

Submission Id: 3855

Title

Bolstering Primary Care Workforce through Rural and Underserved Program Development

Priority 1 (Research Category)

Education and training

Presenters

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Abstract

Context: Rural and underserved America has fewer physicians leading to poorer health outcomes. As a result, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) funded the Teaching Health Center Planning and Development (THCPD) and Rural Residency Planning and Development (RRPD) programs to launch training programs that ultimately bolster workforce in underserved settings. Objective: Describe the characteristics of the underserved communities where the programs are located and compare developmental progress, including barriers and facilitators, across RRPD and THCPD training programs. Study Design: cross-sectional, descriptive analysis of qualitative and quantitative evaluation data. Setting: rural and underserved communities across the U.S. Population studied: 93 newly developing residency programs in Family Medicine (n=66), Psychiatry (n=10) Internal Medicine (n=5), Pediatrics (n=3), General Surgery (n=1), Other specialties (n=8), across the US. Outcome measures: Program characteristics including specialty, structure and size, funding mechanism, percentage of training time spent in setting, practice setting, type of sponsor, affiliations/partnerships (e.g. Indian Health Services, VA), and readiness to start a residency program. Community characteristics for each of the residencies including but not limited to: population density, provider to population ratio, mortality rate, poverty rate, unemployment rates, % non-white, Medicaid eligibility, median household income, rural-urban commuting area (RUCA) codes. Results: RRPD counties are more populous ($p<0.01$), have higher population density ($p<0.05$), and a higher percentage of the population that is non-white or Hispanic ($p<0.05$) compared to rural counties without an RRPD program. The majority of programs are progressing well across the stages of program development, with 23 achieving accreditation to date. Twenty-two programs have participated in the Match and will be training 181 residents as of July 2022. Most common identified barriers were related to program financing and faculty recruitment. Conclusions: Representing a range of communities across the country, RRPD and THCPD grantees provide new insights into the readiness and developmental pathways of communities starting residency programs, including the common barriers and needed resources.