

# Primary Care Office (PCO)

## Our Mission

The PCO is an administrative unit of the Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health that works 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 to bring 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 Division of Public and Behavioral Health. 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

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## PCO Highlights from October 2020 – December 2020

- National Health Service Corps (NHSC) outreach activities during this quarter included *zero* health clinic site visits, *zero* student outreach events. 38 site recertifications reviews were completed (17-Rural Health Clinics, 4-Correctional Facilities/Prison, 2-Family Medicine, 1-OBGYN, 8-Community Mental Health, 1-Geriatric, 4-Youth/Adolescent Mental Health, and 1-Pediatric Group Practice). 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. 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.
- *Five* Conrad 30 J-1 Visa Waiver applications were reviewed, public hearings were held, and letters of support were completed for five physicians to practice in Nevada under the Conrad 30 J-1 Visa Waiver program. One of the physicians specializes in pediatric hematology/oncology and will serve underserved populations in Clark county, and one physician in family medicine who will work at a FQHC who serves the underserved populations in Washoe County. These doctors will serve underserved populations including maternal, pediatric, and adolescent populations in Las Vegas and Reno area. The J-1 program has received seven applications this program year.
- Additionally, the PCO conducted *one* J-1 site visit of physician who specializes in cardiovascular disease and provides services for Northern NV Medical Group in Washoe county. The site visits increase the practice's efficiency in serving maternal, pediatric, and adolescent populations in Nevada. Furthermore, they help strengthen relationships among safety net sites and increase the opportunity for community collaboration.
- The PCO and federal representative partner presented to approximately 38 attendees at the Tribal Consultation virtual meeting to provide tribal leaders with recruitment and retention opportunities for the tribal sites. This event provided networking opportunities and brought together many community stakeholders, Indian Health Services, Tribal Directors, Division State Tribal Liaisons, and others to provide information on the current policy updates, Behavioral Health Transport (non-emergency), HPN Value Added Benefits, CHIP support act SPA, Silver State Insurance Exchange, Behavioral Health and Wellness Program – Women's Services, and employment opportunities.
- The PCO presented to a group of 14 NV Health Centers family medicine residents to provide information to the residents on the loan repayment opportunities that support retention.
- The PCO Office participated in the Nevada Rural Health Day Virtual event. This event brought together the Primary Care Association, the University of Nevada, Reno Office of Rural Health, local health care providers, local coalitions and state of Nevada public health leaders for a community forum and discussion on the current state of the health workforce, cross-jurisdictional sharing in public health, and rural public health initiatives in Nevada.
- The 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter (10/15/2020) PCO Newsletter were published to almost 500 subscribers and included multiple articles that support maternal, child, and adolescent health. Articles included Prevention Infection for Patients with Sickle Cell Disease, Youth Mental Health Supports, and "What It's Like" video project of adolescent perspectives new content from the Office of Population Affairs, and Bright Futures eNewsletter and video recommendations in your health promotion and disease prevention practices and with programs and families in your community.
- The PCO reviewed an application for certificate of need for Elko Community Health Center located in Elko, NV and the DHHS Director approved the application. This 17-bed ambulatory surgery center that is anticipated to serve 10,000 patients each year and expected to be completed in Fall 2021. This surgery center will offer

patients a new option for surgeries locally and will host community programming and patient education to help promote disease prevention, screenings, and nutrition awareness.

- The annual Washoe County School District Career Expo's fall event was canceled due to current difficulties caused by the COVID pandemic. PCO normally participates in this event that brings awareness to students on careers in primary services and the loan and scholarship opportunities working in rural and underserved areas.
- Monthly or Quarterly meetings continue with our safety net partners continue 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 [http://dpbh.nv.gov/Programs/Conrad30/NV\\_PCO\\_Newsletter\\_Sign\\_Up/](http://dpbh.nv.gov/Programs/Conrad30/NV_PCO_Newsletter_Sign_Up/) OR [constant contact](#).