

Legislative Workforce committee

North Dakota Area Health Education Center

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Presented by:

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Chairman Grindberg and Members of the Workforce Committee:

My name is Mary Amundson and I am the principal investigator for the North Dakota Area Health Education Center program, referred to as the AHEC, a program administered from the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences.

We appreciate the opportunity to talk with you about the North Dakota Area Health Education Center (AHEC) program which aims to improve access to health care services in medically underserved areas throughout North Dakota by addressing the distribution, diversity, supply, and quality of health care professionals. This project is a collaborative effort with the UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences, UND College of Nursing and NDSU College of Pharmacy, Nursing, and Allied Science.

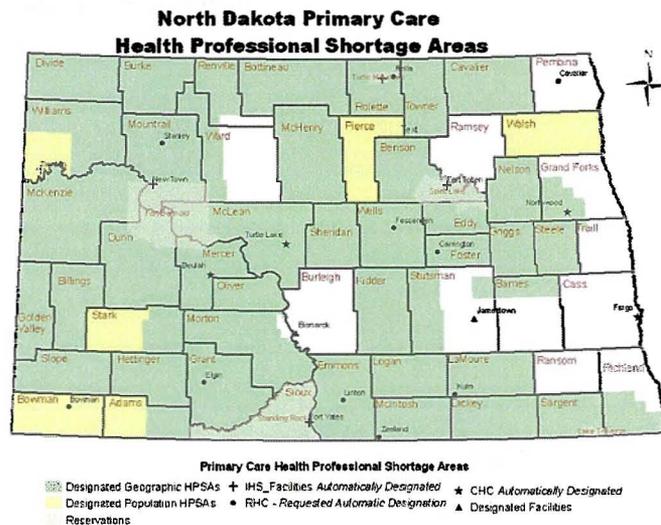
I have been involved in the area of health professional recruitment and retention for the past twenty years, working with communities and health care providers to improve access to primary care services through a variety of federal and state programs and I am pleased to discuss the North Dakota Area Health Education Center program with you today.

The motto of the National Area Health Education Center is “connecting students to careers, professionals to communities, and communities to better health”. Although there are programs throughout the state that address the elements of this motto, there is a lack of coordination among those providing the opportunities for students’, professionals, and communities. The North Dakota Area Health Education is positioned to take on this role.

Currently, 89% of North Dakota’s counties do not have an adequate number of primary care providers; 96% of North Dakota’s counties are partially or fully designated as mental health professional shortage areas and 32% are fully or partially designated as dental health professional shortage areas.

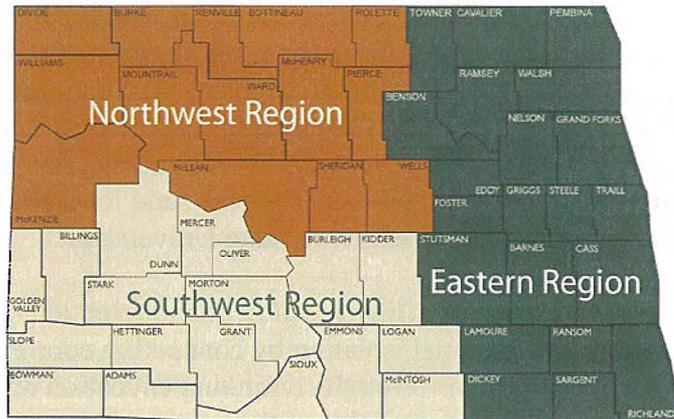
In collaboration with the North Dakota Department of Health’s Primary Care Office, quarterly needs assessments are done for health and human service facilities across the state while the ND

AHEC is conducting a comprehensive examination of the current supply and demand for all health professions. This information will be critical in planning new programs for each of our regional centers as well as for state-wide higher education planning.



The first goal of the ND AHEC is to establish the program infrastructure which began immediately by identifying program office staff and developing an advisory board at the program office and at the regional office level. By April 2009, the first regional center was established and is located in Mayville under the direction of Dr. Bill Krivarchka. Dr. Krivarchka has been to every county in his 21 county region visiting 80 communities and 105 schools to introduce the AHEC program and build relationships with a variety of partners at the local level such as the health facilities, education, economic development, etc. We have just selected a director for the SW AHEC, Mr. Tony Scheerz who will begin July 5th. This center will be located in Hettinger. The third regional office to be established in the Northwest is proposed for development in 2011.

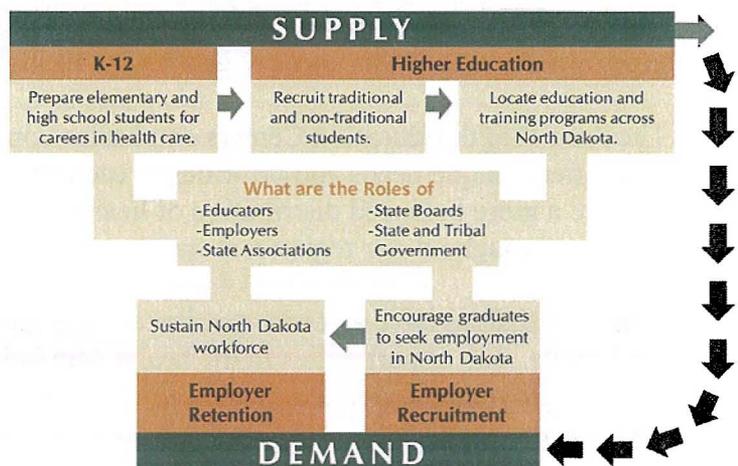
North Dakota Area Health Education Center



The ND AHEC is actively engaging state agencies in round table discussions to build partnerships to introduce the North Dakota Area Education Health Center, (AHEC), mission and goals in assisting to meet the healthcare needs of rural underserved communities and cross-walk workforce activities. Agencies participating in the discussions are NDSU Extension, Department of Career and Technical Education, Department of Commerce Workforce Development Commission, Center for Distance Education, Economic development, North Dakota Department of Health, Indian Health Service, Office of the Labor Commissioner, North Dakota University System, and others that have an interest in health workforce programs.

Our overall goal is to work with all educational institutions and health care programs to increase the number and diversity of providers serving in rural underserved areas through activities across the pipeline.

One of the major activities is to work with our communities to provide opportunities for students K-12 to bring about an awareness of the health professions for these students through a variety of activities; wellness program for 90 students enrolled in the summer institute for the Indians into Medicine Program (INMED); a community/education partnership mini-grant program to develop programs to increase the awareness of health careers for their K-12 students; in collaboration with the Department of Career and Technical Education, the AHEC is supporting students in Health Occupations classes



to obtain their HIPAA certification in order that they may participate in health care job shadowing opportunities. To date, 145 students have been trained.

The AHEC enhances the quality of health professions education at the post secondary level. AHEC has exhibited at student career days at NDSU and UND, and is planning a health career fair at Mayville State University. We are currently working on establishing new clinical rotations for students with an emphasis on community and interprofessional experiences for pharmacy, occupational therapy, physical therapy and medicine with new coop experiences for nursing students. Additionally, Dr. Krivarchka facilitated a meeting with Mayville State University, the Dakota Nurse Program, and local health care providers in their desire to establish a nursing program at Mayville State University.

The AHEC addresses the recruitment and retention of health care providers with a focus on reducing professional isolation by connecting communities and health care providers with education programs through continuing education opportunities. Recruitment and retention workshops are also available with a state- wide workshop planned in August in collaboration with the ND Health Care Association for later this year.

To help accomplish our goals, we are currently partnering with organizations or agencies such as Department of Commerce, Department of Labor, Job Service North Dakota, Department of Career and Technical Education, North Dakota Department of Health, North Dakota Healthcare Association, North Dakota Long Term Care Association, Mayville State University, Dakota Medical Foundation, Bremer Bank, Spirit Lake Reservation, Community HealthCare Association of the Dakotas, Migrant Health Service, and health care facilities across the state.

Several of these organizations/agencies have representation on either the program office advisory board or the Eastern Area Health Education Center advisory board helping to direct the activities of the program.

As for AHEC funding, \$850,000 per year will be needed in match funds to continue the program starting with our new grant year in 2011.

The Area Health Education Centers emphasize community partnerships therefore our programs will reflect unique needs and priorities in each of the regions. Ultimately, our efforts will help achieve a more balanced distribution of health care resources and professionals – and thus better health – throughout our region and state.

AHEC initiatives have an economic impact and good health care makes a community more productive. Job opportunities in the health care industry continue to grow faster than any other employment sector and local health care wages stay in the local economy which further supports the need for the Area Health Education Center for North Dakota.