine how best to communicate with and assist health care employers in meeting their hiring and training needs
- Gain additional input from long term care employers about their workforce needs
- Explore development of community health workers in Maine

Rockland – November 29, 2012 – 17 people attended

- Need further input from employers in region about their needs and means for connecting them to educators

*Not all of the information is available yet from some of the later meetings and some issues have also been modified as a result of follow-up steps or meetings.

Summary of Survey Responses

Overview

The Maine Health Workforce Forum held 6 regional meetings during October and November 2012 in Lewiston, Machias/Calais, Bangor, Presque Isle, Portland, and Rockland. The purpose of the meetings was to help identify regional workforce issues, provide opportunities to network and to determine actions for addressing identified needs. To help focus the issues for discussion at each meeting, people registering for the meetings were asked to respond to an anonymous survey. The survey included several questions regarding regional workforce needs, challenges, and barriers to meeting those needs. Those registering for the meetings included: educators, employers, health professionals and representatives from economic development, Maine Department of Labor, Maine Department of Health and Human Services and workforce development and other social services.

229 people registered for the meetings

101 people completed a survey

183 people attended the meetings

Summary of Responses Regarding Regional Health Workforce Needs

Participants reported that recruitment and retention of qualified healthcare professionals was the biggest workforce need. A lack of skilled health workers including: primary care physicians, RNs, CNAs, PTs, PAs, medical assistants, and mental health workers was reported. Issues with health professionals aging out of the workforce and the anticipated shortage of RNs were reported, as well as a need for workforce statistics in order to plan for the necessary investment in workforce training to cover the shortages. The ability to retain qualified health workers because of budget cuts, low wages for entry level positions, and increasingly lowered employee benefits also emerged as a major concern for employers. Overall concern was reported regarding

how the Affordable Care Act (2009) will affect insurance coverage and reimbursement on a systemic level and how this could affect employment potential within the healthcare sector.

Education and training issues were reported as second to recruitment and retention concerning regional health workforce needs. The need for more clinical placements, training sites, quality instructors, and employer supported training was reported. Fast track options for a wider variety of healthcare professions, stackable credentials, access to affordable continuing education, increased career readiness at entry level positions, as well as increased soft skills training were reported as necessary for program development to address health workforce shortages and evolving workforce needs. The lack of educational support services such as career counseling and financial funding for low income students emerged as a barrier in attracting potential students to academic programs in allied health professions.

Regional Health Workforce Barriers

Rural socio-economic issues emerged as a major barrier to regional recruitment and retention of qualified healthcare professionals. Lack of work opportunities for spouses, lack of transportation, and pay inequities for high skilled positions were reported as deterrents in recruitment and retention.

Lack of program funding was reported as the largest barrier in workforce education and training. Participants reported the need for educators to be more aligned with employers and their needs in the development of future healthcare programs in order to address post-secondary readiness for students and work readiness of graduates entering the workforce. The lack of internships tied to employment, limited career ladders in organizations, limited training opportunities in health information and train the trainer programs, and limited support for employed professionals to acquire continued education trainings were also identified as barriers to regional workforce needs in all sectors of workforce recruitment, retention, and training and education.

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