

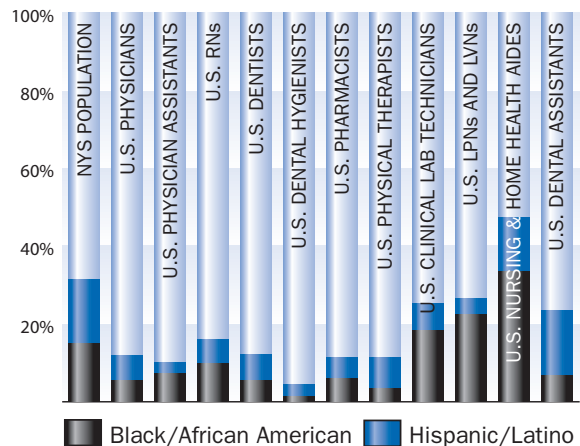


Understanding  
the problems

Everyone deserves access to quality health care. New York State suffers from a shortage of health care workers (doctors, nurses, dentists, therapists, medical technologists, pharmacists and other professionals) especially in inner city neighborhoods and rural communities.

- More than 4 million people live in places where primary care is in short supply, in what are called Health Professions Shortage Areas or HPSAs, a figure that exceeds the populations of 26 states.
- Over 2 million people live in dental HPSAs.
- Over 2 million people live in mental health HPSAs.

Diversity is also an issue. The people who provide care don't look like the people they treat. The chart here reveals the discrepancy between the size of the state's underrepresented minority population and the vastly smaller numbers working in health care in the United States.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2007, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ocwage.t01.htm>, and Bureau of the Census, July 2007, [http://www.census.gov/popest/archives/2000s/vintage\\_2007/](http://www.census.gov/popest/archives/2000s/vintage_2007/)

**NATIONAL NETWORK** The New York State AHEC System is part of a national AHEC network with centers in almost every state and the District of Columbia. Established in 1998, the New York State AHEC System is funded through the federal Department of Health and Human Services (Bureau of Health Professions), New York State's Health Care Reform Act of 2000, and local community support.

**STATEWIDE SYSTEM** Leadership for the New York State AHEC System is provided by community-based centers, the Statewide Office at the University at Buffalo, and regional offices at Upstate Medical University, Albany Medical College and Institute for Family Health.

**OUR MISSION** The mission of the New York State AHEC System is "to enhance access to quality health care and improve health care outcomes by addressing the health workforce needs of medically disadvantaged communities and populations through partnerships between the institutions that train health professionals and the communities that need them most."

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Connecting students to careers,  
professionals to communities,  
and communities to better health.

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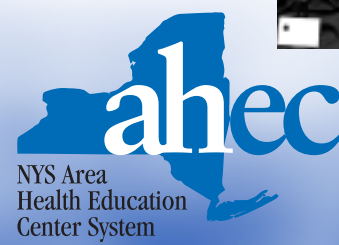
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**BQLI AHEC**  
Brooklyn-Queens-Long Island  
Area Health Education Center

☆ AHEC site locations  
★ AHEC Regional Offices  
○ AHEC Statewide Office



NYS Area  
Health Education  
Center System

[www.ahec.buffalo.edu](http://www.ahec.buffalo.edu)

## Why workforce diversity matters

Quality health care is not about just biology; it is about treating the whole person. Diversity isn't about just percentages; it is about relating to individuals. The relationship between a health care professional and a patient is influenced by everything from their language and ethnicity to their income and education levels, from their habits and beliefs, to the place where they grew up. The better a provider understands a patient's culture, the better they will communicate. The more they trust each other, the better the care and the outcomes will be.



Source: *Missing Person: Minorities in the Health Professions*, report of the Sullivan Commission on Diversity in the Health Care Workforce, and *In the Nation's Compelling Interest: Ensuring Diversity in the Health Care Workforce*, report of the Institute of Medicine in the National Academies.

## AHEC strategies to solve the problems

Strategies involve connecting individuals and communities to the right opportunities and resources.

- Develop opportunities and arrange placements for future health professionals to receive their clinical training in underserved areas, and recruit faculty committed to working with them;
- Encourage young people, especially those from under-represented and disadvantaged backgrounds, to pursue health careers; and
- Provide continuing education and professional support to health practitioners, develop career ladders that enable workers to advance, and promote programs for adults re-entering the workforce.

Because each area is unique, regional AHECs collaborate closely with communities to address specific needs.



## Defining AHEC

The New York State AHEC System is a health care workforce development initiative with effective strategies to cultivate a workforce that more closely matches the diversity of the state's population and assure that each community has enough practitioners in the right categories (especially primary care). New York State AHEC System strategies keep skills and talents in the state, contributing to the health of the economy while improving the health and well-being of all New Yorkers.

## New York State AHEC System activities have an economic impact

Health care employment has a strong economic multiplier effect on job creation and maintenance in local economies. Health care job opportunities continue to grow faster than any other employment sector.

AHECs are positioned as effective liaisons and facilitators to build partnerships between the health workforce supply side (secondary and post-secondary schools) and demand side (health care employers and communities). AHEC's goal is to train health care workers who live in underserved communities to serve underserved communities. They have insight to improve the health of New Yorkers while also contributing to the economic health of the State.

New York State AHEC System recruitment programs increase the number of students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds who enter health careers. Research shows these students are more likely to choose primary care and practice in their community of origin or similar communities.



## Connecting students to careers

It is hard to imagine working in a field without any knowledge or role models. One of AHEC's strategies is to guide students into an education "pipeline," exposing them to the rewards of health care careers as early as possible. This not only encourages interest in health care, it also helps to assure that students take the math and science courses required for acceptance into college or training programs.



## ...and adults to new opportunities

AHEC efforts also target adults who are seeking a new career, whose jobs have been eliminated, or who need new skills to keep pace with advancing technologies. Programs for retraining – plus assistance to overcome obstacles such as child care or transportation – direct people with good work skills into rewarding new careers in health care.

## Connecting professionals to communities

Health care workers often return to practice where they were trained, and students learn from experience that it's rewarding to work in underserved areas. That is why AHEC connects young people, students and practicing professionals to training opportunities with minority and disadvantaged populations, in rural areas and inner city neighborhoods.

## Connecting communities to better health

Because AHECs emphasize community partnerships, AHEC training programs reflect each area's unique needs and priorities. In rural settings, training focuses on overcoming distance or supporting science and math exposure in smaller schools. In lower-income urban areas, training focuses on basic health and preventive care, as well as educating students about disparities so they can better understand the community. Ultimately, New York State AHEC System efforts will help achieve a more balanced distribution of health care resources and professionals – and thus better health – throughout the state.