

1

HEALTH CAREERS

North Carolina must cultivate current and future health professionals to meet supply and demand in the health care workforce.

NC AHEC's health careers pipeline provides informative programs that introduce K-12 youth to the wide spectrum of health careers, increasing the number of students who successfully pursue careers in allied health, dentistry, medicine, mental health, nursing, pharmacy, and public health. The NC AHEC Scholars Program targets college-level students, recruiting and training an interprofessional cadre of health professionals committed to community service and to transforming health care in North Carolina.

2

COMMUNITY CLINICAL TRAINING

Health science students need real-world experience outside academic centers, and health science schools cannot provide all clinical training requirements on-campus.

NC AHEC supports health science students from North Carolina colleges and universities and helps schools secure community health practitioners—preceptors—to teach the next generation of health professionals. These off-campus rotations, especially those in rural and underserved communities, help keep medical professionals in state and in rural areas.

3

GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION (GME) SUPPORT

North Carolina faces shortages and uneven distribution of primary care physicians in the state's rural areas.

The Association of American Medical Colleges reports North Carolina-trained residents have a **41.9%** chance of remaining in-state to practice. NC AHEC has helped develop **19** new community residency programs,

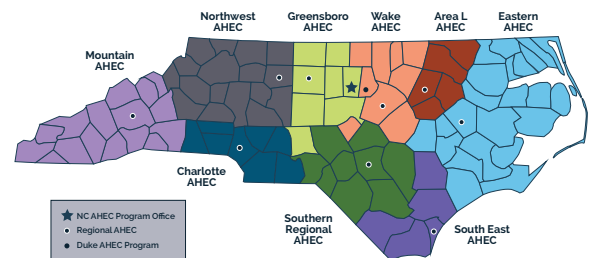
and we support teaching hospitals across the state. NC AHEC's focus on rural GME expansion is part of the solution, yielding providers more likely to practice in rural areas while providing health care and creating jobs in underserved communities.

4

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

To stay abreast of the latest advancements in their fields, health professionals require ever-evolving education and training to maintain state licensure and specialty certification.

NC AHEC's continuing professional development programs are often taught by health sciences faculty from the state's five medical academic centers, bringing university expertise to North Carolina communities. In 2017, more than **215,000** total participants attended more than **9,000** continuing professional development programs provided by NC AHEC.



ABOUT NC AHEC

NC AHEC (North Carolina Area Health Education Centers) weaves through all sectors of health care education and workforce, providing programs and services that bridge academic institutions, health systems, and communities to improve the health of the people of North Carolina. Our nine regional centers reach all 100 North Carolina counties, and the NC AHEC pipeline supports individuals in all stages of professional growth across the continuum of care.

5

PRACTICE SUPPORT

In the rapidly changing health care industry, primary care practices in North Carolina face many challenges—from electronic health records and Medicaid reform to health system consolidation and increasing performance measures.

NC AHEC's statewide network of quality improvement consultants employed at each of the nine centers have served more than **6,000** providers at more than **1,400** practices, ensuring that medical practices, especially those in rural and underserved areas, have the help they need to evolve with the ever-changing health care system, ultimately reducing costs and improving quality of care. Our practice support teams are often the lifeline for these practices, especially in rural areas where primary care practices are vital to community health.

6

LIBRARY SERVICES

In order to practice state-of-the-art medicine, health care professionals need immediate access to cutting-edge research.

We provide library resources to the consortium of hospitals, health care providers, and individual health professionals. Each of the nine AHEC locations has its own library, complete with a librarian staff prepared to meet the unique needs of the health care providers in their counties. In addition to this support, the AHEC Digital Library ensures that all providers in the state have high-quality health information at their fingertips. In 2016–17, NC AHEC's librarians provided information, education, and support through more than **400,000** service interactions with health care providers across the state.

7

NURSING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

According to a recent Georgetown University report, by 2025, North Carolina is projected to have the second-largest shortage of nurses in the country, a deficit of nearly 13,000!

NC AHEC's RN Refresher course combines self-study and clinical training, providing a means for nurses with inactive licensure or who are out of practice for five or more years to reactivate their license with the NC Board of Nursing. Since the program's inception in 1990, **3,269** inactive nurses have completed the program, returning an average of **115** qualified nurses

to the workforce each year. NC AHEC also supports nursing baccalaureate programs and nursing clinical site development, mostly in rural areas. Studies affiliated with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation report that hospitals that employ larger numbers of nurses with advanced degrees have lower patient mortality rates and improved patient outcomes. In 2015–16, **272** nurses from rural counties enrolled in AHEC-supported RN to BSN programs at ECU and UNC Greensboro, and after 20-plus years, almost three-fourths of the nursing clinical sites still have learners. These initiatives help alleviate the nursing shortage in the state.

8

HEALTH WORKFORCE DATA

Legislators need reliable data to better understand the problems and alternatives in maintaining a healthy population.

NC AHEC collaborates with and provides ongoing support to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Service Research, which collects and disseminates descriptive data on health professionals in North Carolina. We frequently provide data and reports to the legislature so that policy makers can make more informed decisions about our state of health.

9

CURRENT CHALLENGES

When there's a nationwide epidemic—from heart disease to diabetes, the Zika virus to the ongoing opioid crisis—North Carolina needs a system in place to ensure our state has every resource on the ground tackling the problem.

In 2017, NC AHEC developed and provided more than **34,000** hours of continuing professional development related to opioids to more than **8,500** health professionals in **99** of the **100** counties in the state.

NC AHEC facilitated a three-year study, Heart Health Now, that shows the promise of primary care to combat chronic disease before patients suffer the consequences of advanced illness. **48%** of the **219** participating practices improved their patients' cardiovascular mortality risk by at least **10%**.