

Primary Care Office (PCO)

Our Mission

The PCO is an administrative unit of DPBH working to improve the health care infrastructure of Nevada. The PCO supports the Division's mission to promote the health of Nevadans by working to:

- Improve access to primary health care services for Nevada's underserved;
- Increase availability of primary care providers in underserved areas;
- Increase access to maternal and child health care service for underserved populations; and
- Improve provider access to health care financing resources.

Programs and Services

The PCO is funded by federal grants from the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) to support multiple programs through the following services:

- Complete applications for federal designation of Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) or Medically Underserved Areas of Populations (MUA/Ps). These designations support eligibility for increased federal funding and recruitment of health care professionals;
- Review applications and provide letters of support for the J-1 Physician Visa Waiver program bringing international medical graduates to underserved areas in Nevada; and
- Review site applications and provide recommendations for the National Health Service Corps loan repayment and scholar programs.

The PCO also engages in the following activities:

- Support primary care workforce development through linkages with education and training, licensure and certification, and recruitment and retention.
- Review applications for certificates of need for construction, or expansion, of facilities providing medical care in counties with less than 100,000 population, or communities with less than 25,000 population in counties with more than 100,000 population.

Oversight

The Primary Care Advisory Council was established in 2008 to enhance oversight of the PCO and the services provided, in an advisory capacity to the Administrator of the DPBH. Creation of the PCAC led to statutory and regulatory changes to ensure compliance with the J-1 Physician Visa Waiver program, under NRS 439A.130-185 and NAC 439A.700-755.

Linkages

The PCO works with many public and private partners to support the health care safety net, including: Nevada Primary Care Association, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Rural Health Centers, Critical Access Hospitals, National Health Service Corps sites, State Office of Rural Health, Nevada Rural Hospital Association, University of Nevada School of Medicine, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, Nevada Division of Health Care Financing and Policy, and multiple health professional licensing boards. Facilitated activities include strategic planning for shortage designations, primary care data development and sharing, recruitment and retention strategies, and workforce development.

Contact

Scott Jones, Manager, scottjones@health.nv.gov, 775-684-4047

PCO Highlights from April 2018 – June 2018

- The PCO collected the required data and submitted updates for 21 HPSAs supporting seven state correctional facilities. These HPSAs assist the correctional centers in recruiting and retaining providers because they are required for the providers at the sites to apply for federal and state loan repayment. The Health Resource Analyst in the PCO was selected to be one of two state representatives in the country participating in a federal auto-HPSA workgroup. The workgroup developed a communications plan to assist safety net facilities and the public in preparing for important HPSA scoring updates in the next year. The PCO strongly advocated for communication measures supporting state safety net clinics. Auto-HPSAs support Federally Qualified Health Centers, Indian Health Service and Tribal health care sites, and Rural Health Clinics throughout Nevada.
- National Health Service Corps (NHSC) outreach activities included two health clinic site visits, one student outreach event, and ten webinars. These activities increase awareness of the program and subsequent program participation, which leads to increased recruitment and retention of health providers for underserved maternal, pediatric, and adolescent populations. The PCO also reviewed three new NHSC site applications. These safety net health care sites serve all patients regardless of ability to pay and represent critical primary care, mental health, and dental access points for maternal, pediatric, and adolescent populations in Nevada.
- Two applications were reviewed, public hearings were held, and letters of support were completed for two specialist physicians to practice in Nevada under the J-1 Physician Visa Waiver program. These doctors will serve underserved populations including maternal, pediatric, and adolescent populations in Las Vegas. The J-1 program has received 15 applications this program year, representing the highest program participation in twelve years.
- The PCO Manager participated in the Elko Community Summit on Opioid Abuse. This event brought together the University of Nevada, Reno Office of Rural Health, local mental health care providers, local coalitions, law enforcement, state of Nevada public health leaders, and HRSA leadership for a community forum and discussion on the effect of the opioid epidemic on the community of Elko. This event was an important educational and networking opportunity to help in coordinating the effort to combat opioid abuse.
- The Spring PCO Newsletter published in June 2018 included multiple articles supporting maternal, child, and adolescent health. Informational articles included an announcement of the EMPOWERED Program supporting pregnant women on opioids, an update on HRSA's efforts to address the opioid epidemic, and a request for the public to complete the Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant survey.
- The PCO manager continued participation in the National Governor's Association and the National College of State Legislatures workgroups to support health initiatives in Nevada. These workgroups include public health leaders and legislatures. The workgroups developed goals to support improvement of health care data collection and use in policy develop, and increased access to behavioral health services, especially in rural and frontier areas. Additionally, the groups worked on initiatives to increase the physician's assistant, psychiatric nurse specialist, and community health worker pipeline into Nevada. These provider types are critical for expanding mental health care access in underserved areas.
- Meetings with our safety net partners continue on a monthly or quarterly basis to collaborate on data development and sharing, provider recruitment and retention, shortage designations, and workforce development.

If you would like to receive our PCO Quarterly Newsletter, you can sign up online through [constant contact](#).