Rural Health Innovation Collaborative

Rural Health Inter-professional Education
Project Overview

Through partnership, we will work together in service of patient-centered and community-centered health care needs.

Mission: The mission of the Rural Health Innovation Collaborative (RHIC) is to improve and expand education and training of health care professionals and future health care professionals, especially for those committed to serving rural and underserved populations.

Key components of this mission include: To promote the retention of health care professionals to serve rural and underserved populations; To invite community revitalization by promoting the enhancement of opportunities for education, training, and experience in health-related professions and fields; To promote social welfare and to encourage and coordinate community initiatives to address challenges affecting health care delivery; To promote the efficient use of public and private resources and collaborate with other entities with similar or complementary purposes; To design and implement innovative best practices and strategies that are capable of replication in other areas of the United States; and To disseminate educational information, thereby potentially or actually benefiting those other areas.

Background: Indiana faces severe health care worker shortages. Shortages of providers are particularly severe in Indiana’s more rural areas. Sixty percent of Indiana counties (55 of 92) are located in rural or non-metropolitan areas. Twenty-six (26) of the 55 rural counties in Indiana are designated as partially or completely medically underserved or have shortages of health professionals. This designation indicates that residents in certain rural areas have fewer physicians than urban areas and a higher rate of unemployment, poverty, and population over the age of 65 years. A key federal report indicates that "the distribution of available health professionals is a particularly acute issue in certain locations. These medically underserved areas, ranging from isolated rural areas to inner cities, have problems..."
attracting and retaining health care professionals." The report further states that "these concerns are likely to increase in the future as demographic pressures associated with an aging population are expected to both increase demand for health services and limit the pool of available workers."

A recent study requested by RHIC partners and conducted by Indiana University School of Medicine’s Bowen Research Center, found that there are shortages in almost every health care field in west-central Indiana, the primary target area of the RHIC. Nurses and physicians topped the list, indicating a need for 702 to 827 additional nurses and 134 to 275 primary care physicians in the 11-county area of west-central Indiana. Significant shortages were also found in mental health counselors, physical therapists, pharmacists, social workers, health educators, speech pathologists, physician assistants and psychologists. In more than three-fourths of the professions analyzed, the study projects that by 2016 the number of health care providers per 100,000 residents will be lower in the west-central region of Indiana than statewide.

Union Hospital and its Richard G. Lugar Center for Rural Health (UH), Indiana University School of Medicine – Terre Haute (IUSM-TH), Indiana State University (ISU) and Ivy Tech Community College Wabash Valley (Ivy Tech) each have successful programs to recruit students into health care focused careers and particularly to prepare them for service in rural areas. Building on this nationally-recognized record of success, these partners – along with the Terre Haute Economic Development Corporation, the City of Terre Haute, the Vermillion Parke Community Health Center, Hamilton Center and the Indiana Rural Health Association – have come together through the Rural Health Innovation Collaborative (RHIC) to respond to these current and worsening health care worker shortages.

**Rural Health Inter-professional Education Initiative**

**Purpose:** The primary purpose of the RHIC Inter-professional Education Committee is to establish a collaborative inter-professional education initiative

---


2 Center for Indiana Health Workforce Studies, Bowen Research Center, Department of Family Medicine, Indiana University School of Medicine, *Health Professions Workforce Needs Assessment Report*, December 2009.
dedicated to enhancing educational opportunities for teams of future health care professionals, particularly those preparing to practice in rural areas. The initiative will ensure a robust, well-prepared team of health care professionals who will provide enhanced access to quality care in rural communities.

**Description of Initiative**

**Background:** There are several challenges to minimizing the health care workforce shortages in rural west-central Indiana and throughout the nation. One of the biggest challenges is changing the educational methodology when training future health care providers. Traditionally, our workforce is educated in “silos,” rather than in inter-professional teams. Even a quick review of the literature reveals qualitative and quantitative evidence suggesting the need to change the methods that have historically been utilized to train health professionals. Yet, this is not an easy task. As one author indicates, “it requires thinking differently about what constitutes teaching and learning.”\(^3\) The author further states that “achieving improvement will take a transformation in our way of thinking and educating, not just a tweaking around the edges of what we are now doing.”

The RHIC partners have begun to address this challenge by embracing Inter-professional Education (IPE) as a major focus of the RHIC. One important component of the RHIC’s IPE initiative is to develop a collaborative curriculum where students from multiple health care professions learn together.

The *Rural Health Inter-professional Education Initiative* will focus on an innovative collaboration to integrate simulation as one aspect of a comprehensive inter-professional rural curriculum. Educational opportunities will be provided for family medicine residents and students of medicine, basic and advanced practice nursing, counseling psychology, social work, physician assistant science, and others through a variety of methodologies. The RHIC proposes to create innovative curricula that incorporate students from multiple professions learning together in a collaborative environment.

**Inter-professional Education Definition:** means the collaborative process by which an inter-professional team of health care professionals, (faculty, clinical preceptors, community health care providers), collaborates, plans, and coordinates an inter-professional program of education and training that encompasses didactic

---

and clinical training components. The collaborative process requires the preparation and functioning of inter-professional teams who share knowledge and decision making with the purpose of creating solutions to health care problems and transcend conventional discipline-specific methods. *The goal is to work together in service of patient-centered and community-centered health care needs.*

**Professions of Focus:** The Inter-professional Education initiative will initially focus on the following professions:

1. Social Work (ISU)
2. Medicine (IUSOM and UH)
3. Nursing (IT, ISU)
4. Athletic Training (ISU)
5. Physical Therapy (ISU)
6. Physician Assistant (ISU)
7. Speech pathology (ISU)
8. Health Sciences (ISU)
9. Health Informatics (ISU)
10. Health Educator (ISU)
11. Imaging (IT)
12. Paramedic (IT)
13. Respiratory Therapy (IT)
14. Occupational Therapy (ISU)
15. Surgical Techs (IT)
16. Dieticians (ISU)
17. Behavioral health (ISU)
18. Diabetes Educator (ISU)
19. Medical Assistants (IT)
20. Massage Therapy (IT)

*ISU = Indiana State University*
*IUSOM = Indiana University School of Medicine*
*UH = Union Hospital*
*IT = Ivy Tech*

**Desired Outcomes:** With the Inter-professional Education initiative we hope to achieve the following results:

1. Define inter-professional terminology
2. Create inter-professional skills/competencies for our students
3. Create certificate/fellowship programs, such as in Sports Medicine, Wellness and Addictions
4. Create an inter-professional research center
5. Create an inter-professional clinic
6. Create an inter-professional student organization
7. Identify inter-professional courses
8. Create Clinical Teams of Inter-professional education
9. Create an Inter-professional Simulation Center