

March 2011

Focus On Workforce Diversity

As California engages in the business of implementing the affordable care act, the promise of equal access to health care services shines as a bright light on our horizon. An estimated 8.2 million Californians will need to obtain coverage. LCHC and allies are engaged in education and outreach to maximize enrollment among the Latino population. As Latinos are approximately 58% of the uninsured, we stand to gain more from ACA implementation and coverage expansion than any other segment of California's diverse population. Through our success, we will open the door to opportunities for regular preventive care visits and help reduce the onset of many conditions that become chronic without regular visits to a doctor. Someone must administer to the newly enrolled. While Latinos constitute almost two fifths of the state's population, we represent only 6% of physicians with similarly poor representation among nurses and the allied health professions. In 2009 the number and percentage of Latino Californians accepted into medical school was 203 and 9.8% respectively. Moreover, the number physicians produced California medical schools remains largely static. These shortages limit opportunity to linguistically and culturally appropriate care and in so doing limits access to access to quality care. Given these numbers it becomes more evident that despite ACA's enhancement of Health Service Corps funding, it will not be enough.

As the newly appointed vice chair of the Health Workforce Development Council (HWDC), LCHC is in a unique position to inform on and assist in the creation of policies that will help address the current health care workforce shortages and those prospective shortages that will occur when the ACA is fully implemented. The HWDC, funded through a federal Workforce Planning Grant has developed a work plan dedicated to the following key considerations:

- Analyze state and labor market information in order to create health care career pathways for students and adults, including dislocated workers
- Identify current and projected high demand State of regional health care sectors for purposes of planning career pathways
- Identify existing Federal, State and private resources to recruit, educate of train, and retain skilled health care workforce and strengthen partnerships.
- Describe the academic and health care industry standards for high school graduation for entry into post secondary education and for various credentials and licensure
- Describe State secondary and post secondary education and training policies, models , or practices for the health care sector, including career information and guidance counseling
- Identify Federal or State policies or rules to developing a coherent and comprehensive health care workforce development strategy, identify barriers and plan to resolve these barriers

On March 10, the HWDC met for the third time. LCHC is excited to report that the discussion amongst panel members was animated, engaging and informative. Every one of the members of the Council is dedicated to the work at hand, and is actively engaged in seeing that the work plan reflects current as well as future needs. An issue raised this last meeting was how delivery system reform will affect workforce needs. Much attention has been paid to insurance coverage as a means to access and diversity of the health professions as a means to access. The question presented now is: what healthcare professions will be in demand as the result of delivery system reform? With the advent of Patient Centered Health Home models, particularly in the wake of the approval of the Federal waiver, who we train and for what purpose becomes increasingly more important. Career pathways which should include opportunities for horizontal and vertical advancement, retraining of unemployed health professionals, are essential. Additionally, scope of practice needs to be addressed within this context. Our Community Clinics stand to bear the brunt of expansion, as they already serve a high number of uninsured, and will likely see the biggest increase in demand for services. Therefore, it is essential that we make the most efficient use of health professionals by evaluating the full range of their professional competence and allow each professional to practice to the fullest extent of their competency, maximizing on their training and experience. This is one of the numerous issues that the HWDC will continue to wrestle with in the coming months. Work to establish a foundation upon which we can implement a comprehensive plan for the healthcare workforce continues, and LCHC will keep you apprised of new developments.