

Building Healthy Communities



Creating Pathways to
Health Careers in a Rural
California County



Background

Del Norte and Tribal Lands is both a health professional shortage area (HPSA) and a medically underserved area (MUA).

HPSA

Refers to geographic areas, populations, or facilities that have a shortage of healthcare providers.

MUA

Refers to geographic areas and populations with a lack of access to primary care services.

Patient to Primary Care Physician (PCP) Ratio Comparison

DNATL

Patient to PCP ratio in 2011
1,312:1

Patient to PCP ratio in 2019
1,620:1

State of California

Patient to PCP ratio in 2011
1,062:1

Patient to PCP ratio in 2019
1,030:1

Access to healthcare is impacted by the lack of a qualified healthcare workforce in the Del Norte and Tribal Lands (DNATL) area. Despite their efforts in recruitment, DNATL has struggled to retain a long-term qualified workforce.

The health career pathways are focused on developing programs and systems that prepare youth for careers in healthcare.

Common Reasons Why Recruited Health Professionals Leave Rural Areas



Providers trained in urban areas may not be prepared for the challenges of working in rural communities.



There are fewer opportunities for career advancement for recruited professionals and residents.



Understaffing causes increased workloads, longer shifts, and less flexibility in scheduling.



Urban facilities and practices may offer higher salaries, more benefits, and better working conditions.

Insights

1 Outside facilitation and support created space to build relationships and work together to break down silos.

2 The Health Career Pathways Design Team members recognized that continuously recruiting health workers from outside the county cannot be the only solution.

3 There are not enough training or certification opportunities to qualify residents for vacant health positions.

4 Building educational pathways to local health career jobs is fundamental in growing a local workforce.

5 The collaboration between healthcare, education, and workforce development was crucial to create sustainable educational health career pathways for youth.

6 Youth need to be encouraged, inspired, supported and reminded about healthcare careers as a pathway for their future.

7 The California Endowment's investment in creating Health Career Pathways in DNATL led to additional funding from other agencies.

Outside facilitation and support to convene the Health Career Pathways Design Team offered space to build relationships and work together to solve the many challenges facing healthcare in the community, and to break down silos that previously existed.



When the BHC initiative began, all of the health entities in DNATL were working together on recruiting and retaining healthcare professionals in Del Norte County.



In 2011, the Del Norte healthcare network became fragmented and efforts at recruitment and retention fell to individual agencies.

The Health Career Pathways Design Team was formed from a group of diverse DNATL agencies to develop the capacity, trust, and partnerships needed to work together as a community to solve the challenges facing healthcare.

Insight 2

Although community partners were aware of recruitment and retention issues among healthcare providers, Health Career Pathways Design Team members recognized that continuously recruiting health workers from outside the county cannot be the only solution. This realization and acceptance that there was a need for a new strategy was key in moving forward.

“And we could not recruit and retain a qualified workforce. Like there was no way that bringing people from outside the area was ever going to get us there despite really an effort... we had to take the long game and start really by recruiting our own.”
-Healthcare Administrator

In 2016, members of the Health Career Pathways BHC Campaign conducted one-on-one *empathy interviews* with employers, educators, health providers, and other community members within the DNATL healthcare system to better understand the needs and issues the community faced.

Based on the findings of the interviews, the Team chose to take the long view, and focus on a “grow your own” workforce.

Partners also agreed to sign onto a proclamation showing their support of the initiative and to support school outreach efforts in three ways:

1

Providing guest speakers for classroom presentations.

2

Offering work-based learning opportunities.

3

Providing workforce development policies and strategies to enhance the skills of current healthcare employees, including educational opportunities and promoting existing employees to advance, while making room for entry level positions.

Insight **3**

There are health-related jobs available, but not enough training or certification opportunities to qualify residents for the vacant positions.

“So many licensed vocational nurses are stuck in their current job.”

–Nurse/Educator

The lack of a qualified workforce in terms of healthcare training and certification.

Employers didn't have enough qualified staff to fill their vacant positions, or in some cases, health professionals weren't working at the top of their licenses as they didn't have enough staff support under them. Though certified nursing assistants and licensed vocational nurses were graduating from the local programs, the closest registered nurse program was located in Humboldt County (93 miles away) so it was not accessible to most DNATL residents.

The lack of knowledge local youth had about options in future health careers

Local elementary and high schools students were only aware of the most common health professions such as nurses and doctors. This revelation prompted the idea of growing a health workforce from within by exposing local youth to health careers as early in their education as possible, defining health careers broadly and including allied health professions.

Insight

4

Building educational pathways to local health career jobs is fundamental in growing a local workforce.

The Grow-your-own Health Workforce Campaign developed educational opportunities at three different levels:

Elementary & Middle School

Dramatic Play Kits (K-2)

The kits were available for check out through the Del Norte Unified School district and included health related toys such as play stethoscopes, thermometers, and other first aid supplies. Age-appropriate curriculum was also developed to go along with the kits.

The Team helped promote the kits to teachers who were unaware of them.

The Health Careers Pathway Team has an ongoing goal of making more teachers aware of these kits.

Elementary & Middle School

“When I Grow Up” curriculum and board game (3rd-5th Grade):

This board game was created by a Social Work graduate student at Cal Poly Humboldt, and is similar to the game of *Clue*. It incorporates all the different health organizations around DNATL and educates players about some of the common cultural medical practices used by local residents.

The California Center for Rural Policy used the BHC funding to duplicate the game and made 15 kits.

Elementary & Middle School

Medical Mystery Curriculum (6th-8th Grade):

One of the teachers at Crescent Elk Middle School developed a Medical Mystery curriculum, where students learned about a variety of health careers and learned how to take blood pressure.

When that teacher left, the teacher who took over pared down the curriculum and with funding support from BHC had Medical Mystery Mondays.

This project has helped prove that engaging middle school students is especially important as it helps ensure they don't lose interest in health careers before they start high school.

Health Related Activities for High School

There are two health-related pathways available at Del Norte High School*:

1

Career Technical Education (CTE) Health Career Pathway

Explores basics of first aid, options for health careers, self care and wellness, and other health-related topics.

Students also learn critical soft skills.

(A similar curriculum is also offered to Court and Community Day School)

2

Science Based Health Career Pathway

Includes classes in medical biology, medical chemistry, and anatomy/ physiology.

Classes count towards A-G requirements.

(A list of classes required by all CSU and UC systems)

**Teachers are using curriculum and labs from the California Community Colleges' Health Workforce Initiative for both of these pathways.*

Allied Health Certification Program

This program was a collaborative effort between College of the Redwoods, California Community Colleges, Health Workforce Initiative, and the California Center for Rural Policy. Comprised of two consecutive courses, the curriculum was developed in collaboration with local healthcare employers to determine what skills they are looking for in an employee.

1

Front Office Online Course

- Prepares students to work in a medical reception position.
- Includes skills such as customer service, basic computer skills, keyboarding and 10-key, office organization, and Microsoft Office programs.

2

Medical Reception Online Course

- Prepares students to work in a medical clinic, private medical provider office, hospital, or similar facility.
- Includes training on soft skills.
- Provides information and training in medical language, terminology, ethics, confidentiality, medical office emergencies, safety, and infection control.

Health Related Activities for College

This was made possible by the collaboration and funding from The California Endowment, College of the Redwoods, Cal Poly Humboldt, Sutter Coast Hospital, Humboldt Area Foundation, St. Joseph Health, and the Slingshot Workforce Initiative.

The return of two nursing programs

**Associate's Degree in
Nursing (ADN) Program at
College of the Redwoods -
Del Norte Campus**

**Bachelor of Science in
Nursing (BSN) Program at
Cal Poly Humboldt**

- Del Norte CR campus made arrangements to maintain faculty, time, and space necessary to offer all prerequisite courses for the RN program within a graduation timeline of 18 months.
- Nursing lab is reopened on CR campus, and new nursing classroom is built at Sutter Coast Hospital.
- Healthcare organizations in Del Norte and Humboldt mapped out plan to provide clinical rotations placements for all incoming students.
- Students graduating from CR Del Norte campus will be eligible to apply for the BSN program at Cal Poly.

Insight 5

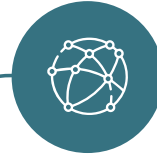
The collaboration between healthcare, education, and workforce development was crucial to create sustainable educational health career pathways for youth.

The BHC initiative leaders recognized that a vital health career pathway aligns the work of employers, educators, and community partners who are invested in preparing their youth for health careers.



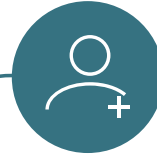
Design Team

College of the Redwoods, Sutter Coast Hospital, Dept. of Health & Human Services, Open Door Community Health Centers, United Indian Health Services, Del Norte Workforce Center, Del Norte Unified School District



Network

Del Norte Ambulance, Del Norte Healthcare District, Crescent City Skilled Nursing, Humboldt Del Norte Medical Society



Paid Staff

California Center for Rural Policy, Building Healthy Communities, The California Endowment

Youth need to be encouraged, inspired, supported, and reminded about healthcare careers as a pathway for their future.

Youth Training Academy Health Career Pathway

- A six-week summer program for youth ages 15-24 where they had the opportunity to work closely with experts in the field, participate in trainings, field trips, hands-on activities, and network with local professionals.
- They were paid a stipend to participate.
- It provided youth the opportunity to earn their CPR and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) certifications.

Employment, Education, Experience (E3) Summer Workforce Program

E3 was a collaboration between local business owners, the Del Norte County Office of Education, Sunset High School, Del Norte County Workforce Center, and Building Healthy Community.

It consisted of a week long training program to prepare high school juniors and seniors for interviews with local employers and potential job placement.

If employed, the youth received 4-6 weeks of paid job experience (paid by their employer), with BHC covering the cost of taxes and unemployment insurance for the employer.

All youth that were hired to work in healthcare settings received HIPAA certifications prior to employment.

Evaluations revealed that the program was a great benefit to the community as it allowed the students to engage in their education outside of a traditional school setting and it also helped youth gain connections and job experience in the community that will be beneficial to their futures.

Health Careers Summer Seminar

- The Del Norte Health Career Pathways coalition partnered with the Humboldt County Office of Education.
- The three-week online seminar was offered to high school students in Del Norte County and Humboldt County.
- A total of 16 students participated in the program.
- They had the opportunity to engage in career and education exploration, HIPAA and other health-related certifications, hands-on at-home lab activities, and presentations from health professional guest speakers.
- They were paid a stipend to participate.

Mentorship from Health Professionals

- Youth engaged with the Health Career Pathways initiatives have had ongoing opportunities to receive mentorships from local health care professionals.

The California Endowment's investment in creating Health Career Pathways in DNATL led to additional funding from other agencies.

The TCE investment not only provided direct support, but also helped inspire other agencies to contribute as well.

TCE Contributions to the HCP Campaign

- Seed money for the Cal Poly RN-BSN program, including equipment for a classroom at Sutter Coast Hospital
- Seed money for opening the nursing classroom at College of the Redwoods- Del Norte Campus
- Wages for youth participation in the Employment, Education, and Experience (E3) Health Career Placements
- Stipends for youth participation in the Youth Training Academy (YTA) Health Career Pathway
- Funding for local science classes to purchase Health and Science Pipeline Initiative (HASPI) interactive lab kits

Contributions From Other Collaborative Partners

CA Health Workforce Initiative

- Funding to cover the first cohort of students in the Allied Health Certificate program

Open Door

- Wages for youth participation in the Employment, Education, and Experience (E3) health career placements

Sutter Coast Hospital

- Wages for youth participation in the Employment, Education, and Experience (E3) health career placements
- Seed money for RN-BSN program
- New nursing classroom at Sutter Coast Hospital

Tangible Wins and Benefits

2012

- The Del Norte Open Door Community Health Clinic supports dental van delivery of services to all Del Norte children through the education system. It permanently funds dental van services to children and bilingual outreach/promotora workforce.
- City Council of Crescent City inclusion and adoption of “health” in official city vision statement.

2013

- The Del Norte Open Door Community Health Clinic provides prescriptions for fresh produce at farmers market.
- The City Council adopts a Health in All Policies (HiAP) Resolution that includes a multi-department review of the City’s General Plan and a City Employee Wellness Policy.

2014

- City, County, and Healthcare District adopt a joint resolution declaring unified work toward improving the local healthcare delivery system.
- City of Crescent City creates a farmers market fund to ensure clinic prescriptions are filled.
- Partnership Health and Sutter Coast Hospital offer resources to support building the local career pathways.

2016

- The Del Norte Open Door Community Health Clinic opens a teen clinic on the College of the Redwoods- Del Norte campus.
- Health Career Pathways are represented in the Youth Training Academy, with the first summer Health Career Pathway option.

Tangible Wins and Benefits

2017

- Del Norte Unified School District funds a Health Career teacher at Del Norte High School, an essential position in the Health Career Pathway development.

2018

- E3 focuses their youth employment program on the healthcare industry. The program was recognized by the California Workforce Association for its innovation and lauded as a model for other communities across the state.
- Del Norte High School adds a Science Based Health Pathway to their curriculum to complete the pathway.
- The “When I Grow Up” curriculum was finalized and offered in after-school programs in DNUSD schools.

2019

- All major healthcare providers in the area sign onto a proclamation, stating their support for the development of health career pathways in Del Norte and commit to providing guest speakers in classrooms, work-based learning opportunities for youth, and career ladder/advancement strategies and opportunities for existing staff.

2020

- A new program delivery system was developed to utilize Zoom to present an online summer Health Career Pathway program.
- CR, in partnership with Sutter Coast Hospital, brings the LVN to RN bridge program back together after a 10-year absence of the program.
- Cal Poly Humboldt reopens their Bachelors of Science in Nursing (BSN). The RN program at CR played an important role in the return of the BSN, with the assurance of a stream of students to participate in the program.