

# **Coos Economic Action Plan**

## **Health Care Technical Review Committee**

### **Recommendation One**

#### **Action Step Recommendation Statement**

Develop a Grow Our Own Health Career Pipeline Program that expands the number of North Country students and residents who enter the field of health care.

The goal for this initiative will be to expand the number of North Country students pursuing health care occupations by implementing a series of activities which will include:

- Creation of Health Careers Counselor position with skills and training in health care occupations to work with students, parents, teachers in all participating North Country middle schools and high schools as well as serving as a liaison with area health care providers.
- Enhancing academic preparedness by offering a health careers summer camp for middle school students and summer internships for high school students pursuing health care occupations. The health careers camp will be modeled on the existing camp at Dartmouth for rising high school juniors and seniors.
- Expansion of the curriculum currently being taught at the Hugh J. Gallen Regional Career and Technical Center in Littleton (attended by White Mt Regional students) and the Health Science Technology Program in Berlin to address additional needs experienced by area health care providers.
- Collaboration with Granite State College and the NH Community College System, for the development of additional courses culminating in Associate level degrees for North Country students who have been qualified and/or certified in health care occupations and wish to further their education and career goals.
- Development of tools to ensure that students participating in the North Country Health Care Occupations Initiative remain in the area and secure positions at North Country health care providers.

#### **Justification of Recommendation**

Coos County, like most rural areas, suffers from severe shortages of trained personnel in every facet of health care delivery. The entire area has been designated as Medically Under Served by the US Department of Health and Human Services (US DHHS).

Specific designations by US DHHS for shortages of dental, mental health and primary care personnel exist as well. This shortage of health professionals results in challenges for area residents to access timely primary and preventive care, oral health, and mental health services. The Coos County population is aging and more health care workers will be needed to meet the demand. The recruitment pool from outside the area is shrinking and rural areas are turning toward strategies that increase the number of rural students with an interest in health professions, providing students with early experiences in health

care, academic and career preparation focused on health care, and strategies to retain or regain the students as they complete their academic training.

This project will also leverage the policy work that is in process currently. A recent report from the Citizen's Health Initiative, *Strategies to Address the Issues of Access to NH's Primary Care Workforce*, will be presented to Governor Lynch on March 19. The report contains findings and recommendations on this statewide problem. There is also pending legislation in the NH legislature (has passed the House) establishing a State Office of Rural Health and setting up a commission to recommend policies and programs to expand the number of NH citizens in health professions serving NH's rural and underserved area with a focus on primary care, oral health and behavioral health; and requiring the Department of Health and Human Services to prepare a workforce plan.

### **Who**

North Country Health Consortium would play the lead role utilizing the Northern NH Area Health Education Center (AHEC) and would partner with long-term care facilities (Morrison Nursing Home, Coos County Nursing Home); hospitals, health clinics and other health and human service providers; the North Country Education Foundation; Granite State College; White Mountain Community College; and the University of New Hampshire.

### **Timeline for Implementation**

The best practices and models exist and the groundwork has been done to begin this work. The start up for the project will require several months and other funding proposals will need to be written. A working group already exists and is putting a concept paper together to submit to the Tillotson Fund. The project has been discussed with the Endowment for Health. Work that could begin quickly includes setting up a health career counseling position for students and the establishment of a health careers camp. Additional work would include meetings with health providers to determine the most effective course work for entry level workers and working with the local academic centers as things move forward.

### **Major Measures of Success**

1. Health Careers Counselor position funded. Position working collaboratively with area middle, junior high and high schools to provide information to students and parents on health careers, advice on courses needed to be competitive for health profession schools; information and support for SAT prep, financial aid, etc.
2. Health careers summer camps established in two North Country locations for middle school students and summer internships for high school students pursuing health care occupations.
3. Students complete the curriculum at area high school technical centers and are well-prepared to begin entry level jobs with area health providers or are accepted at health profession schools.

4. Students are tracked for their success rates in college and return to northern NH to work as health professionals

**Resource**

Funding Resources include Coos Economic Adjustment project funding. Additional funds will be requested from sources such as the Tillotson Fund, the Endowment for Health and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, Northern Division. Funds to be leveraged include limited resources available to AHEC currently as well as loan repayment and recruitment funds through the NH Department of Health and Human Services.

**Appendices**

I. Example of Health Career Pipeline Program

II. NH Citizen's Health Initiative report *Strategies to Address the Issues of Access to NH's Primary Care Workforce*

## Appendix I.

*The New Hampshire AHEC program has provided this example of a Health Careers Pipeline Program*

### **Expand the New Hampshire Health Careers Pipeline Program.**

1. Promote and support health career aspirations at every level throughout the educational cycle.
  - A. Elementary School: *awakening interest in health careers*
    - i. Offer inquiry-based science activities in the classroom, at the discretion of teachers
    - ii. Engage students in interactive on-line science and health careers games
  - B. Middle School: *providing early experience, laying the curricular groundwork*
    - i. Facilitate basic job-shadowing
    - ii. Provide after-school science and health careers enrichment programs
    - iii. Provide advance information on both requirements and important electives in high school science
    - iv. Maintain on-line activities that build on games offered to elementary students
  - C. High School: *engaging students in active pursuit of their own career preparation*
    - i. Facilitate job shadowing, with structured assignments
    - ii. Offer advanced day and residential camps
    - iii. Maintain on-line presence for high school students vis-à-vis application preparation, financial aid information, specific careers
    - iv. Produce and distribute health careers catalog broadly
  - D. College/Health Professions Training: *keeping students on a trajectory toward health care*
    - i. Support the placement of health professions students at sites in rural and underserved communities for clinical training
      - a. Directory of sites and preceptors
      - b. Partial housing and/or travel stipends
    - ii. Support sites and preceptors in rural and underserved communities
      - a. Information resources
      - b. Teaching resources (workshops, guides, texts)
      - c. Materials
  - E. Practice: *retaining practicing health professionals in rural and underserved settings*
    - i. Provide continuing education and academic detailing (i.e. longer term, sequenced educational modules)
    - ii. Promote involvement in academically generated and other research opportunities
    - iii. Offer opportunities to serve as preceptors for the next generation of health professions students
2. Target efforts where they are most needed
  - A. In rural and underserved communities
  - B. On economically and educationally disadvantaged young people
  - C. In support of health professions experiencing greatest shortages
3. Work with academic and community-based partners to leverage resources
  - A. Existing information and training technology
  - B. Academic institutions and faculty
  - C. Professional societies
  - D. Community agencies and programs