



# Workforce Development Key Findings Report

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN CALIFORNIA'S HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE



# Introduction: Health Net's Community Investment Reports

*Headquartered in California* with operations in all 58 counties, Health Net is one of the state's largest and most experienced health plans and also one of its largest employers.

With decades of experience caring for California's most vulnerable residents, Health Net has worked hand-in-hand with the state to build Medi-Cal and serve those who depend on its healthcare safety net.

Our teams live in, and reflects, the diversity of the communities that we serve. We sit on the boards of local clinics and community-based organizations and require leaders, like medical directors, to practice locally each month. The Health Net team has the firsthand experience you only get from knowing the people you serve.

Today, two-thirds of Health Net's members are Medi-Cal enrollees: low-income adults, seniors, pregnant women and children, foster children, undocumented residents and persons with disabilities – they're our foundation and core focus.

To address the shortage of qualified healthcare workers in the state, Health Net is utilizing our history of investments and statewide partnerships to compile a **'key findings reports'** in an effort to increase collaboration among stakeholders and contribute to the development of solutions to better serve Medi-Cal, Medicare and Exchange patients and strengthen the healthcare system.



**MORE THAN  
\$40M**

to tackle California's most pressing healthcare priorities and to help bridge the divide in access, equity and quality of care.



# The Challenge: California's Healthcare Workforce Shortage

*California is grappling with several healthcare workforce challenges – a growing national shortage of healthcare professionals, an uneven distribution of providers across the state that exacerbates structural inequities and a current workforce that does not adequately reflect California's diverse population.*

These challenges have a particularly strong impact on the state's Medi-Cal system – especially as the number of providers serving Medi-Cal patients has not kept pace with the program's rapid expansion. The federal government's Council on Graduate Medical Education recommends 60 to 80 primary care doctors per 100,000 people. In 2020, Statewide in California, the number is already down to just 50 per 100,000 – and in some places it's even lower, according to a report from The Future Health Workforce Commission.

Improved health outcomes begin first and foremost with access to care providers and **strengthening the healthcare workforce by investing in the recruitment, retention and education of a broad range of professionals is one clear strategy to enhance access to quality care and build a healthier California.**

## The objectives

Leverage investments and statewide partnerships to help bridge the divide in access to care by:

- 1 Identifying the core factors most influencing California's healthcare workforce.
- 2 Advancing investments and strategies aimed at addressing workforce challenges and augmenting shortages.

# Executive Summary

From 2017-2019 Health Net invested nearly **\$4 million in workforce development**. As a result of their statewide partnerships and programmatic funding, Health Net has learned critical lessons, gathered best practices, identified trends and contributed to the development of solutions to address California's healthcare workforce shortage – especially as it relates to the state's Medi-Cal population.

To make the most out of these investments, outlined below are key findings, lessons learned and subsequent recommendations compiled after reviewing **15 select progress reports** from Health Net's statewide grant partners which include provider associations, FQHCs and community clinics, educational institutions, communitybased organizations and more (see appendix).

## Overarching Findings from Health Net's Partnerships



### Importance of identifying new talent pools

Health Net's grants demonstrate the positive impact engaging new talent pools – including community colleges and high schools in safety net counties – can have on not only clinic capacity, but also patient satisfaction.



### Need to provide upward mobility across levels

Retention of healthcare professionals, particularly entry level professionals, is key in addressing the workforce shortages. Providing opportunities to 'upskill' and designing career ladders for California's entire health workforce encourages retention and increases the availability of meaningful careers in communities across the state.



### Role of cultural competency training & recruitment

Almost every Health Net funded program reviewed included an element of – or was wholly focused on – cultural competency training and representative recruitment to enhance care to traditionally underserved communities, recruit underrepresented medical professionals and improve patient outcomes through the development of new roles/ positions aimed at addressing inequities.

## Key findings & lessons learned



### Importance of identifying new talent pools

- Shifting recruitment to focus on engaging underrepresented professionals in traditionally underserved markets is key.
- Mentors and mentorship programs play an important role in encouraging and inspiring the next generation of healthcare professionals.



### Need to provide upward mobility across levels

- Providing opportunities for all healthcare professionals – from community health workers to physicians – to upskill and practice at the top of their scope increases clinic capacity, professional satisfaction and patient satisfaction.
- The field of Medical Assistants is growing – and there’s an opportunity to cross-train as health coaches and health educators for the medical care team.



### Role of cultural competency training & recruitment

- Demand exists from both providers and patients for culturally competent care and a representative workforce.
- Increased collaboration – including shared standards and best practices – among healthcare stakeholders (providers, educational institutions, CBOs, county systems and health departments) is critical to establishing the role of ‘health equity-focused’ professions moving forward.



## Recommendations & strategies to overcome workforce challenges

### Recruitment-centered recommendations

- Lean into previously untapped talent pools for healthcare professionals – including high schools and community colleges.
  - **Grant highlight: Reinvent Stockton’s Scholars** initiative demonstrates the success of targeting students pre-graduation to engage them early in the opportunity of health careers.
- Focus on and tailor recruitment efforts to underrepresented populations in the field.
- Center recruitment of healthcare professionals in underserved markets and regions of the state
  - **Grant highlight: In San Joaquin, HealthForce Partners of Northern San Joaquin Valley** took a tailored approach to recruiting new Medical Assistants by identifying the traditional barriers to entry and offering new opportunities for local residents to train for the increasingly essential role.

### Investment strategies

- Fund collaborative partnerships between providers, community-based organizations, educational institutions (high schools, universities, community colleges) and other stakeholders to convene, share and establish new best practices and programming.
  - **Grant highlight: The Black Child Legacy Campaign’s Cultural Brokers Program** highlighted the impact collaborative initiatives have on fostering innovative solutions to the state’s most pressing healthcare priorities. The program resulted in actionable policy proposals, key learnings and recommendations to establish a new health-equity focused profession that providers value.
- Identify opportunities to leverage grants and fellowships with other provider organizations, like the California Primary Care Association, to make initial investments stretch further.

*(continued)*



## Recommendations & strategies to overcome workforce challenges (cont.)

### Education & training of professionals

- Develop training programs and curriculums geared towards all populations (flexible schedule, affordable tuition options, local programming).
  - **Grant highlight:** The **Community Health Worker Pathway Program** – developed in collaboration with the Los Rios Colleges Foundation, Sacramento City College and Greater Sacramento Urban League – demonstrated the impact of an affordable and flexible community college program tailored to underrepresented communities in healthcare. This year the program is looking to expand.
- Provide clear career ladders for entry level professionals to encourage retention and increase satisfaction of both professionals and patients.
  - **Grant highlight:** **Sacramento Native American Health Center** launched a managerial training initiative aimed at creating a stronger leadership team and opportunities for staff to upskill through new certifications and coaching. The result of the investment was not only increased employee satisfaction from those able to rise within the organization, but also a clear positive impact on patients who experienced the direct benefits of a more highly trained provider team.
- Leverage and train healthcare professionals to utilize telehealth practices to increase physical and mental health clinic capacity and help overcome traditional barriers to care.
  - **Grant highlight:** **Charles R. Drew University** implemented a new tele-psychiatry curriculum to ensure residents would be trained to leverage telehealth in underserved areas – enhancing local clinic capacity and increasing patients’ access to psychiatric care in South Los Angeles.
- Continue to invest in the training of community health workers and medical assistants to support Medi-Cal providers – especially in underserved markets.
  - **Grant highlight:** **WellSpace Health** designed a curriculum to train Medical Assistants as health coaches/educators in diabetes management for patients – enabling entry level professionals to upskill while also increasing patient satisfaction and meeting an immediate need for additional patient support.



# Conclusion

To augment workforce shortages and increase the availability of Medi-Cal providers statewide, Health Net is committed to continuing to collaborate and invest in the development of solutions that can help to reverse the workforce trend in California, build a stronger pipeline of qualified professionals and break down barriers to care for the most vulnerable patients.

The analysis and findings detailed in this report are designed to help inform the investment strategy and priorities of organizations, like Health Net, and grantees to help ensure that future grants leverage the learnings of our existing work and are used to their highest and best potential to address the critical issues facing California's Medi-Cal system and community.

## Appendix

### Health Net's featured grantees

#### Southern California

- Charles R. Drew University of Medicine & Science
- The Children's Clinic
- Community Health Association Inland Southern Region

#### Sacramento Region

- Los Rios Community College District/Sacramento City College
- Sacramento Native American Health Center Inc.
- Black Child Legacy Campaign & Sierra Health Foundation
- WellSpace Health
- Sacramento Native American Health Center

#### Central Valley

- Reinvent Stockton Foundation
- Valley Health Team
- Comprehensive Community Health Centers, Inc.
- Family Care Specialist Medical Corporation
- Camarena Health
- Golden Valley Health Centers
- HealthForce Partners of Northern San Joaquin Valley