Alabama Statewide AHEC Program

Health Professions Pipeline Programs – It Takes a Village and an Investment of Time

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Growing Our Own Healthcare Team
Objectives

Participants will be able to:
• Identify characteristics of potential rural providers
• Create a strategic recruitment program
• Describe the components of a community team
The AHEC (Area Health Education Centers) program was developed by Congress in 1971 to recruit, train and retain a health professions workforce committed to serve underserved populations.
Rural/Underserved Challenges

- Geographic isolation
- Perception of limited cultural activities
- Limited employment for spouse
- Longer hours
- Limited back up or call coverage
- Availability of quality housing
Most of Alabama is Rural
Why Alabama Needs More Primary Care Providers!

- Overall health ranking among poorest in U.S.
- Lack of access to healthcare
- Shortage of health professionals in the state
- Alabama’s primary care workforce is aging
- All 67 counties have MUA/MUP designations
- 51 counties are whole county HPSA designations
- 11 counties are partial county HPSA designations
Healthcare Builds the Community and the Community Builds Healthcare
AHEC is all about Collaboration!

The strength of the AHEC Network is its ability to reduce health disparities by improving the quantity, diversity, distribution and quality of Alabama’s healthcare workforce.
So, let’s get started on…

The AHEC Path

Keep ‘Em

Rural and Underserved Communities
Continuing Education
Health Promotion
Disease Prevention
Community Task Forces

Train ‘Em

Health Professional Student Training
Community-based
Rural/Underserved
Primary Care
Housing Assistance
Preceptor Support
Interdisciplinary

Get ‘Em

Awareness & Exploration
(Elementary - College)
Camps
Q&A
Academic Support
Shadowing
Mentoring
Field Trips

Source: OKAHEC, Oklahoma State Center for Health Sciences
Student Perceptions of Rural Alabama
Efforts to Address Shortage of Primary Care

Regional AHEC Staff:

• Facilitate housing
• Identify training sites
• Provide community orientation
• Offer recreational activities
• Link students to community leaders
Implement programs, services, and activities that target underrepresented minority, rural, and other disadvantaged Alabama youth and adults for careers in the health professions, including public health.
Tell your high school students to:

• Do well in school: study, focus!
• Take the courses that will prepare you for health career programs after high school
• Participate in the Youth Health Service Corps to get “hands on experience”
  – Volunteer
  – Participate in Service Learning Projects
• Make yourself a unique applicant for college
Careers in Health Care
Encourage High School Preparation

- Math courses—3-4 years
- Science courses (with a lab)—3-4 years
- English courses—4 years
- Social Studies/History courses—3 years
- Language—2-4 years of same one
- Choose electives wisely!
- Computer applications; be computer literate, it’s vital for college!
A Certain Kind

• https://vimeo.com/15727128
Need from Clinics

Needs for high school students from clinics include:
1. Health careers camp sponsorship
2. Field trip for each camp
3. Supplies for hands on activities at high schools
4. Additional Virtual Job Shadowing
5. ACT review
How Long Does it Take?

- **Certificate programs**, such as nurse’s aide and medical assistant, take as little as 3 months to 1 year to train.
- **Associate degrees**, such as RN or physical therapy assistant, take 2 years at a community college.
- **Baccalaureate degrees**, such as social work or medical lab tech, take 4 years at a college or university.
Personal Qualities & Skills Needed

- Caring attitude!
- Commitment to improving health and wellbeing of others
- Sensitivity to cultural diversity
- Good communication skills
- Knowledge of another language is helpful
Personal Qualities & Skills Needed to Work in Health Care

• Sense of team work, with fair and ethical value system
• Strong leadership skills
• Commitment to life long learning
• Critical thinker and problem solver
Improve the readiness and ability of health professions students/residents toward primary care and willingness to care for Alabama’s medically needy populations.
Recruitment

• The whole community are recruiters
• Find rural students
• Interest in serving underserved or minority populations
• Public or rural schools
According to Dr. John Wheat, "The ground has been prepared for socially responsive medical schools to provide medical education programs directed at regions such as Alabama's Black Belt and to test the utility of increasing the number of medical students from these communities to increase the supply of local physicians and improve population health."
AHECs are the Bridge

AHECs can link rural clinics to health professions programs
Become a Training Site

- Brochures, welcome baskets
  - Welcome them to their town
  - Community activities
  - History of the area

- Know the patient population
  - Visiting a patient at home
  - Visiting an industrial site to learn about occupational health issues
The Immersion Experience
Service Learning: Mission Work at Home and Abroad
Before the student arrives...

- Staff meeting
- Name of student and name of their academic program
- Starting and ending dates
- Student’s expected role in patient care
Orienting Your Student

Work space for student
- Show where coat, purse, backpack can be stored
- Hours of operation
- Time and expectations for lunch
- Parking, phone, email

Dress code & procedures
- Name badge
- Lab coat?
- Participation in meetings and conferences
- Directions for chart notes
Keep Connected

• Invite the student back for events
• Offer to precept elective rotations
• Send cards and newsletters
AHEC is about Partners Connecting!
Questions?