

Draft Health Care Workforce Strategic Plan
Submitted by Ena Backus, Director of Health Care Reform, Agency of Human Services

Act 155 of 2020 Statutory Charge

Act 155 of 2020, an act relating to increasing the supply of nurses and primary care providers in Vermont, establishes that, *the Director of Health Care Reform in the Agency of Human Services shall maintain a current health care workforce development strategic plan that continues efforts to ensure that Vermont has the health care workforce necessary to provide care to all Vermont residents.* In maintaining the strategic plan, the Director or designee shall consult with an advisory group composed of the following 11 members, at least one of whom shall be a nurse, to develop and maintain the strategic plan. Advisory Group participants included representatives from:

1. GMCB Primary Care Advisory Group
2. Vermont State Colleges
3. Area Health Education Center's Workforce Initiative
4. Federally Qualified Health Center
5. Vermont Hospitals
6. Physicians
7. Mental Health Professionals
8. Dentists
9. Naturopathic Physicians
10. Home Health Agencies
11. Long-term Care Facilities

Draft Plan Overview & Advisory Group Recommendations (See resource list below for full report)

Coordination of Health Care Workforce Development Activities in the State of Vermont

- Establish state interagency task team (AHS)
- Integrate with State Workforce Development Board

Data and Monitoring

- Identify lead state entity as health care workforce data hub (Interagency task team)
- Employ supply and demand modeling (Health care workforce data hub)

Financial Incentives

- Broaden loan repayment to more professional types (AHEC)
- Increase scholarship funding created by Act 155 of 2020 and identify permanent payment source (State Interagency Task Team)
- Evaluate effectiveness of the existing scholarship program available to Vermonters who attend dental school (VSAC, AHEC, VDH)
- Make financial assistance options for workforce clear, transparent, and easy to find (VSAC, employers, regional training programs)
- Revisit tax incentive proposals (State Interagency Task Team, Legislature)
- Identify financial barriers to recruitment and retention of non-licensed workforce (State Interagency Task Team)
- Recommend one-time funds for employers to attract retention of the non-licensed workforce (State Interagency Task Team)
- Consider longer-term grant incentive program (State Interagency Task Team)

Education and Training

- Increase enrollment in nursing programs (OPR, Schools of Nursing, clinical sites/health care orgs)
- Support transition-to-practice programs for professional roles (State Interagency Task Team)
- Strengthen incentives for preceptors for all professions (UVM College of Medicine)
- Explore opportunities to expand family practice residency programs (UVM College of Medicine)
- Modify curriculum to introduce primary care earlier in medical school (UVM College of Medicine)
- Establish a Physician Assistant Education Program (Vermont State Colleges, Legislature)
- Modify curriculum to prepare students for work in interdisciplinary teams across the continuum of care (Vermont State Colleges)
- Develop and identify strategies to streamline advancement through the nursing career ladder and upskill existing staff (Vermont State Colleges)

- Ensure that health care career education is offered to all students before leaving middle school (AOE)
- Advertise and recruit for existing apprenticeship opportunities supported by the DOL (DOL)

Regulation

- Advertise and promote the Fast Track for health care professional licensure for all OPR regulated professions (OPR, health care employers, ACCD)
- Differentiate Canadian health care workers from international health care workers and create an expedited path to licensure (OPR)
- Consider reducing licensing barriers for telehealth practice (OPR, Legislature)
- Evaluate further opportunities to remove barriers to licensure for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder treatment professionals (OPR)
- Consider temporarily waiving licensure fees for “first time” Licensed Nursing Assistants (State Interagency Task Team, OPR)

Practice

- Maximize Medicare flexibility & reimbursement through the All-Payer ACO Model Agreement (AHS, GMCB)
- Develop commercial reimbursement models for audio-only services (DFR)
- Expand telehealth coverage (DVHA)
- Make telehealth billing requirements clear (DFR)
- Establish a statewide telepsychiatry program in emergency departments (DMH, VAHHS)

Recruitment and Retention

- Inventory and highlight state programs that support recruitment and retention of health care professionals (State Interagency Task Team, DOL)
- Modify or expand programs that support working and living in Vermont (State Interagency Task Team, ACCD)
- Create marketing campaign to promote health care careers in Vermont (ACCD, State Interagency Task Team, regional health care recruitment centers)
- Promote health care careers to New Vermonters (The Office of Refugee Resettlement)
- Develop a cross system strategy to utilize Section 9817 of the American Rescue Plan Act (AHS)
- Support Organizational Wellness and Peer Support Programs (Director of Trauma Prevention and Resilience Development, DMH, employers)
- Reduce Administrative Burden (Legislature)

Federal Policy

- Support strategies to minimize the increasing trend towards travel staffing that is resulting in unsustainable cost increases for health care employers.
- Anti-poaching provisions directed at travel staffing agencies.
- Price-gouging prohibitions.
- Reforming federal tax incentives.
- Support the CONNECT for Health Act of 2021.
- Support the HEAT Act.
- Support the federal Strengthening Knowledge, Improving Learning, and Livelihoods (“SKILLS”) Act.
- Support the bipartisan Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act.
- Raising the H-2B Cap.
- Medicare waiver requests.
- Support increased funding for Graduate Medical Education/residency and training slots.

Future Considerations

- Current and future need and demand for dental professionals in Vermont should be reflected in the Vermont State Oral Health Plan and compiled by an informed group of key stakeholders.
- Policy proposals developing workforce in psychiatric care for pediatric patients and mental health care in long term care settings.
- Advance a coordinated approach to promote health care careers in K-12 educational settings.
- Consider simulation for clinical experience for all health care professionals.

Draft Health Care Workforce Development Strategic Plan	
Friday, October 15th	Draft Plan Submitted to GMCB - Plan sent to Advisory Committee for review
Wednesday, October 20th (1 PM)	Presentation at Public Board Meeting - Teams shared with Advisory Committee
Monday, October 25th (2 – 4 PM)	General Advisory Committee Meeting - Members should be prepared to discuss & provide feedback on the draft plan
November 1, 2021	Special Public Comment Period - Open from 10/15/2021 through 11/1/2021
TBD	Public Board Meeting - Board discussion & vote on draft Health Care Workforce Plan
On or before December 1, 2021	Updated Plan Submitted to Legislative Committees

Resources

- [Draft Health Care Workforce Strategic Plan \(submitted 10/15/2021\)](#)
- [10/20/2021 Board Meeting Presentation by Ena Backus, Director of Health Care Reform](#)
- [Microsoft Teams Recording of 10/20/2021 Board Meeting](#)
- [GMCB Public Comment Webpage](#)