

Health Care Workforce Committee Strategy Papers: Background and Summary

January 2024

Contents

- Background 3
- Methodology 4
- Major themes of strategy papers 5
- Next steps..... 7
- Conclusion..... 7
- Appendix A: Health Care Workforce Committee Strategic Framework..... 8
- Appendix B: Health Care Workforce Committee Health Equity Framework guiding questions.. 9

Acknowledgments

This publication was compiled from the work produced by the Oregon Health Policy Board’s Health Care Workforce Committee and its subcommittees on Workforce Diversity, Workforce Wellness and Resiliency, and Workforce Development and Retention.

The committee was aided by Oregon Health Authority’s (OHA’s) Health Policy and Analytics Division (HPA). OHA staff in HPA and across the agency contributing to the paper include: Amy Bacher, Jill Boyd, Mackenzie Carroll, Andy Davis, Chris DeMars, Leah Festa, Neelam Gupta, Jo Johnson, Milena Malone, Craig Mosbaek, Lauren Neely, Marc Overbeck, Terrence Saunders, Philip Schmidt, Brian Stafki and Vanessa Wilson.

For questions about this report, please contact: healthcare.workforce@odhsoha.oregon.gov

Suggestion citation

Please cite this publication as follows:

Oregon Health Authority. (2024). Health Care Workforce Committee Strategy Papers: Background and Summary; Portland, OR: Oregon Health Authority.
https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HPA/HP-HCW/Documents/Intro-to-Strategy-Papers-24_FINAL.pdf.

Background

The health care workforce is the heart of Oregon's health care system. The Oregon Health Policy Board's Health Care Workforce Committee created strategy papers as a next step to Oregon's Health Care Workforce Needs Assessment 2023 report (see text box for information on the assessment).

About Oregon's Health Care Workforce Needs Assessment 2023

OHA released a biennial assessment of the health care workforce needed to meet the needs of patients and communities throughout Oregon as required by House Bill 3261 (2017) in January 2023. Authored by Oregon State University on behalf of OHA, the assessment was approved by the Oregon Health Policy Board and its Health Care Workforce Committee and delivered to the Oregon legislature.

The assessment concluded that shortages and lack of diversity in many areas of the health care workforce are a national problem experienced in Oregon, stemming from historic underinvestment, current economic and social forces, and systemic racism. To stabilize, expand, and diversify Oregon's health care workforce so that it can deliver culturally responsive, effective health care services to all:

- **Some** professions need increased compensation to attract new individuals and increase retention.
- **Many** professions with unclear career pathways need better, focused paths for increasing skills, pay, and impact.
- **All** professions need more support around resiliency and well-being.

The assessment offered 26 recommendations to address health care workforce issues that help meet OHA's strategic goal to eliminate health inequities by 2030. The committee acknowledged the importance of all the recommendations and began a process to create actionable policy solutions.

Following the assessment's release, the committee adopted a Strategic Framework in May 2023 that defines three broad areas requiring attention to make progress toward creating a culturally and linguistically responsive health care workforce in Oregon ([Appendix A](#)). For the broad areas identified in the framework, the committee created strategy papers. The three papers may be accessed by clicking on the links below:

- [Workforce diversity](#)
- [Workforce wellness and resiliency](#)
- [Workforce development and retention](#)

The framework sets a vision of a robust, diverse, and resilient health care workforce that provides culturally and linguistically responsive care, eliminates health inequities, and meets the local health care needs of everyone in Oregon. Guided by the framework's vision, the papers are interdependent. Each one contains recommendations in line with the committee's mission to provide guidance on policy and practice to inspire, support, and sustain the Oregon health care workforce.

The committee's strategy papers propose actions to health care employers, education programs, workforce agencies Oregon legislature, state government, and other interested groups intended to move forward the framework's vision and priorities.

The Methodology section below describes the process the committee undertook to create the framework and the papers.

Methodology

The committee began a process after OHPB approval of the assessment to develop the Strategic Framework and the three papers.

OHA developed a survey in February 2023 for the committee to complete and prioritize the assessment's 26 recommendations. The survey identified eight strategies, which the committee discussed at its March 2023 meeting. The committee grouped these strategies into three broad areas of workforce diversity, workforce wellness and resiliency, and workforce development and retention. The committee expanded the survey results into a Strategic Framework approved in May 2023 to guide its future efforts ([Appendix A](#)).

Following the adoption of the framework, the committee organized subcommittees charged with examining data and best practices to inform the strategy papers. Comprised of committee members with expertise, lived experience, and interest in each area, the subcommittees selected a chairperson responsible for organizing meetings and paper writing. The subcommittees were guided by the recently adopted strategic framework and a [Health Equity Framework](#) developed in 2021 that includes guiding questions to make policy and resource recommendations ([Appendix B](#)).

The subcommittees met monthly from June to October 2023 to conduct research and develop the papers. The committee reviewed and discussed draft versions of the papers at its September and November 2023 meetings. The subcommittees revised the papers based on the feedback received from committee members, its OHPB liaison, and OHA staff. The committee approved the papers at its December 2023 meeting.

Major themes of strategy papers

The Health Care Workforce Committee's subcommittees created the three strategy papers describing the current policy approach on the issue, a vision for a future state, and recommendations on next steps needed to make progress toward the vision. A summary of each paper is provided below.

Workforce diversity

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted and exacerbated serious systemic problems in health care delivery for people from communities that have historically experienced inequities in access to care and health outcomes. Achieving the aim of a health care workforce that resembles the population of our state and delivers culturally and linguistically responsive services is a critical ingredient to supporting optimal health for everyone in Oregon requiring deliberate actions.

The subcommittee's three primary objectives in this area are to:

1. Make workplaces more welcoming for diverse health care professionals.
2. Reduce barriers to entry and advancement for people of color, Tribal members, individuals with disabilities, and people from other diverse backgrounds and identities in the workforce.
3. Increase investments in health care professionals who will provide culturally and linguistically responsive, person-centered health care.

Health care education programs and health care provider organizations should focus on supporting the recruitment and admissions, training, placement, and retention of health professionals who reflect the diversity of all our communities. The strategy paper offers more than 60 recommendations that can be implemented by the Oregon legislature, education institutions and programs, and health care employers, in some cases immediately and for others over time, to begin to address these issues.

Workforce wellness and resiliency

Addressing workforce wellness and resiliency in a meaningful way is enormous. Burnout and a lack of resiliency among health care professionals is a very real issue and the source of inefficiencies in care, health care professionals leaving their fields, and additional costs to the health care system. However, there are specific concrete actions that can be taken.

This strategy paper offers the following three primary recommendations, preliminary cost estimates, and responsible parties for beginning to address wellness and resiliency in the health care workplace in a coordinated way:

1. Collect data on workforce wellness and create a taskforce to review the findings and make further recommendations for systems and policy change based on the findings.
2. Expand and fund the [Oregon Wellness Program](#) to become a one-stop destination for wellness resources for all health care workforce participants in Oregon.
3. Create a statewide system to recognize and reward employers that take steps to understand the needs of their employees and implement wellness programs that address these needs.

Workforce development and retention

This aspect of the committee's framework is the broadest, in terms of the number of components involved. This paper offers recommendations and insights in five areas touching on the development and retention of the health care workforce:

1. **Recruitment and awareness:** Develop strategies to market the opportunities available, highlight the benefits of working in the field, and actively engage with both local and external talent.
2. **Education and training:** Invest in education and training programs that graduate skilled and culturally competent members into the health care workforce.
3. **Health care worker support, advancement, and retention:** Focus on health care professionals' ongoing development and support. Establish mentorship programs, continuing education opportunities, and pathways for career advancement; it is well noted that providing a supportive and fulfilling work environment can lead to higher job satisfaction and retention rates.
4. **Community integration and belonging:** Maintain strategies that not only address the professional aspects of work but the professional and social culture of the workplace and community in which health professionals practice and live.
5. **Funding and resource allocation:** Develop a sustainable funding strategy to support recruitment efforts, education programs, workforce development initiatives, and community integration projects. Explore partnerships with government agencies, private donors, and industry stakeholders to secure the necessary financial resources for the success of the health care professional expansion efforts.

Furthermore, the subcommittee notes that successful development and retention of the health care workforce needed in Oregon will be impossible without addressing the other two priorities in its framework of workforce diversity and workforce wellness and resiliency.

Next steps

The Health Care Workforce Committee developed policy solutions in three interrelated areas as a next step to Oregon's Health Care Workforce Needs Assessment 2023 report. In addition to authoring the strategy papers, committee leadership and OHA staff advised the Oregon Health Policy Board in its development of a [Priority Framework for 2024-25](#) that includes workforce diversity and resiliency, as well as highlighting four areas: Affordability, Behavioral Health, Coordinated Care Organization (CCO) Procurement, and Metrics. The committee will continue its work during 2024-25 to advance its proposed health care workforce policy solutions created through this process in line with Oregon Health Policy Board's priorities.

Conclusion

The Health Care Workforce Committee's three goals and strategy papers on workforce diversity, workforce wellness and resiliency, and workforce development and retention are interdependent. We must address all three goals to have a diverse, well, and resilient health care workforce that supports Oregonians to be healthy. We should pay attention to recruitment, education, and training that create career pathways and retain health care professionals at all levels once they have entered the workforce. This will require ongoing action by government and non-governmental entities to ensure Oregon has a culturally and linguistically responsive workforce that can deliver on the commitments of optimal health for everyone and eliminating health inequities.

Appendix A: Health Care Workforce Committee Strategic Framework

Health Care Workforce Committee Strategic Framework



Vision:

A robust, diverse, and resilient health care workforce that provides culturally and linguistically responsive care, eliminates health inequities, and meets the local health care needs of everyone in Oregon.

Mission:

Provide guidance on policy and practice to inspire, support, and sustain the Oregon health care workforce.



Diversity Strategies

- Make workplaces more welcoming for diverse health care professionals.
- Reduce barriers to entry and advancement for people of color, Tribal members, individuals with disabilities, and people from other diverse backgrounds and identities in the workforce.
- Increase investments in health care professionals who will provide culturally and linguistically responsive, person-centered health care.

Wellness & Resiliency Strategies

- Sustain a positive health care workplace culture and environment and reduce workplace burdens.
- Collect data which identifies the current challenges and priorities of health care professionals, and support workforce well-being strategies that are informed by findings.

Workforce Development & Retention Strategies

- Address workforce recruitment and retention factors such as geography, housing cost and supply, opportunities for partners/spouses and families, and quality of K-12 education.
- Ensure adequate numbers of faculty and clinical training placements for health care professionals at every level.
- Invest in reliable and new strategies to enhance training opportunities for people who provide and support physical, oral, and behavioral health care for everyone in Oregon.

Appendix B: Health Care Workforce Committee Health Equity Framework guiding questions

How do Oregon's health care workforce development efforts advance opportunities for communities experiencing health inequities?

1. Who are the racial/ethnic communities and communities that are experiencing health inequities? What is the potential impact of the resource allocation to these communities?
2. Do OHA programs ignore or worsen existing health inequities or produce unintended consequences? What is the impact of intentionally recognizing the health inequity and making investments to improve it?
3. How have we intentionally involved community representatives affected by the resource allocation? How do we validate our assessment in questions 1 and 2? How do we align and leverage public and private resources to maximize impact?
4. How should we modify or enhance strategies to ensure recipient and community needs are met?
5. How are we collecting REALD and SOGI data (race/ethnicity, language, and disability and sexual orientation and gender identity data) in OHA awards and matching recipient demographics with communities served?
6. How are we resourcing and/or influencing system partners to ensure programs optimize equity?



HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE COMMITTEE
HEALTH POLICY AND ANALYTICS
Clinical Supports, Integration, and Workforce Unit
Email: healthcare.workforce@odhsoha.oregon.gov

You can get this document in other languages, large print, braille or a format you prefer. Contact External Relations Division at 503-945-6691 or email OHA.ExternalRelations@odhsoha.oregon.gov. We accept all relay calls, or you can dial 711.