

A Vital Continuing Role for AHECs/HETCs

Distortions in our health care system result in marked inequities in access to and quality of health care services, which are reflected in unacceptable racial and ethnic disparities in health status and the underrepresentation of minority and disadvantaged individuals in the health workforce. AHEC and HETC programs play a key role in correcting these inequities and strengthening the nation's health care safety net. Through community-based interdisciplinary training programs, AHECs and HETCs identify, motivate, recruit, train, and retain a health care workforce committed to underserved populations.

The AHEC Mission

To enhance access to quality health care, particularly primary and preventive care, by improving the supply and distribution of health care professionals through community/academic educational partnerships.

The HETC Mission

To provide community health education and health professions training programs in areas of the United States with severely underserved populations, particularly those characterized by diverse cultures and languages.



"AHECs provide a unique and valuable infrastructure for "rolling out" a wide range of federal and state workforce development, professional education and health promotion initiatives. These programs have established relationships in local communities built on trust and demonstrated performance. State and federal agencies find they can reach communities faster and with fewer bureaucratic hassles if they use AHEC as a platform."

Findings reported in Executive Summary, An Evaluative Summary of the AHEC Program by the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2002



NAO is the national organization that supports and advances the AHEC/HETC network in improving the health of individuals and communities by transforming health care through education.

www.nationalahec.org

National AHEC Organization (NAO)
109 VIP Drive, Suite 220
Wexford, PA 15090
888-412-7424, FAX: 724-935-1560
Key contact: Judy Lyle
Email: info@nationalahec.org

Federal AHEC Branch
Louis D. Coccodrilli
MPH, Branch Chief
Parklawn Building, Room 9-05
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857
301-443-6950 FAX: 301-443-0157

AHEC
Area Health Education Centers

HETC
Health Education Training Centers



Connecting Students to Careers,
Professionals to Communities,
and Communities to Better Health



Growth of the AHEC/HETC Network

The AHEC (Area Health Education Centers) program was developed by Congress in 1971 to recruit, train and retain a health professions workforce committed to



underserved populations. The HETC (Health Education Training Centers) program was created in 1989 to provide programs for specific populations with persistent, severe

unmet health needs. Together the AHEC and HETC programs help bring the resources of academic medicine to bear in addressing local community health needs. By their very structure, AHECs and HETCs are able to respond in a flexible and creative manner in adapting national health initiatives to the particular needs of the nation's most vulnerable communities.

Today, 51 AHEC programs with more than 200 centers and eleven HETCs operate in almost every state and the District of Columbia. Approximately 120 medical schools and 600 nursing and allied health schools work collaboratively with AHECs and HETCs to improve health for underserved and under-represented populations.

Key AHEC/HETC Program Contributions

AHEC health professions training and workforce development functions:

- ▶ **Developing and supporting community-based interdisciplinary training of health professions students in underserved areas.**
Impact – Exposing students to underserved communities increases the likelihood that they will return to these communities to practice.
- ▶ **Providing continuing education and other services to improve the quality of community-based care.**
Impact – Improving quality of care enhances retention of providers in underserved communities.
- ▶ **Recruiting under-represented minority and disadvantaged students into health professions through a broad range of programs.**
Impact – Minority and disadvantaged students are significantly under-represented in health professions and are more likely to practice in underserved communities.
- ▶ **Facilitating and supporting practitioners, facilities and community-based organizations in effectively addressing critical local health issues.**
Impact – AHECs are a flexible and efficient mechanism for addressing a wide and evolving variety of health care issues on the local level.

HETC community health education and health professions training functions:

- ▶ **Developing community health education and health provider training programs to address public health needs in areas with diverse and severely underserved populations.**
Impact – The majority of preventable health problems can be positively affected by education and training directed at behavioral and environmental change.

The collective impact of AHECs and HETCs is reflected in their performance in 2005.

Connecting students to careers – AHECs and HETCs:

- ▶ Introduced nearly 300,000 students, kindergarten through college, to health careers.
- ▶ Better prepared over 52,000 high school students for health careers through academic enhancement or health careers programs of at least 20 hours in duration.

Connecting professionals to communities – AHECs and HETCs:

- ▶ Recruited and maintained more than 26,000 community-based training sites and over 18,000 community faculty preceptors – primarily physicians for student training.
- ▶ Placed over 47,000 health professions students in medically underserved and other community-based sites.
- ▶ Trained over 100,000 health professions students in primary care and other disciplines.

Connecting communities to better health – AHECs and HETCs:

- ▶ Offered continuing education programs to over 337,000 health professionals in a broad range of topics, including cultural competence, public health preparedness, and emerging health care issues.

ACADEMIC HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER

Medical School
Allied Health School
Nursing School
Pharmacy School
Dental School
Public Health School
Other Schools
State Agencies

LOCAL PRACTITIONER SUPPORT
STUDENT/RESIDENT TRAINING
MINORITY STUDENT RECRUITMENT
COMMUNITY HEALTH EDUCATION

AHEC/HETC

Community Hospitals
Private Practitioners
Public School System
Community/Migrant Health Centers
Local Training Institutions
Health Departments
Other Community Organizations

A National Pipeline

For Community-Based Health Professions Education