



Colorado Department
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NEWS RELEASE
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Health Service Corps celebrates another strong year in 2012

Loan repayment program helps meet the growing demand for primary care professionals in “safety net” and underserved communities; Corps Community Day celebrates exceptional primary care clinicians; connects health care students with mission driven-careers

DENVER— October 10, 2012 — When Jennifer McLean graduated from the University of Colorado’s medical school in 2007, she briefly considered working in private practice. Hefty student loans forced her to question her passion for caring for poor, uninsured patients. Fortunately, the Colorado Health Service Corps agreed to repay Dr. McLean’s student loans, so she could join Clinica Family Health Services as a family physician.

“I have many peers from medical school who, having chosen a path that was more financially rewarding, have been able to pay off their loans completely,” Dr. McLean said. “I am rewarded in numerous ways on a daily basis at work, but cannot deny that having my financial loan burden lifted is an important attribute.

“It will keep me dedicated to this community health center long after my loan obligation is fulfilled,” she added.

2011 was the best year ever for the combined efforts of the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) and Colorado Health Service Corps (CHSC), reflective of a growing need for primary care professionals. In Colorado, NHSC granted more than \$12 million and contracted with 240 primary care providers. CHSC granted more than \$2.5 million to nearly 80 primary care providers. So far in 2012, NHSC has granted another \$2.8 million in loan repayment funding.

On October 11, NHSC, CHSC and Colorado Community Health Centers will host “Corps Community Day” awards ceremony, networking and educational event for health care students and professionals who want to learn about loan repayment programs and mission-driven careers. The event will take place from 6-8 p.m. at the Sheraton Denver Tech Center, 7007 S. Clinton St. in Greenwood Village.

“The Health Service Corps has been incredibly successful in helping us attract health care professionals to Community Health Centers,” said Tanah Wagenseller, health center workforce manager for Colorado Community Health Network. “It’s helping students who want to make a difference find a job where they can do that every day.”

Demand for Primary Care Soaring in Colorado

Despite the program's success, a stark need for primary care workers remains. Many of Colorado's 3,200 licensed primary care physicians are nearing retirement age, and an increasing percentage of medical students are choosing specialties other than primary care. Some 85 percent of Colorado is deemed a professional health shortage area.

At the same time, safety net sites that provide health care in underserved communities expect increased demand for their services as a result of health care reform. One in 10 people in Colorado depend on a community health center for primary care. That number is expected to grow dramatically when health reform is fully implemented in 2014, expanding access to care to an estimated 540,000 Colorado residents.

"We need doctors to serve in Community Health Centers," said Donald Moore, CEO at Pueblo Community Health Center. "Every doctor we hire allows us to provide another 1,500 patients with access to care."

About the National and Colorado Health Service Corps

Founded 40 years ago, the National Health Service Corps was created to provide rural areas with essential health services as country doctors retired. The program has evolved over the years, reflecting trends in provider supply and demand. It has consistently received bipartisan support.

In 2009, recognizing an impending crisis in primary care, the federal government, through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, doubled the number of program recipients.

Established in 2009, and also supported by both sides of the aisle, the Colorado Health Service Corps has slightly different requirements than the NHSC, offering providers more flexibility. The Colorado Health Service Corps is administered by the Primary Care Office at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment with funding from the Colorado Health Foundation, the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the state of Colorado, The Colorado Trust and the Comprecare Foundation.

About Colorado Community Health Centers

CCHCs are considered by many to be the future of health care because they provide a medical home where patients can access a broad array of services, including medical, dental and behavioral health care. Employees are attracted by the collaborative approach and high-tech facilities that help patients manage complex and chronic conditions. By statute, CHCs must be included in health plans offered on the new Colorado Health Benefit Exchange, which will open in 2014.

For health care professionals, CHCs offer a deep sense of satisfaction. They treat people who would otherwise have no access to care and they also are on the leading edge of medicine: providers practice outcomes-based medicine in a setting that is integrated, digitized and forward-looking. Further, employees enjoy a collaborative environment, student loan repayment programs, and a flexible work/life balance.

For more information about the workforce campaign or careers at Colorado Community Health Centers, please go to www.missiondrivencareers.org

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The Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN) is the unified voice for Colorado's 15 Community Health Centers (CHCs) and their patients. CHCs provide a health care home to more than 600,000 of their community members - one in 10 people in Colorado - from 57 of the state's 64 counties. Without CHCs, hundreds of thousands of Colorado's low-income families and individuals would have no regular source of health care. CCHN's mission is to increase access to high quality health care for people in need in Colorado. For more information about CCHN, please visit www.cchn.org.