

Draft Health Workforce Council Recommendations

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Workforce data in support of DEI

Workforce Data Collection Recommendation

The Council recommends that policymakers provide ongoing funding and the necessary authority to the Department of Health to support collection of healthcare licensee demographic information.

This collection effort should include practice location and licensees' racial and ethnic identities, as well as other information important to understanding the supply, distribution, and characteristics of the state's health workforce and how it changes over time.



Workforce data in support of DEI

- Recommendation to collect more information about the health workforce is long-standing priority of the Council.
- Many efforts have been launched with the goal of creating a workforce that reflects the Washington population, however there is no consistent data available to measure progress.
- A few professions have instituted mandatory collection of demographic data, but we lack insight into most of the health workforce. Given the reality of team-based care and overlapping scopes of practice, the state needs the ability to analyze professions beyond nursing and physicians.



Broadening approach to educational debt

Educational Debt Recommendations

Recommendation 1: As a short-term strategy, the Council recommends policy makers appropriate additional funds to support both behavioral health and other health professional loan repayment awards to address immediate retention challenges within a variety of healthcare settings.

Recommendation 2: As part of supporting the investments made in loan repayment programs in Washington, the Council recommends policymakers appropriate funds to support administration of the Washington Health Corps and require an evaluation of program outcomes.



Broadening approach to educational debt

- Healthcare workforce is burdened with increasing amounts of educational debt, to the point it influences practice decisions.
- Access to loan repayment programs can help retain healthcare workers in high-need facilities and areas via service contracts.
- Loan repayment programs are confusing for applicants and employers. Support for additional WSAC outreach and assistance would increase understanding about what types of work qualify, requirements, etc.
- Millions of state dollars have been invested in Washington Health Corps since funding was restored, evaluation is key to understand program outcomes and program functioning.



Broadening approach to educational debt

Educational Debt Recommendations, continued

Recommendation 3: As a middle and long-term strategy, policymakers should require eligible healthcare employers to provide Public Service Loan Forgiveness educational materials and information about the Office of the Student Loan Advocate at the Washington Student Achievement Council when hiring a new employee, annually, and at the time of separation.

Within already appropriated resources, the Office of the Student Loan Advocate should conduct outreach to eligible healthcare employers and assess if additional staff members are warranted to serve demand.



Broadening approach to educational debt

Educational Debt Recommendations, continued

Recommendation 4: As a middle- and long-term strategy, if the philanthropically funded conditional grant program demonstrates successful outcomes in training and retaining a diverse master's-level workforce for community behavioral health settings, policymakers should provide funding to continue the program beginning in the 2025-26 biennial budget.

Additionally, the Council should determine if successful outcomes could translate to other targeted health professions and make recommendations to expand conditional grants beyond behavioral health roles.



Broadening approach to educational debt

- Extent of debt across the health workforce is so great that solutions beyond loan repayment are necessary to provide relief.
- Public Service Loan Forgiveness can provide hundreds of millions of dollars of relief, slow worker transition to private practice/for-profit employers. PSLF is complicated and people need understanding of technical assistance resources available in WA.
- Some individuals who would be great additions to the workforce will not be willing or able to take out student loans. This leads them to be locked out of graduate-level professions. Conditional grants offer a targeted way to encourage workforce entry.



Increasing access to child care

Child Care Access Recommendations

The Council affirms that access to high-quality, reliable childcare is a key enabling resource for the healthcare workforce. Having childcare for their children under age 12 allows the state's healthcare workers to accept and maintain employment.

The Council recommends that the Governor and Legislature continue to take action to address the need for dramatically increased access to childcare services in Washington.



Increasing access to child care

- Women are more likely to step away from work to care for children when a family experiences a child care access issue. Women are overrepresented in many healthcare occupations.
- Access to affordable child care was insufficient for Washington families before 2020. The pandemic worsened the situation.
- Healthcare workers need additional child care available outside traditional hours, such as evenings and weekends due to facility schedules.
- Washington healthcare employers report child care is a key resource impacting their ability to recruit and retain workers.

QUESTIONS?

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