

## Attachment 11: Evidence-Based Practice/Promising Practice Abstract

### FORWARD NM Pathways to Health Careers

#### Summary

- **Need:** *New Mexico's southwestern counties of Hidalgo, Catron, Luna, and Grant have experienced chronic shortages of primary care providers. New Mexico has the oldest physician population in the country.*
- **Intervention:** *A comprehensive workforce pipeline program, including programming for middle and high school students, undergraduate and graduate students, primary care program students, and medical and dental residents.*
- **Results:** *The program reaches over 1,000 school-aged students throughout the service areas and hosts students in a variety of healthcare related programs for rural rotation experiences. It has also gained partnership with the HMS-Family Medicine Residency Program since 2013 and designation as an Area Health Education Center (AHEC) since 2012.*

#### Description

New Mexico's Hidalgo, Luna, Catron and Grant counties, located in the southwest corner of the state, have experienced ongoing and severe shortages of primary care providers. The average age of the state's physician workforce is 53, and one-third of the state's physicians are over 60 years of age. The number of practitioners retiring soon far exceeds the number of new graduates ready to take their places. To help improve and ensure access to primary care in this rural area, the [Center for Health Innovation](#) began [FORWARD NM](#) to lead a range of activities under the "Grow-Your-Own" model of care through its [Pathways to Health Careers](#) pipeline.

This project has been supported through a [2010-2013 Federal Office of Rural Health Policy Rural Health Workforce Development grant](#) through the New Mexico Department of Health grants, sub-contracted with the University of New Mexico Area Health Education Center (AHEC) program and local foundations. Partnerships with local organizations for sponsorships and in-kind donations for specific projects such as Summer Academies also aid the program.



The following organizations partner with FORWARD NM:

- [Hidalgo Medical Services](#) & HMS-Family Medicine Residency Program
- [The University of New Mexico](#)
- [Western New Mexico University](#)
- [Gila Regional Medical Center](#)
- [Southern New Mexico Family Medicine Residency Program](#)
- [Arizona School of Dentistry & Oral Health](#)
- [University of Arizona](#)
- [Northern Arizona University](#)
- [AHEC Centers in New Mexico](#): Southern Area Health Education Center (SoAHEC) and Montanas del Norte (MdN AHEC)
- Several other universities and colleges that prepare individuals for a career in the healthcare sector on a national and international level
- All regional school districts
- Community healthcare providers

## Services offered

Services provided by the FORWARD NM program cover the entire healthcare workforce pipeline and help recruit and retain rural providers:

[Dream Makers Health Career Clubs](#) – Educates students on different healthcare professions through field trips, hands-on participation, and interaction with professionals. The program is sponsored by the Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the University of New Mexico.

[Team Academy for Health Sciences \(TAHS\)](#) – A 3-week summer academy for high schoolers. It provides ACT science testing preparation, healthcare career exploration, classes that qualify for college credit, and tours of regional health center.

[AHEC Health Career Manual](#) – A free, downloadable guide to help students discover what health career paths might suit their talents and how to achieve that future.

[College Application & Scholarship Support](#) – Program staff meet with students interested in a healthcare career to formulate a plan to fulfill their goals. Areas include application completion, scholarships and loans, writing support, and mock interviews.

[Rural Clinical Internships and Rotations](#) – Rotations in rural clinics and hospitals for medical school students, shadowing for undergraduates, practicums for college credits, and short-term internships give students hands-on experience in the rural medical field.

*Advocacy* – Program staff work to support state and federal policies aimed at obtaining an adequate rural primary care access and workforce. The program introduces students interested in medicine to the [University of New Mexico Combined BA/MD program](#) for a medical-focused higher education path. Provides rural training experiences during medical, dental, and behavioral school and residency programs, including the newly accredited [Hidalgo Medical Services Family Medicine Residency Program](#).

## Results

FORWARD NM has accomplished the following:

- Worked with middle and high school students throughout the four counties, reaching more than 800 students in FY20
- Hosted more than 5,000 rural rotation experiences since its start in 2012 for medical, dental, and behavioral health students and residents of more than 20 disciplines in healthcare more than 12 different colleges and universities
- In 2012, FORWARD NM received accreditation as an Area Health Education Center (AHEC)

The article [One Month Rural](#), published in *The Differential*, was written by University of Arizona Second Year Medical Student Michelle Blumenschine. The article explains her experience during a clinical rural rotation at Hidalgo Medical Services, coordinated by FORWARD NM, in 2015.

## **Challenges**

In recent years, AHEC funding has been stable and adequate to support FORWARD NM's pipeline programs and activities. The center has faced the challenge of reaching students amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Replication**

FORWARD NM Pathways to Health Careers and its components are replicable and adaptable to similar environments and communities. FORWARD NM developed a Toolkit that can assist in adapting parts or the entire model as applicable and necessary in other environments and communities.

Source: <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/project-examples/724>