Merriam Webster defines a keystone as “the central principle or part of a policy, system, etc. on which all else depends.” As the intersection of health sciences and health systems (healthcare delivery and public health), the health workforce is a keystone supporting patient and population health. This keystone represents a myriad of professions which share a common goal: supporting, securing, and protecting population health.

Ensuring alignment between supply and composition of the health workforce and population health needs is critical. Consistent, high resolution information on this workforce is needed to support policy and planning across the health system and other sectors: workforce development, higher education, public health, social services, etc. Determining the capacity of and demand for this large, diverse workforce is challenging. Methods and systems are needed to define and measure this workforce and the contribution its members have on population health.

Indiana was among seven states, identified as having a commitment to advancing health workforce initiatives, that participated in a policy academy with the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center): Building a Transformed Healthcare Workforce: Moving from Planning to Implementation. The Governor has established the Indiana Health Workforce Council to serve as a policy coordinating entity for the state. The state has also entered into a formal partnership with the Bowen Center for Health Workforce Research and Policy (BCHW) for data coordination and technical support. Through these efforts, Indiana is strategically positioned to develop informed health workforce policy that aligns with Hoosier health needs.

BCHW is excited to formally partner with the State of Indiana. BCHW has a rich history of collecting, analyzing, and disseminating health workforce data. Established in 1991, the “Bowen Research Center” was named in honor of Otis Bowen, M.D., former Governor of Indiana, Secretary of Health and Human Services for the United States, Chair of the National Governors Association, and faculty member in the IU Department of Family Medicine. With its history and expertise in health workforce studies, the Bowen Research Center was identified as an ideal partner to support data coordination efforts. As a result, the center has been rebranded and renamed the “Bowen Center for Health Workforce Research and Policy” (BCHW).

Our newsletter, the Keystone Review, will provide a snapshot of BCHW initiatives related to the health workforce, the keystone supporting population health. In addition to introducing the BCHW team and our mission, vision and values, this inaugural edition of the newsletter highlights current activities, recently published resources, and new and emerging initiatives.
Research

Health workforce research is vital to informing health workforce development and planning efforts, ultimately serving to inform health policy, improve healthcare delivery, and promote population health. Our current research focuses on understanding how health workforce and healthcare delivery models influence access to care. Current research projects include:

Putting the Smile into Primary Care: Developing interprofessional education and collaborative practice strategies for the integration of oral health into primary care. An interdisciplinary team of researchers from the Indiana University School of Dentistry, the Indiana University School of Medicine, and the Indiana University Center for Interprofessional Education and Practice are working to develop a new, interprofessional training program for dental hygienists and family medicine residents.

The Impact of State Policy on Access and Health at Federally Qualified Health Centers: BCHW researchers are examining the impact of state policy on health workforce capacity, health service availability, access to care, and health outcomes at Federally Qualified Health Centers. We are currently in the development phase of a study to examine the impact of state policies for other professions on additional aspects of health service delivery and quality measures within Federally Qualified Health Centers.

Evaluation

Evaluation of policies, programs and initiatives is critical to measure impact and for continual process improvement. BCHW provides quality and timely evaluation of ongoing health workforce projects. Selected evaluation projects are described below.

Indiana Primary Care Needs Assessment (PCNA): BCHW has partnered with the Indiana State Department of Health to evaluate Indiana’s primary care workforce, funded through a cooperative agreement with HRSA. BCHW is leveraging health workforce data to proactively identify Indiana communities experiencing health professional shortages. Additionally, BCHW is assisting with preparation of Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) applications to fulfill requests from the past two years. Within two months, BCHW team members prepared HPSA applications for 21 counties, 12 facilities, and 27 correctional facilities. Of these, 10 have successfully received federal designation.

Clinical Health Coach Evaluation: BCHW is working with the Indiana Rural Health Association and the Indiana Statewide Rural Health Network to evaluate a health coach-facilitated chronic disease management intervention. The pilot year of the program, which included evaluation of the health coach training program, was recently completed. In this coming year, key informant interviews will be held and we will collect and analyze patient data following health coach implementation.

Resources

Building capacity for the collection, management, and reporting of high quality data on the health workforce is essential to answering fundamental questions on supply, demand and distribution as well as informing policy and resource allocation. Administering surveys to health professionals during license renewal is recognized nationally as a preferred method for health workforce data collection. In Indiana, professional boards and administration of professional licenses are centralized at the Professional Licensing Agency (PLA). This provides Indiana with an opportunity to implement standardized survey tools consistent with minimum datasets developed by Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). BCHW is committed to reporting up-to-date findings through publishing reports on these professions. These may be found in the Resources section of our website at http://family.medicine.iu.edu/hws/resources/. Two of our most recent resources are highlighted below:

Policy Report: 2012 Substance Use Disorder Workforce
Ensuring that Indiana communities have the capacity to meet the increasing need for substance use disorder services is of critical importance. This report aims to understand the substance use disorder workforce capacity in Indiana and its relation to emergency department utilization for substance use services.

Information on the oral health workforce is critical to understanding oral health system capacity and informing policy. This report describes the dentist workforce in Indiana, as reflected by the small sample that responded to the state survey.
The Indiana University School of Medicine was well represented by the BCHW team at the 2015 American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Session with two posters and two oral presentations. Dr. Hannah Maxey, who was invited to be the oral health section counselor, presented her research during a scientific session on Oral Health Workforce and Infrastructure. Connor Norwood presented as part of an invited panel on Nursing Workforce Policy. Courtney Randolph presented a poster on the Health Coach Model Evaluation Project which is in conjunction with our work with the Indiana Rural Health Association for the Health Administration Section.

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” – Helen Keller

Hannah L. Maxey, PhD, MPH, RDH
Director, Bowen Center for Health Workforce Research & Policy
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Philanthropic support helps to advance research in the Bowen Center for Health Workforce Research and Policy and the Department of Family Medicine that will benefit Hoosiers throughout Indiana. Your gift also supports the training of the next generation of physicians who benefit from the expertise of our dedicated faculty.

For additional information about the various ways to give, please contact Joshua Lee at 317.278.2124.

Gifts to the Bowen Center for Health Workforce Research and Policy and the Department of Family Medicine can be made online by clicking the “Gift Giving” tab on the top of the page at family.medicine.iu.edu/hws/

Thank you for making a difference!

How Can We Assist You?

Looking for data or technical assistance? The Bowen Center for Health Workforce Research and Policy provides stakeholders with critical information on Indiana’s health workforce that can be used for evaluation, original research, and reporting. Contact us today to discuss how we may assist you!

Contact Us

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