

IMPROVING THE HEALTH STATUS OF UNDERSERVED AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

IN THIS ISSUE

Primary Care Importance and Challenges

There is wide agreement that patient-centered primary care is essential to fixing the challenges of inefficiency, uncoordination and medical errors in our healthcare system.

Primary care clinicians oversee healthcare for their patients across the full spectrum. Their importance includes:

- being the first point of contact for undiagnosed health problems;
- comprehensive, whole-person care;
- building longitudinal relationships that are important for understanding an individual's health over time and treating chronic problems; and
- coordinating across other health services.¹

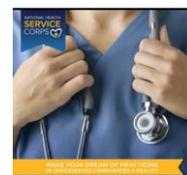
While primary care is critical to improving health care service and delivery, there are significant challenges faced by primary care providers in Montana.

A significant percentage of the current primary care workforce is nearing

retirement. Unprecedented levels of educational debt and the current reimbursement system have resulted in fewer medical students choosing to specialize in primary care. The majority of those that choose primary care practice in urban areas. This leaves rural States like Montana, especially rural areas of rural States, significantly underserved.

In addition, the expanding and aging population accompanied by the increase in insurance coverage demands an increase in the number of primary care clinicians to meet the need. The result is a growing shortage of high value primary care services, which will only make it more difficult for Montanans to get the care they want and need.^{1,2,3}

In recognition of these challenges across the nation, the federal government utilizes Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) designations to identify and support areas in need. HPSAs in Montana and the current status of the programs designed to benefit these areas are described in this newsletter.



NHSC Loan Repayment Application is OPEN

Primary care providers can pay off student loans while serving in underserved communities. **NHSC is now accepting application through MARCH 30, 5:30pm.** Page 3



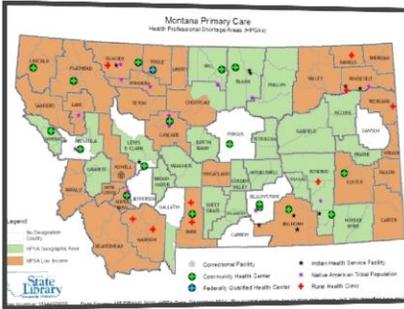
Physician J1 Visa Waiver Program

Montana still has **28** of the 30 **J1 Visa Waiver slots** available for foreign physicians. Page 3



Montana Safety Net Health Centers Bullhook Community Health Center in Havre is one of 18 Safety Net Health Centers in Montana. Page 4

HPSA DESIGNATIONS IN MONTANA



Primary Care HPSA designations in Montana. For a larger map visit: <http://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/primarycare/-Shortage-Area-Designations>



Dental HPSA designations in Montana. For a larger map visit: <http://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/primarycare/-Shortage-Area-Designations>

MONTANA HPSA FAST FACTS

56 of 56 Counties

Have MENTAL HEALTH HPSA designations

52 of 56 Counties

Have PRIMARY CARE HPSA designations

45 of 56 Counties

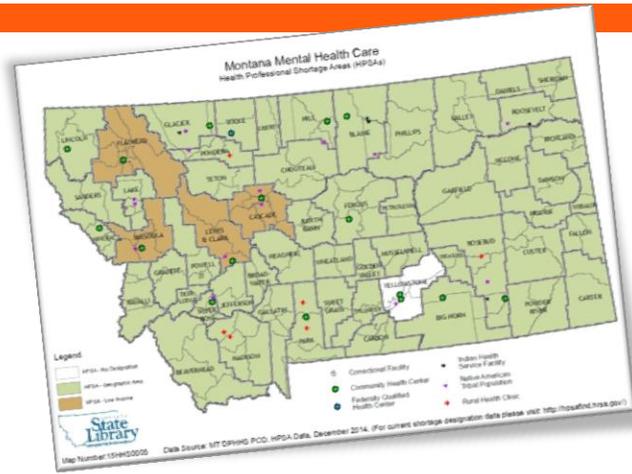
Have DENTAL HPSA designations

FOR MORE INFORMATION

HPSA Designation Criteria and Determination Process: <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/shortage/hpsas/>

Find Shortage Areas by State and County: <http://hpsafind.hrsa.gov/>

CONTACT: Julie Fife, 406-444-3934, jfife@mt.gov



Left: The Mental Health HPSAs in Montana. For a larger map visit: <http://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/primarycare/-Shortage-Area-Designations>

Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) Designations in Montana

HPSA designations were created in the 1970s in response to the national healthcare workforce crisis that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s as rural physicians retired or moved to urban areas, and increasing numbers of physicians chose to specialize. HPSAs were originally used by the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) to identify areas in need of primary care providers.

Physician shortages continue to be a problem, particularly in rural areas and among low-income populations. In accordance with the federal designation guidelines, the Montana Primary Care Office continues to track and assess primary care needs and the physician workforce across the state. HPSAs may be designated as having a shortage in primary medical care, dental or mental health providers. They may be geographic areas, specific population groups, or public facilities.

All HPSA designations are reviewed every three years. However, if there are changes in the number of providers or healthcare needs, individuals from a community can contact the Primary Care Office to inquire about an additional HPSA review.

The HPSA designation is used by many federal and state programs to identify areas and populations eligible for assistance. These programs include, but are not limited to:

- Medicare HPSA Bonus Payment <http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-Fee-for-Service-Payment/HPSAPSAPhysicianBonuses/index.html?redirect=/hpsapsaphysicianbonuses/>
- Health Center Program <http://bhpc.hrsa.gov/uds/datacenter.aspx?year=2013&state=MT>
Read more about Health Centers in Montana on Page
- Rural Health Clinic Program <http://www.hrsa.gov/healthit/toolbox/RuralHealthITtoolbox/Introduction/ruralclinics.html>
- Indian Health Service Scholarship Program <http://www.ihs.gov/scholarship/>



- NHSC <http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/>
- Montana NHSC <http://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/primarycare/SLRP>
- J1 Visa Waiver program <http://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/primarycare/J1-Visa-Program>

Montana NHSC: Doing what they love, and loving what they do

Montana is fortunate to recruit high quality primary care providers to practice in underserved areas across the State through the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) program.

Likewise, NHSC providers are fortunate to have the opportunity to practice in beautiful Montana settings while paying off student loans and helping to meet significant needs. NHSC providers recognize their good fortune. One provider shared, "I get paid to work in the place that I love."

The top two reasons National Health Service Corps members choose to serve in Montana are:

- Beautiful Montana scenery
- Broad scope of practice

Other benefits of living and working in Montana identified by NHSC members include: support from the site and the community, the pace of life, no sales tax, and camaraderie.

If you are interested in serving in the NHSC in Montana or becoming an approved NHSC site, contact the MT Primary Care Office to learn more about eligibility requirements.

NHSC LOAN REPAYMENT IS NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS!!!

NHSC is currently accepting applications for loan repayment until **March 30, 2015 at 5:30pm**. Visit: <http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/loanrepayment/index.html>



Photo Source: <http://ih.constantcontact.com/f510271133206806240/ima/USA.jpg?e=1134681455827>

MONTANA NHSC FAST FACTS

Total NHSC Providers in Montana	189
Physicians	28
Nurse Practitioners	25
Physician Assistants	38
Certified Nurse Midwives	1
Dentists	16
Dental Hygienists	6
Mental/Behavioral Health Providers*	75
RN (SLRP only)	0
Pharmacist (SLRP only)	0

*Mental/Behavioral Health Provider disciplines= Health Service Psychologist, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Psychiatric Nurse Specialist, Marriage and Family Therapist, and Licensed Professional Counselor



J1 Visa Waiver Program for Physicians

The Montana J1 visa waiver program increases access to health care in communities that have physician shortages by helping health care facilities recruit foreign physicians. Qualified foreign physicians must have completed their advanced clinical training in an approved US residency training or fellowship program and must agree to work in the shortage area for three years.

Montana currently has outstanding J1 visa waiver physicians practicing the following specialties: cardiology, family practice, internal medicine, general vascular surgery, and hematology/oncology.

Montana is allowed 30 waivers per year, 10 of which can be for physicians that specialize or live in non-shortage designated areas. **Currently only 2 of the possible 28 waivers have been recommended.**

For more information about the J1 Visa Waiver Program in Montana visit: <http://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/primarycare/J1-Visa-Program>, or contact Julie Fife @ jfife@mt.gov, 406-444-3934.



Above: Montana’s Health Centers. Map and Data provided by the Montana Primary Care Association.

For more information contact: Marge Levine @ mlevine@mtpca.org, or visit: www.mtpca.org

Health Centers Provide Vital Safety Net for 97,214 Montanans

Health centers in Montana provide comprehensive, culturally competent, quality primary care services to medically underserved communities and vulnerable populations. CHCs are located in high-need communities, are governed by a community board comprised primarily of the population they serve, provide comprehensive primary health care as well as supportive services that promote access to health, provide services to all with fees adjusted based on ability to pay, and meet performance and accountability requirements regarding administrative, clinical and financial operations.

- **Health centers (HC) in Montana provide a crucial safety net for more than 90,000 Montanans in 46 different communities.**
- **Montana’s HCs log over 350,000 patient visits annually.**
- **Montana’s HCs provide 721 full time equivalent local jobs.**
- **Montana’s HCs bring more than \$38 Million in outside grants and non-patient revenue.**

Rural Medicine Hackathon at the University of Montana

Have you ever come across a problem in rural healthcare and thought, “there must be a better way to do this?” Or, do you have an idea but no time to build the solution?

If so, bring your ideas for innovation to the first Hacking Rural Medicine event in Missoula, Montana from **March 20-22, 2015** at the **University of Montana**.

The Hacking Rural Medicine event takes ideas and creates breakthrough innovation in one weekend. The interactive and high-energy meeting format was designed by MIT’s Hacking Medicine Program and has been used to “hack” tough healthcare challenges in more than 21 events around the world. This is the must-attend event this year for rural healthcare leaders, clinicians, entrepreneurs, business professionals, engineers, students, and innovators.

The event kicks off with Ignite Rural Medicine on March 20th which includes two keynote speakers: Terry Hill, Executive Director of Rural Health Innovations, and Senior Advisor to the National Rural Health Resource Center; and Sarah Calhoun, rural community leader and entrepreneur, and founder of Red Ants Pants. The Ignite event will also include short, high-energy,



Partnership Health Center medical director John Miller assists resident Claire Frost with Medicare reimbursement codes at the Missoula clinic. The Family Medicine Residency of Western Montana program is designed to train more doctors for careers in rural areas.

presentations on topics including the healthcare workforce.

For More Information:

Register at www.HackingRuralMedicine.org. For questions or more information, please contact Monica Bourgeau at 406-544-3098 or at mbourgeau@mymrhc.org.



Montana Primary Care Workforce

Montana Primary Care Office

1400 Broadway A116
Helena, MT 59620

I would love to hear from you! Contact me if you would like to share information through the Montana Primary Care Office newsletter, or if you have questions about shortage designations or the programs that benefit underserved areas in Montana.



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Healthy People. Healthy Communities.

Department of Public Health & Human Services

Sources:

1. Primary Care Progress." *Primary Care Progress*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Nov. 2014.
2. Petterson, Stephen M., Winston R. Liaw, Robert L. Phillips, David L. Rabin, David S. Meyers, and Andrew W. Bazemore. "Projecting US Primary Care Physician Workforce Needs: 2010-2025." *Projecting US Primary Care Physician Workforce Needs: 2010-2025*. Ann Fam Med, Nov.-Dec. 2012. Web. 28 Nov. 2014.
3. SM, Stover B. Montana's physician workforce in 2014. Seattle, WA:WWAMI Center for Health Workforce Studies, University of Washington, Nov. 2014.