

**Alaska Health Workforce Coalition
Alaska Healthcare Mobilizes Long-Term Strategy to Address
Current Needs and Future Demand
Fall 2012 ~ Winter 2013**



<https://sites.google.com/site/alaskahealthworkforcecoalition/>

The Importance of the Alaska Health Workforce Coalition:

The Alaska Health Workforce Coalition (the Coalition) was launched to develop a coordinated, cohesive and effective approach to addressing the critical needs for health workers in Alaska. The Coalition recently published a 2012-2015 Action Agenda, outlining priority occupations and initiatives that require immediate attention to ensure Alaskans continue to have access to health care services. The Action Agenda is the implementation plan for the Alaska Health Workforce Plan 2010, endorsed by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board and many other groups representing state and industry health leaders.

What is the Alaska Health Workforce Coalition?

The Coalition is a public private partnership comprised of leadership representatives from government, health industry and associated organizations. The Coalition's leadership includes both industry and government entities:

- Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC)
- Alaska Area Health Education Center (AHEC)
- Alaska Primary Care Association (APCA)
- Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Homes Association (ASHNHA)
- Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB)
- Alaska Behavioral Health Association (ABHA)
- Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA)
- Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)
- Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)
- Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD)
- University of Alaska (UA)

Why does the Coalition exist?

The Coalition exists to coordinate and monitor statewide healthcare initiatives and ensure strategic goals are met and system capacity is built through targeted action. When the Coalition formed in 2009, some coordination existed focusing on behavioral health, community based services and direct care workers through the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority's (The Trust) Workforce Development Focus Area. However, little to no coordination and planning existed on the broader health workforce front, and the State lacked a plan to orchestrate the myriad efforts that were underway in health workforce development. Industry members recognized the need to focus on building communications and relationships that would allow for a coordinated

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approach. The Coalition came together to develop comprehensive picture of what was happening, what needed to be done and identify where additional resources were necessary to address the critical health workforce needs in Alaska.

What is the problem?

Alaska is expected to add 38,749 jobs between 2010 and 2020, an increase of 12%. Health care and social assistance which will support the needs of an aging population is projected to grow by about 31%. Health care and social assistance jobs will be booming through 2020 as the population of Alaskans age 65 and up is expected to grow by 89%. Ambulatory health care – which includes practitioners, outpatient care centers, and home health services – will gain 5,860 jobs, or 28%, and nursing homes and community elder care facilities will also show strong growth. The aging population will also increase social assistance, adding about 2,400 jobs – up 25% for the 10 year period. In all, health care and social assistance will be responsible for a third of the total added jobs over the projection period. It will also become a larger share of the state's employment, growing from 12.8% in 2010 to 15% in 2020.¹ Unfortunately, there are unacceptably high vacancy rates in many critical fields. The Coalition is orchestrating concerted and strategic tactics to address these needs through a comprehensive statewide plan.

Why are there shortages of health workers?

It's complicated. There are a large number of shortages in Direct Care Workers, who often provide needed services to the elderly, those experiencing mental health and additions problems, and those with developmental disabilities; Alaska experiences high turnover in these jobs. In addition, many of the shortages are in advanced health professions like Physicians, Psychiatrists, Physical Therapists, Advanced Nurse Practitioners, Licensed Clinical Professionals or Pharmacists. These require significant levels of advanced education, much of which is not currently available in Alaska. Many of the professionals that currently fill these positions are approaching retirement age and will be leaving their health professions. This is all complicated by the implications of the Patient Care and Affordable Care Act and the increasing number of Alaskans over the age of 65, both of which will increase the number of peoples seeking medical care.

¹ **Alaska Economic Trends; Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development; October 2012, Vol. 32, No. 10, ISSN 0160-3345.**

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What does the Coalition do?

The Coalition has identified 12 priority health occupation areas and meets periodically to review the progress on the strategies and implementation plan for these initiatives. They also work closely identifying areas that are ripe for cooperation and collaboration.

What are the priorities or goals of the Coalition?

The Coalition identified six occupations and six systems change and capacity building initiatives. These twelve priorities each have specific objectives to be completed through the end of 2015.



How do I find out more?

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