

County Health Care Workforce Analysis and Forecasting

Traditionally, economic development experts and policymakers have placed emphasis on public investment in the development and expansion of export-oriented sectors. However, research shows that there is a growing importance of “aggregate job growth in local-serving activities and the potential for certain local-serving sectors to serve as job generators and diversifiers of regional economies.”¹ The health care sector is a combination of local-serving and export-oriented goods and services due to technological advancements and specialization. This sector also has indirect and induced impacts that spill across various industries, which include employment in retail, finance and insurance, real estate and rental, administrative and waste management, and manufacturing, etc.² The industry as a whole has continued to grow and change

¹ Ann Markusen & Greg Schrock (2009) Consumption-Driven Urban Development, *Urban Geography*, 30:4, 344-367, DOI: [10.2747/0272-3638.30.4.344](https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3638.30.4.344)

² Cooper, Christine, Myasnik Poghosyan, and Shannon Sedgwick (2012) *Hospital Industry in Southern California: Economic Impact Analysis*. Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation. <http://www.laedc.org/reports/EconomicContributionofSouthernCaliforniaHospitals.pdf>.

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and is likely to be a driver of economic activity as our population grows, ages, and as medical advances extend our productive lives.³ Moreover, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has contributed to the rise in demand for health care services. There is a need and will continue to be a need for health care workers across the spectrum of health care occupations.

“Practitioner and technical services” occupations, which include physicians, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, physician assistants, dietitians, among others, are generally high-wage jobs.⁴ On the other hand, “health care support and extender” jobs are commonly lower paying.⁵ Occupations in this subsector include home health aides, nursing assistants, pharmacy aides, and medical transcriptionists, etc.¹ Research shows that workers in the health care support subsector generally move from one job to the next without acquiring new significant skills.² In order to build sustainable career pathways from low- to high-wage jobs, the fragmentation between practitioner and technical services and health care support and extender occupations must be addressed. This fragmentation entails an absence of career pathways or limited accessible and affordable avenues for health care support workers to ascend into higher wage and higher skilled health care occupations. It signifies a loss for a health care institution or system with regards to sustaining staff, institutional knowledge, and increasing efficiencies through up-skilling its existing workforce by offering and supporting workers through accessible and affordable pathways to ascend into higher-wage and higher-skilled occupations.

³ *Ibid.*, p 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*

Within the region's health care industry, the County of Los Angeles' (County) Health Agency, comprised of the Departments of Health Services (DHS), Mental Health (DMH), and Public Health (DPH) is an important health care delivery system. To demonstrate the magnitude and extent of services provided, DHS alone provides healthcare to nearly 800,000 individuals annually, including to youth in the juvenile justice system, to inmates in County jails, and to children in foster care. It also provides vital services to homeless individuals and people who come out of County's jail system. Through academic affiliations with the University of Southern California (USC), University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and Charles Drew University (CDU), County facilities are training sites for over 1,000 physicians completing their Graduate Medical Education in nearly every medical specialty and subspecialty. DHS also runs the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Agency and County's 911 emergency response system. DPH works to protect health, prevent disease, and promote the health and well-being of all 10 plus million persons in Los Angeles County. It improves lives of LA County residents through 39 programs and 14 public health centers. DMH, with a budget of approximately \$2.4 billion, is the largest county-operated mental health department in the United States, directly operating programs in more than 85 sites, and providing services through contract programs and staff at approximately 300 sites co-located with other County departments, schools, courts and various organizations. On average, more than 250,000 County residents of all ages are served every year. The Health Agency departments employ a diverse and specialized workforce that is trained to serve individuals and families who often do not have access to other medical resources and services. Due to its reach and as an integral service delivery system in

the broader health care industry of the region, the Health Agency departments are uniquely positioned to provide entry level jobs, family sustaining employment, and career pathways, as a way to increase its impact as a health care system on its workforce and the people it serves.

There is an additional unique advantage to the County's health care system—it's College of Nursing and Allied Health (CONAH). CONAH serves as an integral institution providing high-quality education and training. Its location on the campus of LAC-USC Hospital and its central location in an underserved part of the Los Angeles County are ideal for it to serve as a key training center for existing health care support and extender staff and new workers across a myriad of health care occupations.

There are multiple workforce development efforts underway. For example, DHS is hiring over 300 new Nursing Attendants; training Registered Nurses (RNs) to Nurse Practitioners; participating in the County's High Road Training and Employment Program; and supporting 10 Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs) to train as RNs starting in 2019. These excellent programs are much needed, however, have emerged on a need-by-need basis, and often, one classification at a time. In order to modify and expand existing or develop and implement new workforce programs for the County's health care delivery system, it is first necessary to better understand the departments' workforce needs in the immediate, intermediate, and long-term. Broadly, the County does not have a comprehensive assessment across health care support and extender occupations within all departments that comprise the Los Angeles County Health Agency over a specific time period.

I, THEREFORE MOVE, that the Board of Supervisors

1) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), in collaboration with the Directors of Health Agency, DHS, DMH, and DPH, to engage a consultant by March 15, 2019 to:

- a. Conduct an assessment of all County workforce development programs involving occupations across all three departments;
- b. Conduct an analysis and forecast workforce changes and needs across all three departments entry- and mid-level health care support and extender occupations (i.e., nursing assistants, certified medical assistants, LVNs, ophthalmology technicians, physician assistants) through the use of a wide range of quantitative and qualitative research strategies and methods which may include, but not be limited to, interviews with key department staff members, management and leadership; representatives and members from affiliated unions; researching and analyzing changes in local, state, and federal policies and rules that can impact the departments' workforce needs in the future; and by examining existing and planned Los Angeles County health related job openings and workforce assessments within its departments;
- c. Evaluate the consistency of the future workforce needs of the Health Agency departments with those of the broader health services industry both locally and nationally, and identify any key differences that would provide for unique hiring opportunities, or challenges, within the County;
- d. Conduct an analysis of the student population at Los Angeles County's CONAH and identify demographics; how many students are current health

care sector workers and in what occupations; how many are enrolled to attain higher wage health care occupations if they are already employed in the health care sector; how many are currently employed with DHS, DMH, and DPH; how many current department employees are CONAH graduates; among other pertinent issues and information as it relates to identifying CONAH's existing capacity for serving the County's health system; and

- e. Evaluate the merits of potentially developing new programs and capacity for CONAH to serve as a central entity for training new workers for health care support and extender occupations and/or upskilling existing DHS, DMH, DPH workers, and recommend options for supplementing any future efforts at CONAH to ensure the County adequately addresses DHS', DPH's, and DMH's future workforce needs.
- 2) Instruct the CEO and Directors of Health Agency, DHS, DPH, and DMH to work with the consultant to provide a written report to the Board of Supervisors by July 15, 2019.

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