

In This Issue

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Dear Reader,

This issue of the Delaware Journal of Public Health is different from any issue published to date. First, it has a lot of content. Second, it links to a website for additional information. Finally, it is based upon research done by various colleagues and institutions in Delaware who have worked on healthcare workforce concerns.

Why have an issue dedicated to healthcare and healthcare access? Simply stated, it is one of the social determinants of health, and depending where you look, it is ranked in as being accountable for 10%¹ to 27% and higher² within the larger framework including genetic predisposition, behavioral patterns, social circumstances, and environment.³

Those percentages are informative, however during the COVID-19 pandemic they became even more important based upon the dramatic increase in need for services, the exodus of front line healthcare workers from the workforce, and the exacerbation of existing healthcare provider shortages and their impact on the provision of care, especially in respect to routine primary care and chronic disease management.

With startup funding from the Delaware Health Care Commission and American Rescue Plan Act funding from the United States Department of Treasury through the State of Delaware, we and our partners are engaged in a wide-ranging initiative. There are four components to the initiative:

- 1) To quantify the healthcare workforce in Delaware;
- 2) To expand pathways programs to encourage Delaware youth to pursue a career in healthcare;
- 3) To expand the graduate medical education capacity in Delaware for key practitioner disciplines; and
- 4) To expand our existing student financial aid program to include loans to nursing and physician assistant students, medical and dental technicians, and behavioral health providers who are residents of the State of Delaware, attend Delaware schools, and are willing to commit to practice in Delaware after graduation.

This issue of the Delaware Journal of Public Health focuses on our initial healthcare workforce analysis, based upon data from the Delaware Division of Professional Licensing and on data provided from the Delaware Health Information Network (DHIN) regarding healthcare utilization in Delaware and reflected in claims data. Numerous other sources of data have been brought to bear on this subject as well, which are too numerous to list here.

A website, <https://dehealthforce.org> has been built. You can find the complete 406 page 2022 Workforce Report there, and over time we will be enhancing the capacity of that website to bring you a series of dashboards and widgets to access additional, up-to-date workforce data.

Future issues of the DJPH will continue this dialog. As always, we appreciate your input and suggestions on this and other public health topics.

References

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