

# Promising Practices for Addressing the Workforce Shortage

## A Summary of the Gaps Analysis Process Webinar (June 2019)

The Gaps Analysis is an ongoing process to understand and improve access to services systems for older adults, persons with disabilities, and children, youth and adults living with mental health conditions in Minnesota. A key step in this process is to identify promising strategies to improve service access. To facilitate this, the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) and Wilder Research hosted four webinars highlighting current strategies to address prioritized service access issues. During the June 11 webinar, three panelists shared their experiences implementing strategies to address Minnesota's workforce shortage.

The webinar discussion highlighted key considerations for local stakeholders considering similar strategies, such as critical partnerships, resources needed, and barriers encountered. Below are some of the key themes and resources that arose during the discussion.

## Workforce shortage in the context of this discussion

---

Includes the limited availability of qualified service providers, including direct care/direct support professionals, who are critical to delivering needed Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) and community mental health services and supports.

## Panelists and featured initiatives

---

**Chuck Hurd**, [Region 7 Adult Mental Health Initiative \(AMHI\) \(http://adultmentalhealth.org/\)](http://adultmentalhealth.org/) and [Kanabec County Family Services \(http://www.kanabecounty.org/departments/family\\_services.php\)](http://www.kanabecounty.org/departments/family_services.php) (Chicago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, & Pine counties), [chuck.hurd@co.kanabec.mn.us](mailto:chuck.hurd@co.kanabec.mn.us)

*Featured initiative:* Established a tuition forgiveness program for a clinical nurse specialist (CNS) to provide services for three years in exchange for \$60,000 in loan forgiveness. The CNS helped address a psychiatric provider shortage in the region, allowing rapid access to medical interventions and reduced inpatient hospital days, a benefit to both the client served and taxpayers.

*"Because of these efforts, we've been able to provide much more rapid access to psychiatric services. And we all know that in many cases of crisis, medical intervention prescriptions really help reduce inpatient hospital days and benefit the client and the taxpayer alike."*

**Jon Nelson**, [Residential Services Inc. \(RSI\)](http://residentialservices.org/) (<http://residentialservices.org/>),  
[jon.nelson@residentialservices.org](mailto:jon.nelson@residentialservices.org)

*Featured initiative:* RSI, a Duluth-based nonprofit, is a member of the first person-centered thinking training cohort organized by DHS. RSI received in-depth training on person-centered practices and tools to use with everyone in the organization. Applying these practices with RSI employees, particularly direct support professionals, has resulted in increased job satisfaction, and reduced job stress, staff turnover, and worker's compensation claims.

*"And of course we've learned some things as we went along and it's led to some changes that have really ... helped with retention and helped with improving outcomes for people and one of those is the collaborative safety practices. As well as figuring out better and new ways to connect people in the community and build on some natural supports."*

**Will Wilson**, Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), [Office of Rural Health and Primary Care](https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/ruralhealth/index.html)  
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/ruralhealth/index.html>)

*Featured initiative:* MDH offers funding and information resources to assist stakeholders in understanding workforce shortage trends and help address shortages. Will highlighted several of these resources.

- [Shortage designations](https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/underserved/designation.html)  
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/underserved/designation.html>) - MDH collects data about the number of doctors, psychiatrists, and dentists in each region of the state; when the ratio of providers relative to the population falls below a certain number, it becomes eligible for state and federal assistance programs.
- [Licensed professionals data](https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/workforce/reports.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/workforce/reports.html>)  
- MDH provides snapshots of different health care professions to inform planning statewide.
- [Office of Rural Health and Primary Care grants](https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/ruralhealth/funding/index.html)  
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/ruralhealth/funding/index.html>) - Grants and assistance are available at various points in the workforce pipeline. Examples include:
  - Summer Health Care Internship Program - Internships for high school and college students interested in health care professions
  - HCBS Scholarship Grant Program - Employee scholarships for education and training in health care fields
  - National Health Service Corps - Offers federal loan forgiveness, MDH provides technical assistance
  - Health Care Loan Forgiveness and Repayment Programs - Programs for health care students or residents in several health professions. MDH also administers the federal loan forgiveness program.

## Key themes and highlights

---

**Partnerships were important for all of the featured initiatives.** Panelists highlighted partnerships as critical to addressing workforce needs.

- MDH highlighted partnerships with educational institutions as one approach. MDH partnered with technical colleges to help ensure the emerging workforce meets community needs through addressing curriculum needs, recruitment, and internship opportunities.
- RSI worked with the Duluth Police Department, emergency room staff from area hospitals, and mental health crisis providers to develop a person-centered model of crisis management that has improved cooperation and understanding across providers.
- Kanabec County Family Services/Region 7 AMHI quickly got support from participating counties, who helped with recruitment, hiring, and ongoing engagement of a new CNS to ensure success.

**Navigating barriers or challenges can happen at multiple levels.** The discussion on addressing barriers, including limited funding, shortages of data, and low wages, led to a rich discussion about addressing barriers on multiple levels. RSI emphasized that challenges can be addressed simultaneously at multiple levels, from individual staff changes, to organization-level changes, to county- and state-level changes.

*"You know were many times when we first started out saying well we think this is something a county needs to address or the state needs to address and as we started working through the process realized there was a lot more we could do than we thought."*

*– Jon Nelson, RSI*

**Assessing effectiveness of these initiatives takes multiple forms.** These initiatives use data, trend analysis, and one-on-one feedback to understand effectiveness and plan for the future.

- RSI measures changes in outcomes like turnover and number of new staff. It can be difficult, however, to draw a correlation when doing multiple things at a time to address workforce shortages.
- MDH uses workforce trend data, including things like turnover rates for HCBS programs and applications for scholarship funds to understand what is happening in the field.
- The Adult Mental Health Initiative works one-on-one with their CNS to ensure a quality experience for their CNS, with the goal of retention.

*"We spend a lot of time with the CNS in talking about what they want to see, what they want to do in their careers. We try to support them in any way we can...the person-centered approach has helped us to increase satisfaction in their work."*

*– Chuck Hurd, Region 7 Adult Mental Health Initiative*

## Resources

---

Panelists shared resources that can be useful to others addressing workforce shortages.

- [ARRM Technology Resource Center \(https://www.arm.org/Technology\)](https://www.arm.org/Technology) offers resources on the using of technology to promote independence and self-sufficiency in the lives of people with disabilities.
- [The Learning Community for Person-Centered Practices \(https://tlcpcp.com\)](https://tlcpcp.com) provides Person-Centered Thinking® training.
- [Office of Rural Health and Primary Care grants \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/ruralhealth/funding/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/ruralhealth/funding/index.html) includes information and due dates for ORHPC grant programs.

## Next steps

---

Complete recordings of the webinars will be available on the [DHS Gaps Analysis website \(https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/news-initiatives-reports-workgroups/long-term-services-and-supports/gaps-analysis/\)](https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/news-initiatives-reports-workgroups/long-term-services-and-supports/gaps-analysis/).

If you have questions about the DHS Gaps Analysis process, contact [dhs.gapsanalysis@state.mn.us](mailto:dhs.gapsanalysis@state.mn.us).