

ISSUE SUMMARY

Federal health professions education and training programs play a critical role in developing a workforce that meets the nation's changing health care needs. The AAMC supports increased funding for the workforce development programs authorized under Title VII (physicians and other health professions) and Title VIII (nursing) of the Public Health Service Act.

Issue

The Title VII and VIII education and training programs of the Public Health Service Act (42 USC 292 et seq.) are the only federal programs with the stated goal of training providers in interdisciplinary settings to improve the supply, diversity, and distribution of the physician and health professions workforce. The Title VII programs have suffered from chronic underfunding in recent years due to the constrained budget environment. The Title VII programs need a strong and stable investment from year to year as part of a comprehensive national workforce strategy to meet the country's growing health care needs.

Background

The U.S. population is aging with the baby boomer generation, resulting in higher per capita consumption of health care and increased physician retirement. It is essential to ensure an adequate supply of well-trained providers to address this added strain on the health care workforce. Because the Title VII health professions programs emphasize diversity, primary care, and special-need or underserved populations, increased support for these programs is critical to achieving this goal.

Title VII and Title VIII authorize, respectively, the health professions and nursing workforce programs administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), an agency of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Through loans and scholarships to students, as well as grants and contracts to academic institutions and nonprofit organizations, these programs support the education and training of health care providers, including physicians, dentists, pharmacists, nurses, psychologists, and public and allied health professionals.

Designed to improve the supply, diversity, and distribution of the health care workforce, Title VII programs pick up where traditional market forces leave off. For example, the Title VII diversity programs increase racial and ethnic minority representation in the health professions by providing academic enrichment and career development. Centers of Excellence implement programs to improve clinical education, curricula, and cultural competence. The Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP) is a K–16 pipeline program that partners with local educational and community organizations to improve the recruitment and retention of minority and disadvantaged students in the health professions workforce.

Similarly, the Primary Care Training and Enhancement Program helps expand the primary care workforce, and the Area Health Education Centers facilitate community-based linkages and training in underserved rural and urban areas. By assessing the needs of the communities they serve, the Title VII geriatric and pediatric programs are well positioned to fill workforce gaps and increase access to care for all populations. Further, the programs emphasize interprofessional education and training, bringing together knowledge and skills across disciplines to provide effective, efficient, and coordinated care.

With the country's current and expected health workforce shortages, Title VII will become more important in the country's effort to develop a diverse and culturally competent workforce that is distributed across rural and underserved communities. The Title VII physician and health professions programs are an essential component of the health care safety net, training a diverse supply of providers who are more likely to serve in rural and underserved settings and in community health centers. A continued commitment to and strong investment in the health professions programs are needed to ensure that these programs are well positioned to meet the growing demand for health care professionals.

AAMC Policy Recommendations

- As a founding member of the Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition (HPNEC), the AAMC recommends increased funding for Title VII and Title VIII that will ensure the programs can both educate and train professionals to help meet the ever-growing demand for care.
- The AAMC continues to recommend that Congress and the administration prioritize the development of racial and ethnic minority faculty across the health professions. The Title VII diversity programs are critical to the development of the racial and ethnic minority health care workforce, as these mentors create a supportive environment that allows diverse health professions students to thrive as future providers.
- The AAMC recommends that HHS use its authority to increase grant awards for Title VII programs to support data collection, tracking, and long-term program evaluation. These activities will need an adequate investment from Congress to be effective.

Related Issues

- Physician Workforce Issues
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Health Equity

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Web Resources

Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition Updates

www.aamc.org/advocacy/hpniec

Health Professions and Nursing Education Programs FY 2017 Brochure

www.aamc.org/advocacy/hpniec/FY2017HPNECBrochure.pdf

Health Resources and Services Administration Health Workforce Information

<http://bhpr.hrsa.gov>