



Broward Regional Health Planning Council 2009 Broward County Health Plan

HEALTHCARE RESOURCES

August 2009

A variety of resources are essential to ensuring the community has access to quality healthcare. These resources are impacted by several factors, which can compromise the health of the community. Factors influencing Broward County health resources include health professional shortages areas, medically underserved populations, Broward County cost of living, residency programs, medical student debt and reimbursement rates.

HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SHORTAGE AREAS

Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) are geographic areas, demographic population groups (such as low income or homeless) or institutions (medical or other public facilities) with a shortage in health care professionals. The HRSA Bureau of Health Professionals (BHP) designates three HPSA provider categories: primary medical care, dental health and mental health. The HRSA BHP designated 125 Broward Census Tracts (45% all Broward Census Tracts) and 13 low-income population groups, comprehensive health centers (CHCs) and Native American tribal populations as primary medical care provider HPSAs, 2 as dental provider HPSAs and 2 as mental health provider HPSAs.

MEDICALLY UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

In addition to the HPSAs, the HRSA BHP designated 94 Broward County Census Tracts (34% of all Broward County Census Tracts) and 10 low-income population groups as Medically Underserved Populations (MUPs) who face economic, cultural or linguistic barriers to healthcare.

BROWARD COUNTY COST OF LIVING

The high cost of living in Broward County impacts the number of medical students willing to practice in the County, which results in the above mentioned shortage areas. The Florida Price Level Index (PLI) measures price levels in different parts of the State and represents the consumption pattern of a clerical worker or an average person who receives a salary. The total cost of living in Broward (114.12) was higher than both Monroe County (91.78) and Dade County (90.93) in 2007.

FAMILY MEDICINE RESIDENCY PROGRAMS

Family medicine is one of 24 medical specialties recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties. It is an essential element of providing primary care to Broward's residents. Despite its importance, Family Medicine residency programs have seen a decline in enrollment. According to the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP), family medicine residency positions in the U.S. peaked in 1998 at 3,293. Since 1998, the number of positions has declined steadily. Of the filled family medicine residency positions, 41 percent were graduates of U.S. medical schools (1,117). The remaining positions were filled by international students, who frequently return to their country of origin upon completion. If they do remain in the U.S., they are less likely to practice in rural, underserved areas (American Academy of Family Physicians).

Osteopathic medical students go through a similar process for residency matching, guided by the American Osteopathic Association's (AOA) National Matching Services. In 2005, 84 programs offered family medicine residencies,



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with 252 residency positions funded. One hundred sixteen (116) of these positions were unfilled. (Agency for Health Care Administration, "2005 Annual Report Family Practice Physician Recruitment")

MEDICAL STUDENT DEBT

Selection of specialties with higher salaries by medical students may encourage by high medical student debt and low practice reimbursement. Medical students can accrue a student debt of more than \$100,000. Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) 2007 Graduation Questionnaire found that the average education debt of 2007 graduates was \$139, 517, a 6.9 percent increase over 2006 graduates. The survey also found that 75.5 percent of graduates have debt of at least \$100,000.

Specialties with higher salaries are more appealing because they provide medical students with the ability to pay back loans. This results in fewer students choosing primary care or family practice specialties, which traditionally offer lower salaries than other specialties.

DECREASING PHYSICIAN REIMBURSEMENT

As a result of Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements not keeping pace with the cost of care, many family physicians find it increasingly difficult to continue providing these services. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) projects physician fee schedule updates to be about negative five percent for six consecutive years, beginning in 2006. This results in an approximate cumulative 26 percent reduction in payment rates for services from 2005-2011. However, over the same time period, the Medicare

Economic Index (MEI), which is a measure of physician practice costs and general wage level inflation, is expected to experience a 15 percent increase. While there is a debate regarding the impact of reimbursement, there is little doubt that it impacts the number of primary care and family medicine physicians. (Agency for Health Care Administration, "2005 Annual Report Family Practice Physician Recruitment")

Broward Regional Health Planning Council, Inc. is a non-profit organization committed to delivering health and human service innovations at a national, state and local level through planning, development, implementation, evaluation and organizational capacity building. For additional information, please visit www.BRHPC.org.

The entire **Broward County Health Plan** available online (www.BRHPC.org) or hard copy upon request.