

Strengthening the Health Care Workforce In South Dakota



The Community HealthCare Association of the Dakotas (CHAD) is a non-profit membership organization that serves as the primary care association for South Dakota and North Dakota, supporting community health centers, South Dakota Urban Indian Health, and Oyate Health Center in their mission to provide access to quality health care for all Dakotans. These health centers provided primary care, behavioral health services, and/or dental care to more than 125,000 South Dakotans in 2022.

South Dakota is facing crisis-level workforce shortages across primary medical care, dental, and behavioral health professions. Health centers across South Dakota have identified workforce as their number one challenge, and the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) projects this trend will continue.

From 2020 to 2030, South Dakota is expected to experience a:

- **7.5% ↓** decrease in supply in primary care while demand is expected to increase by 7.9%
- **8.2% ↑** increase in demand for dental health professionals
- **6.7% ↑** increase in demand for behavioral health services



In order to reverse this trend and keep South Dakota communities healthy and economically viable, comprehensive workforce solutions are urgently needed. CHAD is committed to working collaboratively with lawmakers and other stakeholders to address this issue, and we have outlined a variety of recommended solutions here.

Recommended Workforce Policy Solutions:



Develop a Coordinated, Statewide Strategy on Health Care Workforce Training and Career Laddering

- There is a need for a coordinated, statewide strategy on health care workforce training in South Dakota. CHAD supports the Interim Long Term Care Committee's recommendation to create a health care workforce coalition in South Dakota and requests that at least one seat on the coalition is designated to CHAD.
- This coalition should analyze existing health care training programs and slots by profession and compare the current capacity with anticipated need by discipline. The coalition should also develop and define career pathways in South Dakota and examine scope of work by discipline and gaps in getting professionals to the next level in their careers.



Simplify Licensing and Ensure Professionals can Practice at Top of Scope

- Modern health care delivery requires that safe and quality care provided by qualified professionals be dynamic and fluid across state boundaries. CHAD supports recommendations by the Interim Long Term Care Committee for South Dakota to join interstate compacts for licensing health professionals, including Advanced Practice Registered Nurses, Social Workers, Psychologists, and Counselors.
- The evolving medical practice environment requires flexibility in the composition of teams to meet the diverse needs of patients. CHAD supports efforts to ensure that health care professionals are able to practice at the top of their scope, given their education, training, and experience.



Maximize and Increase Loan Repayment and Scholarship Programs

- Efforts to relieve the financial burden of educational debt and tuition costs are a critical strategy in workforce recruitment, retention, and capacity building. South Dakota offers a variety of loan repayment programs, including the Recruitment Assistance Program, the Rural Healthcare Facility Recruitment Assistance Program, and the federally funded State Loan Repayment Program. These programs have been successful, and CHAD supports additional investments into health professional loan repayment programs.
- Scholarship programs are effective in incentivizing more South Dakotans to become trained as health professionals and to join the local health care workforce. CHAD supports efforts to expand and maximize scholarship programs to better meet growing health care workforce demands. This includes greater flexibility in the style of training program eligible for scholarships, such as of remote learning, apprenticeship programs, and on-the-job training programs.



Increase On-the-Job-Training and Remote Learning

- South Dakota faces a significant challenge in the form of a lack of local training opportunities and education capacity for health professions. Those who do seek a career in healthcare often must travel or move out of their community to receive training, making it harder for them to return and work in rural and underserved areas. In order to bring more local people into the health care workforce, South Dakota should invest in innovative training approaches. CHAD supports efforts to grow remote learning opportunities, on the job training, and formal apprenticeship programs for medical assistants, dental assistants, and other health professions. These training pathways should be supported with scholarships.