

North Carolina Healthcare Innovations Report

June 2012

The Institute for Emerging Issues has had two goals for healthcare innovation for the past two years: to improve healthcare access, quality and cost and to maximize the industry's economic development potential for North Carolina.

Defining new opportunities for our state to grow a skilled workforce, raising awareness about the economic impact of health, and highlighting the importance of engaging the next generation in this work have been critical to developing North Carolina's competitive advantage in the healthcare industry. The work has centered on IEI engaging hundreds of stakeholders to attain these goals.

Innovating Job Creation and Healthcare Access

The healthcare industry provides a massive opportunity for job creation in the state. North Carolina's unemployment rate now hovers at 9 percent, half of whom are unable to secure a job within six months. These workers are more likely to drain their savings, experience difficulty meeting basic family needs, and face significant challenges in finding work. At the same time, however, the demand for a skilled healthcare workforce continues to increase. In fact, healthcare jobs in N.C. increased by 46 percent compared to 3 percent for the economy as a whole (1999-2009). This presents a clear opportunity for innovations in the development of the healthcare workforce and job creation.

Working with Communities

Nearly 150 participants from 40 counties gathered at four Community Forums to discuss how our state could take advantage of the opportunity to grow its healthcare workforce. With allied health jobs responsible for 44 percent of the growth in healthcare jobs, the Forums made clear the need for allied health professionals, regardless of the region.

Forum participants focused on how to grow allied health career paths to meet their region's needs. In doing so, they uncovered seven key barriers and over 80 state and local strategies to address them. These strategies were shared with key networks and decision makers, and as a result, the N.C. Department of Public Instruction and IEI will partner to communicate relevant strategies, including awareness of allied health careers, to local education agencies statewide.

Allied Health is often defined as a healthcare professional with the exceptions of physician, nurse, chiropractor, dentist, optometrist, pharmacist and podiatrist. Examples include: dental hygienist, dietitian, medical technologist, occupational therapist and physical therapist.

Barriers to growing healthcare jobs

1. Lack of knowledge about healthcare career opportunities.
2. Lack of preparation of students entering in to college and the workforce.
3. Access to quality faculty, as clinical settings can offer more competitive salaries.
4. Lack of available clinical placement sites.
5. Lack of programs or the supports that incent opportunities for career advancement.
6. Lack of funding affects multiple points along the pipeline.
7. Poor health and wellness of healthcare workers to meet the demands of their work.

Coming out of the Community Forums was a conundrum – the demand for skilled allied health professionals, and a troubling supply of potential workforce represented by the high numbers of long-term unemployed. Developing the skills needed to fill allied health jobs is a challenge that is more pronounced for the long-term unemployed, many of whom are in their mid-40s and have been out of the classroom for twenty or more years. Few strategies have been implemented that focus on supporting their transition into allied health careers.

These North Carolinians may not know how to connect to existing allied health career opportunities. They might not know the process for enrolling in a training program, the time commitment, rigor, and/or associated costs. Moreover, the process of choosing a career and enrolling in a training program can be lengthy, and unemployment insurance benefits often run out before the training program can be completed. Long-term unemployed individuals have different concerns and needs than traditional students. Navigating employment resources, handling the fear of going back to school, and arranging childcare and transportation can be major barriers to making that transition.

Challenges continue even for those who enter the education pipeline. Allied health program graduates may not have the skills and attributes that are needed for the healthcare jobs available in their communities. Once hired, healthcare employers often bear the responsibility of providing such training for career advancement and could benefit from partner resources. Additionally, employers

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CRISSY GARNER'S STORY

I was a single parent who often worked two or more jobs trying to support my children. I had put off going back to school to make sure I was a good provider. Most people in my county never completed high school or went to the mill immediately after they graduated, so this was the only way most people knew how to make a living. Once the local textile mill closed, a lot of people were left pondering how to make a living.

I'm a prime example of what a dislocated worker represents. Living in Halifax County, one of the poorest areas in N.C., I have struggled to find gainful employment in my rural community. This obstacle became even larger after I was hit by a drunk driver and had to go on life support. Though I ultimately overcame that challenge, I spent many days depressed and not knowing what to do next.

A friend suggested I go back to school and start a new career. The thought of going back to school after more than 20 years terrified me, but I had Student Support Services at Halifax Community College encouraging me to take a deep breath and to refocus. The program offered me tutoring, mentoring, and advisement. It was this support, along with family and friends that pushed me to strive to do my best. I will graduate in spring '12 with honors.

Luckily, I have a support system, but so many others lack that lifeline. People often need someone to guide them and show them the way. By implementing this program, we can reach out and help many to obtain the skills that are necessary to succeed. Because of my own experiences, I can relate to many others who struggle with similar circumstances. I continually persist in bettering myself and want to use my experiences to be an advocate for those who are going through similar situations. Most people are looking for a hand up, not a hand out. This program can be that hand.

Businesses as Leaders in Health:

As a pilot, IEI is working with local businesses in one N.C. community to identify roles this sector can adopt to improve community health, thereby improving economic development. Through collective impact thinking, IEI will also help to build the capacity of other sectors within the community to partner with these businesses on a common health improvement agenda.

Acknowledgements

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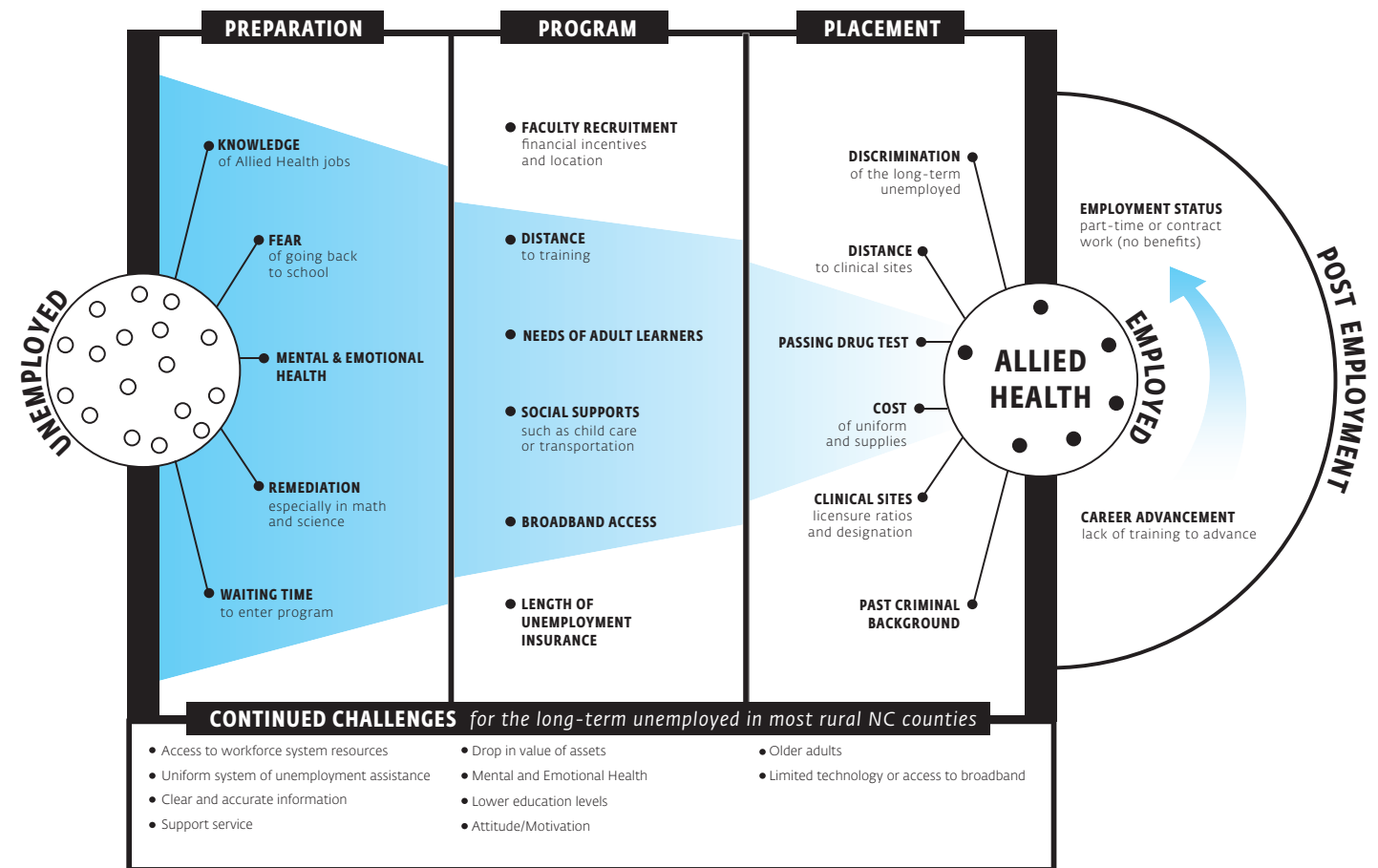
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need to be able to communicate their current and emerging allied health job vacancies with local educational institutions. On a more systemic level, standardized employer hiring practices and a real-time and projected job vacancy database are needed to produce a successful transition pipeline.

Working with State Stakeholders

To address this unmet need, IEI engaged Alice Schenall of Area L Area Health Education Center (AHEC) as its first Practitioner-In-Residence. Alice was charged with creating a local demonstration project to transition the long-term unemployed into allied health careers. More than 40 N.C. stakeholders representing healthcare employers, education institutions, transportation, labor, commerce, social services, funders and the long-term unemployed living in rural communities came together to create a demonstration model project. This model addresses four main challenges: career guidance, program structure, individual supports and employer collaboration.

CHALLENGES IN THE ALLIED HEALTH PIPELINE



The demonstration model calls for a collaborative partnership at the local level to implement strategies that address the four key challenges to increase the utilization and effectiveness of an allied health pipeline. As a healthcare employer driven initiative, the local partnership will assess, link and mobilize existing programs and services; implement multilevel approaches; and utilize recommended strategies to transition the long-term unemployed in rural communities into allied health jobs.

The demonstration model outlines program infrastructure, including key staff, partnership representation and healthcare employer engagement. It also calls for more supportive services for the long-term unemployed worker,

including career assessment tools, educational readiness and participation in four phases of a comprehensive training and competency program for direct care workers (PHCAST). The first and only mandatory phase (Phase I) helps a learner decide if direct care is right for them. Job placement and career advancement are also addressed in the demonstration model. Learn more at www.ncsu.edu/iei/index.php/emerging-issues/healthcare/north-carolina-healthcare-innovation-report, under *resources*.

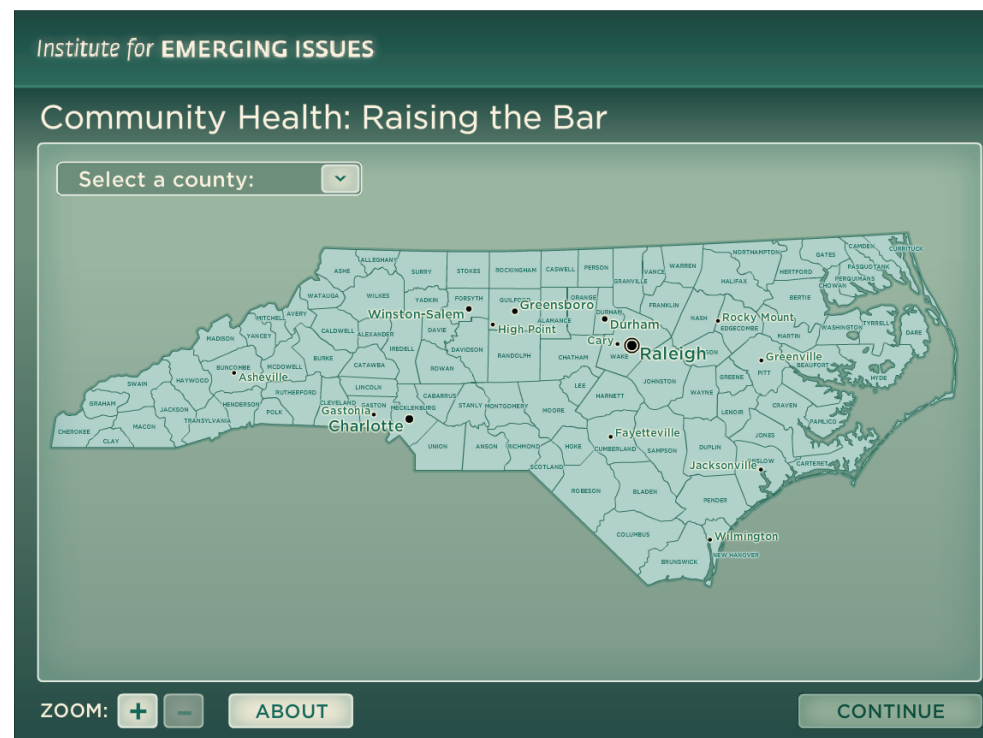
IEI is currently working with several state agencies to coordinate resources and seek private foundation support to implement the demonstration model. Successes and lessons learned from the demonstration model will be shared statewide.

Economic Impact on Health

Everyone pays for the cost of poor health. As more people develop chronic conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke, health insurance premiums continue to increase. These same conditions have a negative impact if the business offers health insurance due to high premiums. Sick employees also request more sick days or come in to work, but are less productive when they do not feel well. They also adversely affect profit margins. Communities have to cover the cost of poor health, too, which compete against programs and services that might otherwise be used to fund education, economic development and other initiatives.

Raising the Bar County Health Tool

Having access to credible, unbiased information and understanding the connections between these pieces of data are critical for making smart policy decisions. As a result, IEI created Raising the Bar, a county health tool that explores the inter-linkages of health, environment, economic, and education on healthcare costs. At the 2011 Emerging Issues Forum, IEI released this interactive county-level tool to allow counties across the state to see how improvements in any one of these variables can improve health outcomes and save money. Based upon user feedback, the environment variable was changed from affordable housing to food insecurity in August 2011.



This tool has been used at several statewide events, including the N.C. Association of County Commissioner's 104th Annual Conference on August 19, 2011. It has been shared in classrooms and other venues, such as with nursing students at East Carolina University. More than 1,500 individuals have accessed the tool through the IEI website since January 2011. Learn more at www.ncsu.edu/iei/index.php/tools-resources/county-health-tool.

Engaging the Next Generation in Healthcare Innovation

The next generation will face a number of challenges if obesity and other health-related issues are not addressed. IEI has directly engaged these young people to help design solutions.

Emerging Issues Prize for Innovation

The 2011 Emerging Issues Prize for Innovation was awarded to a group of UNC-Chapel Hill students for their idea to help reduce childhood obesity levels. The idea has become a for-profit business, Sqord, a social health company that seeks to make physical activity engaging for kids. In a fun and competitive online world, children can earn points for real-world play. The company has developed an interactive website that is connected to the real world via an accelerometer kids wear on their wrists to track activity in exchange for points, gift cards, virtual goods and other online rewards. Sqord is currently participating in Carolina Launch Pad, a pre-commercial business accelerator for early-stage information technology startups from the UNC community and is preparing for their second round of pilots with several local youth organizations.

Emerging Issues for Future Leaders (EIFL) Program

In June 2011, IEI partnered with the N.C. State University Office of the Provost to engage 50 promising high school students from five counties on healthcare issues in the EIFL Program. The group spent two and a half days learning how to access information about health challenges in their counties. Using IEI's Raising the Bar county health tool, they explored the economic impact of poor health and identified and shared policy solutions to address these challenges.

Economic Opportunities

Turning the challenges of healthcare access, quality and cost into economic opportunities for our state requires time, resources and innovation. Communities that work together have a greater chance of increasing economic development by collectively supporting policies and programs that improve health.

Health Innovation Challenge:

Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina, in partnership with IEI and Bull/Queen City Forward, launched the Health Innovation Challenge, a statewide prize competition for entrepreneurs across N.C. to receive \$20,000 and mentoring support to develop, implement, and scale high-impact ideas that aim to reduce obesity and support healthy lifestyles. More than sixty innovations were submitted by entrepreneurs seeking to demonstrate scalability, sustainability, feasibility and ability to improve health metrics. BCBSNC has the option to invest in the winning business idea or company to support them beyond the challenge. Learn more at www.healthinnovationchallenge.com.