

Arizona Healthcare Workforce

This report presents findings from interviews with health care leaders across Arizona regarding the trends they are observing and their expectations for future health workforce needs. For this report, interviews with 16 health care leaders were conducted to assess their plans and projections about how health care delivery is changing and impacting worker needs.

Background: From 2004 to 2013, employment grew in all health occupations by over 75% in Arizona. Future growth projections indicate massive shortages in all roles, but especially for physicians and nurses, with shortfalls as high as 30% for registered nurses and 50% for licensed practical nurses. The Affordable Care Act's provisions are also expected to spur growth in emerging occupations and to increase emphasis on social and preventative care needs, such as behavioral health and dental care coverage. For Arizona, the distribution of health care workers is complicated by significant geographic variation within the state. Arizona includes one of the nation's largest metropolitan areas and some of the most rural areas in the country.

Summary of Findings:

- Accountable Care Organizations and the growth of value-based purchasing have increased the focus on population health, integrating information systems, and quality-based payments, but it also has caused system disruptions.
- Healthcare is shifting its focus away from solely clinical settings to community wellness and prevention, with greater requirements for patient self-management.
- Integration of behavioral health and primary care requires greater integration of information, reimbursement methods, and licensing.
- Staff, providers, and patients all need further education in the use of technologies and data documentation.
- New roles and models of care are being piloted. But more is needed.
- Health care education needs: new providers need to learn the basic tenets of patient-centered care, and how to better use information technology; there needs to be better coordination between hands-on experience and clinical simulations; more medical assistants need updated training; and there needs to be new degree programs to accommodate the new roles.
- Regulatory changes can facilitate better use of the health care workforce by streamlining and expanding certifications, licensure, and communication across health care fields.

Interviewees' Top Three Priorities for health workforce development: 1) better use of technology, 2) training and education, 3) recruitment and retention. Their overall responses indicate a need to simplify and update the processes for students to enter health fields *in all roles* and to improve the attractiveness of the field through compensation.

Conclusions: As health system transformation continues, a combination of regulatory, education, and training changes will be necessary to facilitate new models of care and address changing demographics. Most occupations now require skills in care management, patient engagement, new technology, and team-based care. Employers and educators will need to both expand their education programs in these areas and reassess the curricular content of their programs to ensure an adequately sized and skilled workforce in the future.