

Health Workforce Forum Regional Meetings 2012 – Summary of Survey Responses 12-11-12

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.