

Optimizing the Impact of the National Health Service Corps

Client: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration

Project Overview

The purpose of this evaluation was to help the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) determine how to achieve the best possible outcomes given recent changes in program legislation that include an increase in funding, the ability to include additional provider types, and greater flexibility in dividing awards between scholarships and loan-repayment programs. The study focused on the determination of the factors that are related to positive NHSC outcomes, the optimal mix of awardees to achieve these outcomes, and recommendations on how NHSC could improve program performance.



The research involved the analyses of qualitative and quantitative data. Insight utilized:

- Administrative data to describe the effects that NHSC clinicians have on communities and sites including the populations served, types of services provided, and specific contributions (using data from the Uniform Data System (UDS), “freestanding” sites, and the NHSC retention survey)
- A nationally representative survey of site administrators and NHSC alumni to examine the relationship between clinician characteristics and their outcomes
- Discussion groups with site administrators, NHSC ambassadors, NHSC clinicians, and alumni to examine the factors of clinicians, schools, and sites that are critical to the success of NHSC
- Simulations to determine how NHSC outcomes change as the funding allocation between the loan repayment and scholarship program changes

Table 2.11. Ability of Clinician to Reach and Serve ‘At-Risk’ Patient Population

Patient Population	Percentage of Site Administrators Reporting		
	NHSC Clinicians Allow Site to Serve Additional Patients	NHSC Clinicians Allow Site to Provide a Broader Range of Services	NHSC Clinicians Allow Site to Reach New Populations
Pregnant Women.....	57%	41%	32%
Infants.....	66%	47%	36%
Young Children.....	80%	57%	40%
Teens.....	80%	58%	39%
Minorities.....	72%	52%	30%
Chronically Ill.....	75%	58%	34%
AIDS Patients.....	54%	39%	25%
Elderly.....	73%	57%	32%
Nursing Home Residents.....	42%	30%	19%
Uninsured.....	81%	58%	41%
Homeless.....	49%	34%	15%
Any ‘At-Risk’ Population.....	95%	85%	71%

The resultant report helped NHSC to determine 1) whether the current mix of health professionals deployed was the most effective in meeting community needs and 2) what mix of scholarship and loan-repayment recipients would achieve NHSC program goals most effectively. Additionally, the report summarized the characteristics, attitudes, and experiences of NHSC clinicians that are related to clinician success and satisfaction with the program, and provided recommendations for the NSHC program to ensure the program meets its goals in the future.

Core Activities

Program Evaluation; Literature Reviews and Environmental Scans; Qualitative Research; Secondary Data Analysis and Simulations; Performance Measurement and Monitoring; Policy Analysis and Assessment; Report Development and Presentation

Products

The final report is entitled “Improving the Health of the Nation’s Underserved: Future Directions of the National Health Service Corps.” (January 2006)

