



Wisconsin Community Health Centers: Primary Care Workforce Development

Issue Brief OCTOBER 2016

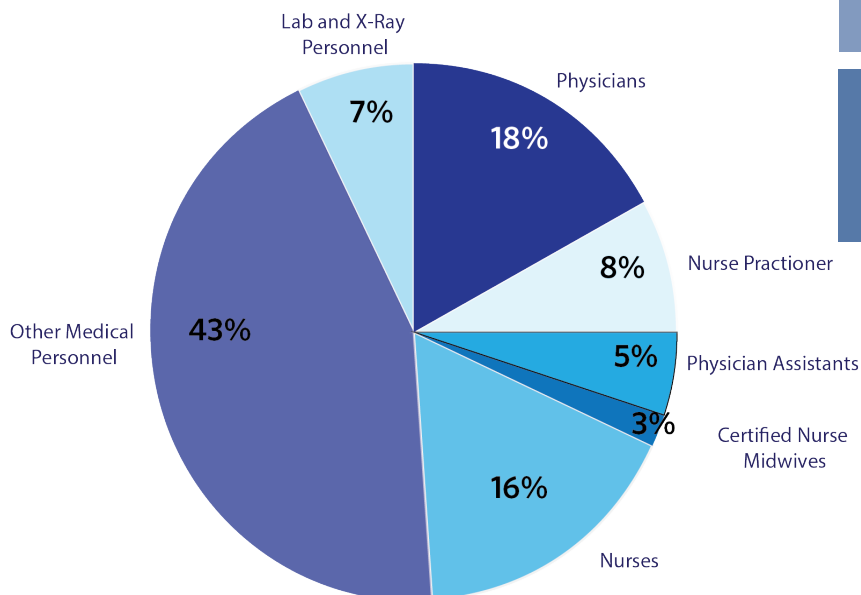
Background

Community Health Centers provide health care services in some of the most isolated and underserved communities in our country. Finding and retaining staff and providers who want to practice in these communities is challenging. Research indicates that physicians who train in safety net settings like community health centers, are more likely to stay and practice in these settings.

When it comes to fulfilling the need for more primary care practitioners - legislators, medical schools, and local communities in Wisconsin are working on programs to attract and retain primary care providers. Wisconsin Health Centers are an important training ground for providers in the primary care field, as well as a source of employment for new providers and staff.

This brief focuses on the current programs and initiatives in which Wisconsin Health Centers participate. These initiatives are geared towards attracting and training individuals who are interested in working in rural and urban underserved communities as primary care physicians.

**Wisconsin Community Health Centers
% 2015 Primary Care Provider by Type**



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ISSUE BRIEF

PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN TRAINING

In Wisconsin, Community Health Centers provide training and work experience for many types of providers and support staff through a variety of different programs.

Training in Urban Medicine and Public Health (TRIUMPH) Program

The University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) developed the TRIUMPH program in response to the shortage of physicians in urban areas of Wisconsin. The program trains third and fourth year medical students in urban clinical settings. Community Health Centers in Milwaukee are involved with TRIUMPH on a number of levels.

- As part of the TRIUMPH program, students complete an eighteen month placement in a community organization. Over the past eight years, Sixteenth Street Community Health Centers has worked with TRIUMPH students on thirteen community, public health, quality improvement, or research projects. In 2015-2016, these projects included:
 - Helping Hands: HIV Peer Mentoring Program Design, Implementation, and Evaluation Project
 - Improving Colorectal Cancer Screening
 - Bebes Sociales - Implementation, Evaluation, and Sustainability
 - Improving the Evaluation and Management of Dementia among Latino Elders
- In the 2015-2016 year, the program had four students complete their longitudinal preceptorship requirements at FQHCs. Two were located at Progressive and two at Sixteenth Street.
- A number of TRIUMPH alumni work at FQHCs. In the past year there were two alumni working at Sixteenth Street.

Wisconsin Academy for Rural Medicine (WARM) Program

The Wisconsin Academy for Rural Medicine, developed at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, seeks to “recruit students with rural backgrounds and career goals, develop a rural medical education track, and eventually expand rural residency training opportunities in the state.” The four-year program prepares medical students for residencies in any specialty, as well as a focus on primary care.

The WARM program has three regional locations affiliated with three health systems: Gunderson, Marshfield Clinic and Aurora in Green Bay.

- Students affiliated with Gunderson, in their Viroqua critical access hospital rotation, have the opportunity to spend time at Scenic Bluffs Community Health Centers in Cashton. Students are mentored by a Scenic Bluffs physician, who has mentored eight students through the program.
- The Marshfield Clinic allows for students to be immersed throughout their many sites, many of which are also affiliated with Family Health Center Marshfield, a FQHC.

The WARM program now has 23 graduates in practice:

- 87% are practicing in Wisconsin
 - 52% in rural communities in Wisconsin
 - 30% are practicing in their home town

Northeastern Wisconsin (N.E.W.) Psychiatry Residency Program

N.E.W. is a program slated to start in July 2017 through the Medical College of Wisconsin. This program is geared toward instilling the knowledge base and ability needed to care for the mental health needs of rural areas and beyond. Bridge Community Health Clinic in Wasau will be one of the clinics participating in the program and will focus training on psychiatry residents in primary care, and integrating them into practicing in a rural setting.

SPOTLIGHT: Dr. Xia Vang



Dr. Xia Vang is a recent graduate of University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health and a Wisconsin HealthCorp alumni. She is currently a first year family medicine resident at the University of Wisconsin.

Xia graduated from college knowing that she would pursue a career in medicine. She felt it was important for her to first gain some real world experience before she went to medical school.

Xia was born in Ban Vinai Refugee Camp in Thailand and at the age of three, immigrated

with her family to California before settling in Milwaukee with her family. Growing up, Xia witnessed many of the barriers to healthcare that many people, particularly those in minority and low-income populations, experienced.

Xia served with Wisconsin HealthCorps, WPHCA's AmeriCorps program, from 2011-2012. Her placement with Milwaukee Health Services, Inc. (MHSI) was an important step in determining the type of physician she hoped to become.

Xia served as a program coordinator in the Social Work Department at MHSI. Her service involved multiple projects where she worked directly with patients and community members. This included organizing and running "lobby fairs" where she educated patients on chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension. She worked outside of the Health Center to provide education on breast cancer screening, and also developed and taught sexual education classes for local students.

Xia spent the majority of her time, however, working with the Prescription Assistance Program. Prescription drugs are vital to helping patients maintain their health, and are often times quite costly, especially for those that are uninsured. Xia and a fellow AmeriCorps member helped low-income patients navigate these special prescription assistance programs offered by drug companies, and tracked their prescription needs.

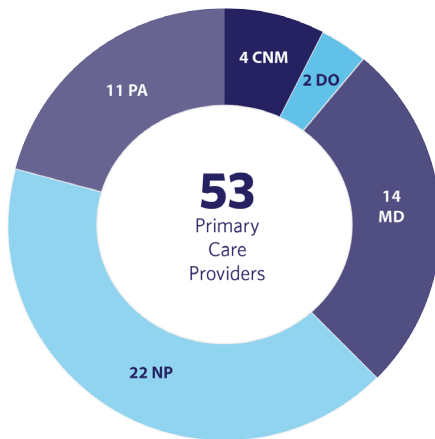
Xia was well-supported by the staff at the Health Center. They were interested in providing her with opportunities to learn and help her with her goals. "My work with patients at MHSI was very rewarding. They were receptive to talking to us [AmeriCorps members] and sharing their stories."

Serving at a Health Center was a big influence on Xia's decision to pursue a career in Family Medicine. She learned about different aspects of patient care outside of the strictly medical model—the importance of treating the whole person according to their economic, psychosocial, cultural and medical needs.

University of Wisconsin, Madison, Family Medicine Residency Program

UW-Madison has a well-established family medicine residency program. Residents practice at one of four family medicine centers, one of which is the Wingra Family Medical Center, affiliated with Access Community Health Centers in Madison. Residents working at Wingra get the opportunity to understand the FQHC model and the diverse and underserved populations that are served.

Wisconsin Community Health Centers
Current NHSC Primary Care Providers



National Health Service Corps (NHSC)

The National Health Service Corps provides scholarships and loan repayment to health care providers who commit to providing care in the communities who need them most. All service sites are within Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs), which means that the majority of people in that area go without essential health services or have to travel long distances to see primary health care providers.

In Wisconsin there are currently 170 active members of the NHSC. 156 are loan repayors (earning up to \$50,000 towards student loans in exchange for a two-year commitment at a NHSC-approved site) and 14 are NHSC scholars (providers who are committed to primary care and who received a NHSC scholarship that pays tuition, fees, other educational costs and provides a living stipend in return for a commitment to work at least two years at a

NHSC approved site in a medically underserved community).

All eighteen Community Health Centers in Wisconsin are NHSC-approved sites, with the majority employing some type of provider through the NHSC program. Currently there are 144 total NHSC providers working in Community Health Centers, with 53 of them working in primary care.

Wisconsin HealthCorps

For years, Health Centers in Wisconsin had been interested in working with AmeriCorps members as a way to attract young people to the Community Health Center world. The Health Centers worked together through WPHCA as their member association, and formed the Wisconsin HealthCorps in 2010. The program is a successful partnership between the Community Health Centers, the Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association, the Wisconsin Public Health Association, and local public health departments.



Each year, the Wisconsin HealthCorps places 20-25 individuals interested in public health and health care at various Community Health Center and Public Health host sites throughout Wisconsin. Approximately half of Wisconsin Community Health Centers participate in the program.

AmeriCorps Members serve 1700 hours during their year of service, and some extend their commitment for a second year. While serving with our program, Members are supporting the local host site efforts by conducting outreach and enrollment activities with new populations, developing health education initiatives, and engaging in broad-based coalition work to address complex public health issues.

WI Community Health Centers: Primary Care Workforce Development

The majority of Wisconsin HealthCorps alumni have gone on to pursue education and jobs in the public health sector. These include:

- Working at Community Health Centers, health departments and other health focused non-profits
- Pursuing graduate degrees in public health and social work
- Pursuing medical and other direct health care related degrees

Wisconsin HealthCorps recently received a 3 year competitive grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service which will allow us to continue to work with AmeriCorps members to improve the health and well-being of individuals and communities in Wisconsin.

LOOKING FORWARD

Physicians are only part of the primary care team that work in our Community Health Centers. Nurses, midwives, physicians assistants, and the support staff that assist health center patients are all integral members of the primary care team. The CHC environment is a prime arena for promoting and training providers in interprofessional, team-based care. Training and retaining these providers in underserved areas is critically important. A companion issue brief on the national and state initiatives that our Community Health Centers participate in to train and attract these providers will follow.

Primary health care providers are the bedrock of our health system. They provide integral healthcare services throughout a person's lifetime and help us protect our health through preventive care and disease management. The need for primary health care providers has grown over the years, especially with the expansion of access to health insurance through the Affordable Care Act.

While Community Health Centers were designed to provide primary health care in underserved communities, there continues to be a shift towards integrating behavioral and dental health into the scope of care that Community Health Centers provide. Wisconsin Health Centers have provided these crucial services to their patients in areas which might otherwise lack access.

Community Health Centers participate in a number of programs to train and attract primary care physicians, however Health Centers continue to face barriers in recruiting and retaining providers. According to a recent report on the provider workforce by the National Association of Community Health Centers, a number of issues hold Health Centers back from participating in formal residency programs. These include: the lack of formal relationships with area medical schools and/or teaching hospitals, lack of space, and budgetary constraints or inadequate funding for resident training.

Despite these barriers, it is crucial that WI CHCs continue to play an active role in the training and retention of our state's next generation of primary care physicians by:

- Continuing to build formal relationships with Wisconsin medical schools and health systems to introduce more students to the health center model of care,
- Supporting the continued federal funding for programs like the NHSC and Wisconsin HealthCorps in order to build up the field strength of these programs in Wisconsin,
- Supporting continued state and federal funding for Graduate Medical Education, including programs like the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME), which could help build up residency programs within health centers or other safety net providers.

This publication was made possible by Grant Number U58CS06821 from the Health Resources and Services Administration, an operating division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Health Resources and Services Administration or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

