

## Challenges in Connecticut's Health Care Workforce

Between 2010 and 2030, the percentage of Connecticut residents over age 65 is expected to grow by 40% and the ratio of Connecticut seniors to 100 workers (ages 20 to 64) is expected to grow from 23 to 40. An aging population will place greater demands on the health care system at the same time that many health professionals will be retiring. National and state health reforms to cover the uninsured will add to the demand for providers. In 2006 when Massachusetts expanded coverage to almost all uninsured residents, wait times for physician visits increased significantly, to a year in some areas, and serious healthcare workforce shortages were reported across the state.

Despite economic uncertainty, the health care field is among the few industries to maintain levels of employment and job security. Despite this encouraging fact, health care reform has led to a reevaluation of the course of health care employment in this country. Changing technology, as well as new methods of payment for services, among other factors should lead us to assess "Connecticut's rapidly changing workforce environment in health care." A comprehensive assessment of health care workforce needs – present and future – was conducted last year for the Office of Workforce Competitiveness and the Connecticut Training and Employment Commission. A broad collaboration of stakeholders addressed workforce capacity issues in the SustiNet Task Force on Health Care Workforce. The following are recommendations from those reports towards greater efficiency and ease of operation within the system.

### 1. The challenge:

Connecticut's aging population will rapidly increase demand for health care services. The supply of capable health care workers must be maintained to adequately care for Connecticut's aging residents. Available technology is expanding, increasing the need for continued education and new skills within the health care field.

#### The solution:

Provide incentives for young people to enter into the health care field in the state of Connecticut. Invest in continued education in light of changing technology and advancing business models.

### 2. The challenge:

Health Care reform and budget shortfalls create uncertainty for health care workers in the short-term. Communication between Connecticut's educational institutions and sharing resources such as clinical slots needs improvement.

#### The solution:

Improve communications between educators, employers, and lawmakers. Encourage action on all fronts when changes become apparent. Encourage educators to work collaboratively to maximize resources for students.

3. The challenge:

“The many sources of health care workforce information are not coordinated in a way that supports complete analyses or shared understanding and strategy development.”

The solution:

Develop across-the-board standard systems of analysis and information sharing about workforce capacity, opportunities and needs. Encourage collaboration and communication between the Labor, Higher Education, and Public Health agencies in Connecticut.

Further recommendations:

1. Develop an “internet-based health care workforce portal” in which information can be easily accessed and transferred. Coordinate information strategies between public and private entities concerned with Public Health.
2. Shift the state focus of research and planning to implement change and efficiency within the health care system.
3. Consider the different needs and demands of specific fields in health care- including behavioral health, ambulatory care, hospital care, and nursing and residential care.

Continued attention to the needs of the health care workforce in a rapidly changing economic and technological environment is critical. Access to information, collaborative work, and the implementation of systems encouraging ease of access and efficiency can aid in the improvement of the environment of Connecticut’s current health care workforce.

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