

Health Professional Shortages

All states face some physician shortages and the problem is predicted to worsen

- ▶ More than 60 million people—approximately one-fifth of the U.S. population—live in an area with a physician shortage.¹
- ▶ The federal government has designated approximately 6,000 primary care shortage areas, more than 4,000 dental Health Professional Shortage Areas and more than 3,000 mental health shortage areas.¹
- ▶ In Idaho, which has fewer doctors per capita than any state, one-third of its 44 counties have been designated Health Professional Shortage Areas by the federal Health Resources and Services Administration.¹
- ▶ It would take more than 16,000 additional physicians to meet the country's need for primary care physicians.¹
- ▶ The Health Resources and Services Administration designates a county as a shortage area when it has a population-to-primary care physician ratio of more than 3,500-to-1.²
- ▶ More than 30 federal programs, such as the National Health Service Corps, depend on the shortage area designation to determine eligibility or funding preferences.³
- ▶ Several studies have concluded the U.S. will need between 55,000 and 200,000 additional physicians by 2020.^{4,5}



Solutions include increasing the number of physicians through medical school enrollment and incentive packages

- ▶ First-year enrollment at the nation's medical schools increased in 2008 by nearly 2 percent over 2007, to more than 18,000 students—the highest enrollment in history.⁶
- ▶ The federal government provides scholarships and loan repayment to health professionals who agree to practice for at least two years in a shortage area through the National Health Service Corps.
- ▶ International medical graduates, typically obtaining J-1 visa waivers, account for approximately 25 percent of all physicians practicing in the U.S.⁷
- ▶ States also have policies designed to address shortages:
 - At least 10 states (Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Montana, North Dakota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon and Virginia) provide tax credits for physicians locating in underserved areas;
 - Physician extenders, such as nurse practitioners, can provide some services associated with medical doctors, although their scope of practice varies by state;
 - Arkansas provides grants to physicians to help pay costs of starting a practice.

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Health Resources and Services Administration. Accessed at <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/shortage/> on January 30, 2009.

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Health Resources and Services Administration. Accessed at <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/shortage/primarycare.htm> on January 30, 2009.

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration. Accessed at <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/shortage/proposedrule/designatingMUs.htm> on January 30, 2009.

⁴ Merritt, J., J. Hawkins, et al. (2004). Will the Last Physician In America Please Turn Off The Lights? A Look at America's Looming Doctor Shortage. Irving, TX, Practice Support Resources, Inc.

⁵ Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Physician Supply and Demand: Projections to 2020. October 2006.

⁶ American Association of Medical Colleges. News Release. Accessed at <http://www.aamc.org/newsroom/pressrel/2008/081021.htm> on January 30, 2009.

⁷ Hallock, James. American Association of Medical Colleges. AAMC Reporter (September 2006) Accessed at <http://www.aamc.org/newsroom/reporter/sept06/viewpoint.htm> on January 30, 2009.

HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SHORTAGE AREA DESIGNATIONS BY STATE OR TERRITORY

| State/Territory | Single County | Geographic Area | Population Group | Native American Tribal Population | Facility | Total |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Alabama | 23 | 8 | 32 | 1 | 22 | 86 |
| Alaska | 13 | 3 | 1 | 30 | 23 | 70 |
| Arizona | 5 | 41 | 16 | 28 | 46 | 136 |
| Arkansas | 18 | 28 | 19 | 0 | 23 | 88 |
| California | 2 | 108 | 72 | 45 | 278 | 505 |
| Colorado | 17 | 14 | 29 | 4 | 44 | 108 |
| Connecticut | 0 | 7 | 18 | 2 | 14 | 41 |
| Deleware | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 12 |
| District of Columbia | 0 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 8 | 14 |
| Florida | 16 | 4 | 106 | 5 | 109 | 240 |
| Georgia | 58 | 9 | 65 | 0 | 56 | 188 |
| Hawaii | 0 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 22 | 31 |
| Idaho | 14 | 6 | 26 | 3 | 14 | 63 |
| Illinois | 24 | 36 | 66 | 0 | 148 | 274 |
| Indiana | 13 | 14 | 26 | 1 | 41 | 95 |
| Iowa | 14 | 7 | 25 | 1 | 41 | 88 |
| Kansas | 25 | 0 | 64 | 4 | 50 | 143 |
| Kentucky | 39 | 1 | 47 | 0 | 48 | 135 |
| Louisiana | 46 | 18 | 9 | 4 | 44 | 121 |
| Maine | 0 | 15 | 22 | 5 | 33 | 75 |
| Maryland | 7 | 4 | 16 | 0 | 19 | 46 |
| Massachusetts | 2 | 5 | 15 | 1 | 45 | 68 |
| Michigan | 9 | 19 | 55 | 13 | 104 | 200 |
| Minnesota | 12 | 21 | 28 | 12 | 48 | 121 |
| Mississippi | 54 | 4 | 19 | 2 | 30 | 109 |
| Missouri | 31 | 1 | 85 | 1 | 62 | 180 |
| Montana | 21 | 15 | 14 | 11 | 30 | 91 |
| Nebraska | 26 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 38 | 73 |
| Nevada | 10 | 9 | 5 | 22 | 9 | 55 |
| New Hampshire | 0 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 16 | 24 |
| New Jersey | 0 | 4 | 7 | 0 | 24 | 35 |
| New Mexico | 18 | 14 | 8 | 21 | 30 | 91 |
| New York | 8 | 52 | 31 | 4 | 79 | 174 |
| North Carolina | 21 | 8 | 30 | 1 | 55 | 115 |
| North Dakota | 28 | 15 | 7 | 4 | 22 | 76 |
| Ohio | 11 | 32 | 24 | 0 | 47 | 114 |
| Oklahoma | 23 | 9 | 29 | 97 | 39 | 197 |
| Oregon | 5 | 15 | 27 | 8 | 44 | 99 |
| Pennsylvania | 2 | 42 | 43 | 0 | 87 | 174 |
| Rhode Island | 0 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 12 | 20 |
| South Carolina | 9 | 9 | 38 | 2 | 30 | 88 |
| South Dakota | 26 | 20 | 3 | 10 | 32 | 91 |
| Tennessee | 29 | 11 | 37 | 0 | 43 | 120 |
| Texas | 119 | 49 | 67 | 3 | 168 | 406 |
| Utah | 10 | 2 | 23 | 5 | 19 | 59 |
| Vermont | 0 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 15 | 23 |
| Virginia | 31 | 23 | 5 | 0 | 56 | 115 |
| Washington | 7 | 23 | 29 | 29 | 59 | 147 |
| West Virginia | 17 | 17 | 8 | 0 | 53 | 95 |
| Wisconsin | 12 | 34 | 12 | 16 | 35 | 109 |
| Wyoming | 13 | 9 | 1 | 3 | 12 | 38 |
| American Samoa | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Micronesia | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| Guam | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Marshall Islands | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Palau | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Puerto Rico | 0 | 1 | 16 | 0 | 23 | 40 |
| Virgin Islands | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 4 |
| TOTAL | 894 | 818 | 1347 | 404 | 2460 | 5923 |

Source: U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration as of 6/10/2008