

The Changing Community Health Center Workforce: 2007-2013

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OBJECTIVE

To describe the changes in the workforce of community health centers (CHCs) from 2007 to 2013.

DATA/SETTING

Authors used administrative data from 1,059 to 1,200 CHCs that reported annually as part of the Uniform Data System, from calendar year 2007 to 2013.

DESIGN/METHODS

The data for all CHCs and years were pooled and edited to create consistent staffing categories. Authors analyzed trends and composition shifts in CHC staffing during a period of rapid growth and changing programmatic priorities.

RESULTS

The number of federally qualified health centers (FQHC) patients rose 35 percent to 21.7 million by 2013, while the number of staff rose 50 percent to 156,800. The ratio of staff-to-patients rose by 10.4 percent. Noteworthy changes in the workforce composition include an increase in behavioral health staff, nurse practitioners and physician assistants, eligibility assistance, and information technology staff.

CONCLUSIONS

Rapid growth led to sharp increases in staffing and shifts in the composition of staff. The mission of comprehensive and community-oriented care has led CHC staffing to be unusually diversified. The changes in staffing reflect broader trends in primary care, such as greater use of team-based care, integration of behavioral care and use of health information technology.

Key Words: community health centers, staffing, federally qualified health centers