

Governor's Task Force on the Healthcare Workforce

Concept Recommendations, June 6, 2024

Education and Training

Faculty

Recruitment of nursing and allied health faculty was identified as a significant challenge.

1. Proposed Policy Name: **Nurse and allied health educator incentive programs**
 - a. Description: Recruiting nurses into faculty roles is challenging because nurse faculty salaries are typically lower than nurse salaries in patient care or other settings. For similar reasons, technical colleges report shortages for allied health faculty. State sponsored loan repayment programs for faculty may be helpful to incentivize qualified nurses and allied health professionals to serve in these positions. This proposal would expand on the [Nurse Educators Program](#).
2. Proposed Policy Name: **Compensation for nursing faculty**
 - a. Description: Review compensation levels for nursing faculty at Wisconsin Technical Colleges and University of Wisconsin campuses and develop a plan to ensure pay is competitive. Faculty salaries are often lower than practitioner salaries, which leads to difficulty recruiting or retaining nursing faculty.

Strengthen Clinical Training & Experience

Clinical training and other hands-on experiences are an important part of the educational process for most healthcare occupations.

3. Proposed Policy Name: **Support preparation of clinical behavioral health counselors ([Qualified Treatment Trainee Grants](#))**
 - a. Description: Supervised clinical experience is required for individuals seeking licensure as a clinical counselor or clinical social worker. Newly graduated individuals completing supervised experience for clinical licensure must either identify a licensed clinical professional that is willing to be their supervisor or find employment that offers supervision. Providing supervision takes time and typically has some impact on the clinical productivity of practicing professionals and their organizations. The QTT grant program supports organizations and professionals involved in

supervision by covering costs associated with supervision and providing support to individuals receiving supervision (paid clinical experiences and benefits). State funding is needed to continue this important program.

4. Proposed Policy Name: **Develop a registry for clinical experience sites**
 - a. Description: Competition for clinical training sites can make it challenging for students from some programs to gain clinical experience. Some states have developed clinical training registries to organize opportunities and support equitable access to clinical training experiences. Such registries can be developed and managed by the state or outsourced to another entity.
5. Proposed Policy Name: **Expand experiential learning tools**
 - a. Description: Higher educational entities offer simulation labs and other experiential learning tools as a supplement to classroom and clinical experience. Additional funds could help schools to expand simulation labs and other hands-on tools to help students gain practical experience.

Reduce Barriers to Training for Wisconsinites

6. Proposed Policy Name: **Wraparound services programs**
 - a. Description: Some students experience social barriers, such as transportation and childcare, to completing education and training in healthcare related fields. Wraparound services are designed to support students experiencing these barriers. State supported wraparound services programs, which have been successful for Wisconsinites, require continued and sustainable funding of our state higher education partners.
7. Proposed Policy Name: **Direct care worker training support (Continuation/expansion of [WisCaregiver Careers](#))**
 - a. Description: Funding to employers to cover Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) and other direct care worker training costs. Under this model, the worker gets a sign on and retention bonus. Additionally, the worker gets a mentor that gets a retention bonus. Without a plan for continued funding, training costs revert to employers and workers will no longer receive state-sponsored bonuses.
8. Proposed Policy Name: **Strong state support for WTCS and UW System**
 - a. Description: The cost of education is a barrier to entry. A strong state investment in the Wisconsin Technical College System and the Universities of Wisconsin would address the magnitude of the healthcare workforce need by keeping college affordable.
9. Proposed Policy Name: **Reduce GED/HSED costs for students**

- a. Description: Encourage Wisconsinites to complete a Certificate of General Educational Development or High School Equivalency Diploma by reducing training and/or testing costs.

Expand Apprenticeship Programs in Wisconsin

Apprenticeships are a work-based learning model that support workers and employers. Wisconsin is a leader in apprenticeships, including for healthcare occupations. Expansion of both Wisconsin State Registered Apprenticeships (RA) and Youth Apprenticeships (YA) will ensure these opportunities are available to support more workers and employers.

10. Proposed Policy Name: Leverage state infrastructure for apprenticeship expansion.

- a. Description: The Wisconsin Departments of Corrections and Health Services operate healthcare facilities that provide selected services within the state. Healthcare facilities operated by the state may present opportunities for apprenticeship expansion.

11. Proposed Policy Name: Additional state funding for state registered apprenticeship programs.

- a. Description: Increased infrastructure support for apprenticeship programs to boost interest, understanding, and navigation of health care apprenticeships. Increased staffing would boost individual outreach to employers, build and grow pre-apprenticeship opportunities to train individuals for registered apprenticeship opportunities, and allow for more nimble policy and program changes. Increased funding to support and enhance the development of new and existing curriculum and IT processes will help the state respond to the increased demand in pre-apprenticeships, registered apprenticeships, and youth apprenticeships and enhance the worker and employer experience. Incentivize local consortia to engage sponsors and bridge YA-to-RA programs to encourage youth to continue their career pathway as an adult. Fund instruction-related costs for youth apprentices to ensure equitable access to YA pathways. Support registered apprentices by covering the costs of any required licenses, certifications, and exams. Increase funding for apprenticeship completion award program. Fund On-the-job Learning (OJL) Reimbursements to health care sector employers to incentivize them to establish new RA programs.

Expand Non-Apprenticeship Work-based Learning Opportunities

12. Proposed Policy Name: [Worker Advancement Initiative Grant](#)

- a. Description: Support the continuation of the Worker Advancement Initiative (WAI), which provides grants to the local workforce development boards to assist individuals successfully enter and advance in Wisconsin's health care workforce. WAI offers human-centered design techniques, wrap-around services, and sector-based, tailored, training programs. Invest in these training programs with demonstrated success within the health care sector that are not otherwise eligible for federal WIOA reimbursement.

Other

13. Proposed Policy Name: **Strengthen licensure pathways for veterans and service members**

- a. Description: Many veterans and service members have training and experience that may be translated into licensed healthcare occupations. Pathways for translating military experience into educational credit and bridge programs that are aligned with state licensure requirements can help qualified veterans and service members enter high demand licensed healthcare occupations.

14. Proposed Policy Name: **Strengthen dual enrollment opportunities**

- a. Support health science education by strengthening dual enrollment programs in secondary schools. These help high school students complete post-secondary coursework and earn certifications and/or licenses.

15. Proposed Policy Name: **State support for AHEC early pipeline activities**

- a. Description: Increasing awareness of healthcare careers among youth is critical to developing the next generation of the workforce. The [Area Health Education Centers \(AHEC\) program](#) is involved in educating youth about healthcare careers. Targeted state support to the AHEC for expansion of youth engagement and education in healthcare careers would ensure more Wisconsin students are aware of the variety of healthcare careers available.

Recruitment and Retention

Medicaid Strategies to Support Recruitment and Retention

1. Proposed Policy Name: **Expand Medicaid to increase funding for strategic healthcare workforce development**
 - a. Description: The state of Wisconsin is projected to realize an increase of \$1.6 billion in state general fund savings during the first two years of Medicaid Expansion. A portion of these funds could be used to support strategic initiatives, including the workforce, such as employer support for education and training of healthcare workers. Medicaid Expansion would also encourage workforce participation among workers who sometimes limit hours of employment to retain public benefits.
2. Proposed Policy Name: **Rate increases to strengthen the workforce for aging Wisconsinites**
 - a. Description: The Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) workforce provides services for individuals that enable them to age in place or at their homes. Most people prefer to stay in their homes as long as possible. The cost of providing HCBS is typically lower than the cost of providing facility-based services (nursing home or assisted living), but wages are typically lower. The Department of Health Services has proposed increasing Medicaid rates for home and community-based services to facilitate higher wages, a strategy referred to as the [minimum fee schedule](#). Supporting higher Medicaid rates can encourage recruitment and retention of direct workers and meet the needs of our aging population.
3. Proposed Policy Name: **Rate increases to strengthen the behavioral health workforce**
 - a. Description: Recruitment and retention of professionals among public sector providers of behavioral health services is a significant challenge. Wages for public sector behavioral health services, such as Outpatient Behavioral Health and Day Treatment, are based on Medicaid reimbursement rates, which typically fall behind private insurance and self-pay rates. Lower reimbursement rates can translate to lower wages for behavioral health professionals. While Wisconsin has made progress in recent years in increasing rates, additional Medicaid rate increases for behavioral health services will help providers increase wages and support recruitment and retention of professionals.

Recruiting and Retaining in Areas of Need

4. Proposed Policy Name: **Expand state loan repayment/forgiveness for professionals serving in state-defined shortage areas**
 - a. Description: Many healthcare professionals use student loans to finance their education. Educational debt may impact health professionals practice decisions, including where they decide to practice. Rural communities have smaller populations and lower cost of living but typically offer lower incomes to health professionals. Health professionals with educational debt may choose to practice in more populated communities where higher incomes are offered. State sponsored student loan repayment/forgiveness programs are a common state strategy to support recruitment of health professionals into areas of greatest need. These programs incentivize recruitment by offering relief from student indebtedness in exchange for service in state defined areas of need.
5. Proposed Policy Name: **Additional funds for state healthcare staff compensation**
 - a. Description: The income of healthcare professionals at state-run health facilities, including those operated by the Department of Health Service, Veterans Affairs, and Corrections, are typically lower than those offered by private health sector employers. Funding to support increased compensation for health professionals working at state-run facilities will increase the competitiveness of these positions, help provide needed services, and support recruitment of professionals.

Supporting Innovation

6. Proposed Policy Name: **Support employer-based workforce development solutions with [Provider Innovation Grants](#)**
 - a. Description: The workforce needs of employers are generally unique and driven by their industry, the local economy, and the population. Funding to support workforce development innovations must be adaptable to meet the unique needs employers. Provider Innovation Grants offer flexible funds to employers to support strategic workforce development initiatives, such as mentorship programs, preceptor bonuses, paid clinical sites, improved scheduling practices, professional development, and social supports.
7. Proposed Policy Name: **Support regional collaboration for workforce development through [Workforce Innovation Grants](#)**
 - a. Description: Support the continuation of Workforce Innovation Grants (WIG) to encourage the development of long-term solutions to help businesses

find qualified workers and assist individuals in obtaining family-sustaining jobs. Allocate specific funding to address health care industry labor and workforce challenges. Flexible funding to support regional planning and strategic workforce development would support regional solutions.

8. Proposed Policy Name: **Support the workforce through [Covering Wisconsin](#)**
 - a. Description: Many healthcare workers in direct care roles, such as Certified Nurse Aids, Home Health Aids, Home and Community Based Service Workers, lack healthcare benefits. Navigating benefit opportunities in the Marketplace can be challenging without guidance and support. Some workers may choose to leave their direct care positions for employment in other sectors or industries where they are offered benefits. Providing resources to healthcare workers and connecting them to benefit opportunities that work for them, and their families, may help retain these workers in their critical roles.

Regulatory Policy

Support New or Expanded Pathways to Licensure

1. Proposed Policy Name: **Create new healthcare pathways**
 - a. Description: License or certify community health workers, birth doulas, peer supporters, and other emerging support professionals to help licensed practitioners, such as primary care physicians and obstetricians, operate at the top of their licenses. Allow Medicaid to cover these services.
2. Proposed Policy Name: **Support pathways to licensure for qualified foreign educated professionals**
 - a. Description: Foreign educated professionals represent a potential pool of workers to grow the healthcare workforce. Programs (education) and provisions (regulatory) may be established or strengthened to support the recruitment of these professionals into the state in areas of need.
3. Proposed Policy Name: **Ratify and enter into multi-state licensing compacts.**
 - a. Description: Multi-state compacts allow professionals to become eligible to practice in other participating states. Compacts can make it easier for healthcare providers to practice across states or to relocate. Wisconsin has not yet ratified and entered into the Counseling Compact, which allows professional counselors to become eligible to practice in other states.
4. Proposed Policy Name: **Explore alternative pathways for licensure qualification demonstration**
 - a. Description: Applied experience in healthcare can provide opportunities for learning and skill building. In some cases, applied experience may augment formalized training. States are exploring and adopting ways to incorporate applied experience as pathways for licensure qualification for some healthcare professions.

Strengthen State Capacity for Regulation

5. Proposed Policy Name: **Enhance licensee experience and reduce time to licensure**
 - a. Description: Providing the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) with needed staffing levels will help improve workforce availability within Wisconsin communities. In particular, the establishment of positions to support board members' decision making regarding educational requirements may expedite the licensure process for qualified candidates, making Board time more efficient. These positions could perform preliminary

review of applicants' educational requirements, prepare summary information, and provide expert recommendations to the Board.

6. Proposed Policy Name: **Enhance state quality assurance capacity**
 - a. Description: The Department of Health Services regulates and provides technical assistance to healthcare facilities and providers. Increased support for staff to regulate healthcare facilities and providers would enhance capacity focused on ensuring safety within the healthcare sector.

Healthcare Workforce Wellbeing and Monitoring

7. Proposed Policy Name: **Increase support for healthcare workforce wellness.**
 - a. Description: Physical, mental, and psychological challenges faced by healthcare professionals can be managed with appropriate treatment. Provisions to support the health of healthcare professionals can support workforce health and wellbeing and promote continued practice. In some states, these programs are available for licensed health professionals and supported through licensing fees. In other cases, supports are provided by employers through employee assistance programs or company well-being initiatives.
8. Proposed Policy Name: **Resources to analyze the healthcare workforce.**
 - a. Description: Monitoring the healthcare workforce within a state is challenging. Many states use license counts to estimate state-level capacity of healthcare professionals. Unfortunately, not all license holders actually practice or work within the state, and license information (such as license address) may or may not reflect where a professional is practicing. The collection of supplemental workforce information (whether a professional practices in the state, where their practice is located, their specialty, etc.) at time of license renewal is a best practice for states to gather the information needed to assess the workforce, identify shortages, and target and evaluation policy solutions. DSPS is poised to champion workforce data collection for Wisconsin's licensed healthcare professionals. Resources will be required to ensure appropriate staffing and expertise to collect this data and transform it into actionable information for Wisconsin.