



## Overview

The need for a well-trained, quality health workforce that reflects the diversity of communities in which health professionals practice is greater than ever. Yet the historical challenges in recruiting and retaining primary care providers, nurses and other essential health care workers has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past year, the Biden-Harris Administration has made historic investments in the health workforce to begin to turn the tide and better support the health workforce and promote health equity.

## HRSA's Work to Support and Grow the Health Workforce

HRSA's workforce programs train [physicians](#), [nurses](#), [oral health clinicians](#), [behavioral health professionals and paraprofessionals](#), [maternal and child health clinicians](#), [geriatricians](#), [public health professionals](#), and [health care providers serving people with HIV](#).

- We invest in strategies that engage students in health professions early through career development and scholarship programs.
- We support building career ladders in health care and invest in paraprofessional and professional education and training programs.
- We fund post-graduate and residency training opportunities.
- We fund loan repayment programs aimed at recruiting and retaining practicing clinicians and faculty.

With investments from the American Rescue Plan and the Provider Relief Fund, HRSA is strengthening the workforce by connecting skilled health care providers to communities in need through grants, loan repayment, and scholarship programs; helping to build the pipeline of public health workers in the most underserved communities, and providing COVID-19 relief payments. Highlights of recent efforts include:

- **With HRSA support, [22,700 health care providers](#), the largest number ever supported, now practice in underserved communities treating more than 23 million patients thanks to HRSA's loan repayment and scholarship programs funded through the American Rescue Plan and other appropriations:**
  - In 2021, HRSA increased health professions' scholarship and loan repayment awards by more than 27%. These programs provide scholarships and loan repayment assistance to clinicians that commit to practicing in underserved communities.
  - With American Rescue Plan funding, in 2021, HRSA nearly quadrupled the number of National Health Service Corps scholarships awarded and nearly doubled the number of Nurse Corps scholarship awards.
  - HRSA's new Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Recovery loan repayment programs also supported over 250 substance use disorder professionals practicing in underserved communities in 2021.
- **HRSA made pandemic relief payments to 137,000 health care providers across all 50 states and territories in 2021.**
  - This funding can be used for a wide variety of direct and indirect costs of recruiting and retaining personnel during the pandemic, such as incentive pay, hiring or retention bonuses, childcare assistance, temporary housing, mental health supports, and more.

- In November, [HRSA began distributing \\$8.5 billion](#) in American Rescue Plan Rural funding to providers and suppliers who serve Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program, and Medicare beneficiaries who live in rural areas.
- In December, [began distributing approximately \\$9 billion](#) in the fourth phase of Provider Relief Fund payments to health care providers who have experienced revenue losses and expenses related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **HRSA awarded \$323 million through two separate funding opportunities in [June](#) and [July](#), 2021 to 150 local and national organizations, including community-based organizations to support vaccination outreach strategies to help underserved communities get the information they need to make informed decisions from trusted community messengers.**
  - Funding supports hiring and mobilizing community outreach workers, community health workers, social support specialists, and others to conduct on-the-ground outreach to educate and assist individuals in getting information about vaccination, help make vaccine appointments, and assist with transportation and other needs to get individuals to each of their vaccination appointments.
- **With [\\$23 million in HRSA support](#), 47 new awardees received Teaching Health Center Development Program awards to support the development of new, accredited, community-based primary care residency programs in underserved and rural communities.**
  - Through the Teaching Health Center Programs, HRSA is creating new primary care residency programs through accredited Teaching Health Centers in rural and underserved communities.
  - Since the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education Program began in 2011, over [1,400 new primary care physicians and dentists](#) have graduated and entered the workforce, a majority of which are practicing in primary care and medically underserved areas and/or rural settings.
  - HRSA will award the full \$330 million in American Rescue Plan funding for the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education Program in the coming months.
- **HRSA awarded \$22 million to 56 organizations to train and expand the behavioral health workforce thanks to the American Rescue Plan. Funding provides for behavioral health professionals, with a particular emphasis on the integration of behavioral health into primary care.**
  - These awards, [announced in June](#), bring the total awards for the Behavioral Health Workforce and Education Training Program, to \$66 million for 168 organizations.
- **HRSA expanded pediatric mental health care access by awarding \$10.7 million to 24 organizations that will support state and regional networks of pediatric mental health care teams to provide tele-consultation, training, technical assistance, and care coordination in order to diagnose, treat, and refer children and youth with mental health conditions and substance use disorder.**
  - [Announced in August](#), these awards continue HRSA's commitment to build the maternal and child health workforce by supporting a continuum of training investments to develop leaders in public health, clinical practice, teaching, research, and/or administration and policy-making. Additional awards are expected in Fiscal Year 2022.
- **HRSA awarded more than \$3 million in supplemental funding to 25 Healthy Start grantees to cover the costs of training, certifying, and compensating doulas who have been shown to support better health outcomes.**
  - These awards, [announced in September](#), will increase the availability of doulas in Healthy Start service areas most affected by infant and maternal mortality in order to improve health outcomes before, during, and after pregnancy, and reduce racial/ethnic differences in rates of infant death and adverse perinatal outcomes.

- **HRSA made \$122 million in emergency home visiting funds available to 56 states, jurisdictions, and nonprofit organizations to support children and families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.**
  - Distributed through two rounds of awards, first in [May](#) and then in [December](#), these funds can be used to train home visitors on emergency preparedness and response planning for families, how to safely conduct virtual intimate partner violence screenings, and support home visitor hazard pay and other staff costs, among other supports.
- **In April, HRSA [awarded \\$6 billion](#) in American Rescue Plan funds to 1,400 health centers which operate more than 13,500 service delivery sites nationwide and provide primary medical, dental, and/or behavioral health care services to nearly 29 million people.**
  - Community health centers nationwide expanded COVID-19 vaccinations, testing, and treatment for vulnerable populations; are delivering preventive and primary health care services to people at higher risk for COVID-19; and expanded their operational capacity during the pandemic and beyond, including enhancing and expanding health care workforce and services.
- **HRSA awarded an additional \$11.8 million to 10 organizations and a [technical assistance center](#) to increase physician training opportunities in rural communities and focus on improving access to high quality health care providers.**
  - Awarded in July and September, these funds are supporting new rural residency programs that will train future physicians in rural areas in specialties including family medicine, internal medicine, psychiatry, and general surgery.
- **HRSA [awarded over \\$32 million](#) to 122 organizations that will provide health centers with critical COVID-19 related training, technical assistance, and health information technology support.**
  - The Primary Care Associations, National Training and Technical Assistance Partners, and Health Center Controlled Networks provide training and technical assistance support to HRSA Health Center Program-supported health centers nationwide, including supporting the health care workforce to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19, and to carry out other health workforce-related activities.
- **HRSA [awarded approximately \\$30.3 million](#) to 14 organizations to support education and training of health care professionals treating people with HIV.**
  - The AIDS Education and Training Centers conduct targeted, multidisciplinary education and training programs for health care providers treating people with HIV through a national network of leading HIV experts serving all 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and the 6 U.S. Pacific Jurisdictions.

## Strategic Planning and Research

Addressing the country's workforce needs for the long-term requires significant stakeholder engagement, strategic planning, and research.

- **In October, HRSA released the [Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\) Health Workforce Strategic Plan](#), a forward-looking framework to address long-standing barriers to strengthening the health workforce.**
  - This Strategic Plan is focused on four goals: 1) Expanding supply; 2) Ensuring equitable distribution; 3) Improving quality; and 4) Enhancing the use of data and evidence to improve program outcomes.

- HRSA’s [National Center for Health Workforce Analysis](#) examines the supply, education, demand, and distribution of the health workforce, along with the quality and dissemination of health workforce data, including through the work of nine [Health Workforce Research Centers](#).
  - In addition to their ongoing health workforce research projects on health workforce, the centers have focused on COVID-19 response efforts, including [developing resources](#) for policy makers and states including:
    - A [COVID-19 County Workforce Estimator and Dashboard](#) which seeks to identify hospital workforce issues at the county level throughout the United States.
    - [Health Care Workforce Playbooks](#) that provide health care systems, states, the federal government, and other stakeholders with updated, state-of-the-art resources to promote local flexibility to respond to workforce challenges and shortages during the pandemic and beyond.
    - A [Research brief](#) that summarizes findings on how states prepared for and responded to the pandemic, including regulatory flexibility, surge capacity for acute care services, and impacts on both ambulatory care services and the health professions educational pipeline.
    - A series of [webinars](#) on health workforce and COVID-19, including examinations of the impact of telehealth and provider attrition on access to care for underserved populations as well as state actions to expand health care workforce flexibility.
- HRSA’s [Rural Health Research Center Program](#) support high-quality, policy-relevant research to assist health care providers and decision makers at the federal, state and local levels in better understanding the challenges faced by rural communities.
  - Recent publications examining rural health workforce issues include:
    - A [policy brief](#) examining the 2019 supply of general surgeons in rural and urban areas of the U.S. and compared to a similar study of general surgeon supply conducted in 2001, and the changes in the regional distribution and age and gender characteristics of general surgeons since 2001.
    - A [peer-reviewed journal article](#) analyzing the rural distribution of clinicians with a Drug Enforcement Administration waiver to prescribe buprenorphine to treat opioid use disorder.
    - A [policy brief](#) examining geographic access to health care for rural Medicare beneficiaries and analyzing which types of providers were caring for rural beneficiaries.

## Stakeholder Engagement

Highlights of recent engagement with stakeholders, including professional organizations/associations and program awardees and participants, include:

- In August, the White House, HHS and HRSA held a [Leadership Listening Session on the Nursing Workforce with stakeholders to gather information on the challenges facing the nursing workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly burnout among nurses](#).
  - In December, HRSA conducted a follow up Clinical Leaders Peer-to-Peer Forum Webinar on the nursing workforce where over 230 clinical leaders and nursing professionals were offered an opportunity to learn best practices from one another.
- Throughout 2021, HRSA engaged with HRSA-funded health centers to enhance their capabilities to recruit, develop, and retain a workforce through the [Health Professions Education and Training Initiative](#).
  - HRSA will continue working with health centers to implement workforce action plans, disseminate evidence-based models and promising practices, and demonstrate sustainability and the return-on-investment health center-based education and training programs have on their workforce.

- Throughout 2021, HRSA's Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs participated in four rural town hall listening sessions where rural stakeholders provided feedback about key issues and current challenges, including workforce.
  - HRSA's Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs serves as the principal lead on intergovernmental and external affairs, regional operations, and tribal partnerships to increase the reach, impact, and awareness of HRSA programs.

## Forthcoming Funding Opportunities

In Fiscal Year 2022, HRSA has announced the availability of funding for the following health workforce opportunities and awards:

- [\\$48 million](#) in American Rescue Plan funding for community-based organizations to **increase the number of public health professionals in rural and tribal communities** through job development, training, job placement for public health professionals in community health support; Health IT and/or telehealth technical support; community para-medicine; and case management staff and/or Respiratory Therapists.
- [\\$103 million](#) in American Rescue Plan funding to **reduce burnout and promote mental health among the health workforce**, with specific consideration of the needs of rural and medically underserved communities.
- [\\$240 million](#) in American Rescue Plan funds into a new program focused on education and on-the-job training to **build the pipeline of public health workers in the most underserved communities**. This effort will support apprenticeship programs for 13,000 community health workers and paraprofessionals at over 500 health care and public health sites nationally where high-risk populations access care and receive services.
- [\\$66.5 million](#) in additional American Rescue Plan funding to **support community-based organizations that will provide information and education on COVID-19 vaccines to the medically vulnerable or underserved**, including racial and ethnic minority groups with low vaccination rates.
- [\\$89.5 million](#) in American Rescue Plan funding for Nurse Corps Programs to **improve and expand access to care in underserved communities with significant nursing needs** exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic through recruitment and placement of nurses in Critical Shortage Facilities.
- [\\$400 million](#) in American Rescue Plan funding to support the National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment and Scholarship Programs, including [\\$100 million](#) for the State Loan Repayment Program, to help **recruit and retain primary care, mental health, and dental health clinicians in areas of greatest need**.
- [\\$13 million](#) to **develop new residency programs in rural communities** to train physicians in rural practice settings.