



The Rural Partnership

Connecting Physicians With Communities

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For immediate release

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2006 TENNESSEE HEALTH PROFESSIONAL DEMAND ASSESSMENT

This executive summary of the 2006 Tennessee Health Professional Demand Assessment highlights the full report of the activities that were carried out to create a database of practice locations for health professionals emphasizing physicians in Tennessee's 91 non-metropolitan (rural) counties and to identify current practice opportunities in each of those same counties. The full report summarizes the workforce practice opportunities in the rural Tennessee counties.

This Demand Assessment was part of a comprehensive program initiated and managed by the Tennessee Rural Health Recruitment and Retention Center (TRHRRC), now The Rural Partnership, as a response to revise the TennCare Graduate Medical Education Physician Resident Stipend Program. The initial purpose of the Demand Assessment was to identify physician vacancies in rural Tennessee communities and make them available in a statewide database for physician recruitment.

This 2006 Demand Assessment was a follow-up to a similar study conducted in 2002 and built upon that first statewide demand assessment, incorporating all essential elements successful to that previous effort. The Recruitment and Retention Task Force of The Rural Partnership was designated as an advisory board to institute a review and planning process. The primary focus was to enhance and improve the previous assessment's respondent participation in order to obtain greater survey confidence levels and more comprehensive and generalized results. The 2006 Demand Assessment of the identified and verified rural locations throughout the state of Tennessee produced a reliable and valid profile of most practice opportunities.

The approach used in this study was customized for the unique types of health care businesses and organizations by categories (e.g., hospitals, health systems, rural health clinics, community health centers, health departments, and independent practices). As part of an initial promotion of the newly formed organization and

the pending Demand Assessment, pre-notice letters were sent to all (3,575)

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physicians, physician assistants and advanced practice nurses either residing and/or practicing in Tennessee's non-metropolitan counties.

The use of multiple strategies resulted in a substantial number of returned assessment forms representing respondents from all types of rural practices throughout the state. Of the more than 1,700 unique practice locations, a total of 480 individual Demand Assessment survey forms were returned. Of the 480 facilities represented in the assessment responses, 35% indicated they were actively recruiting one or more physicians.

The Recruitment and Retention Task Force was interested in results from four specific groups: hospitals, local health departments, certified rural health clinics and the designated federally qualified health centers. These 302 targeted facilities throughout the state yielded 208 returned assessment forms for a very acceptable response rate of 69% with a range from 30 to 100%.

Each facility self-identified its own type of facility, type of health care providers currently being recruited, and details as to the numbers of providers being recruited. Of the 480 respondents 201 were from independent practice type facilities, representing 42% of the respondents.

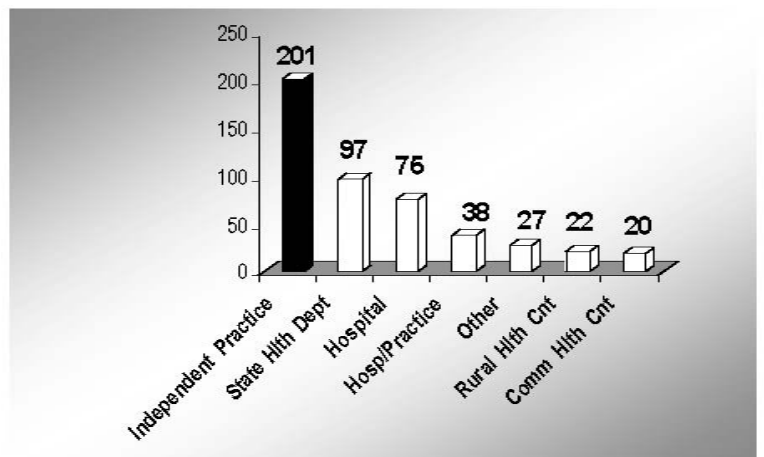


Figure 1. Respondents by Type of Facility/Practice

Thus, in terms of total responses received, the greatest number was from the independent rural practices throughout the state. The 201 independent practices indicated recruiting 85 providers, including 51 physicians and 34 advanced practice nurses or physician assistants. The local health departments and rural hospitals responded at the second and third highest frequencies, followed by combination hospital/practice types, other, rural health clinics and community health centers. While hospitals were third in terms of number responding with 75 facilities (16% of responses) reporting, this facility type accounted for the greatest number of providers being recruited (479 positions).

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care physicians. The second highest number was 44 locations (26%) looking for both primary care and specialist physicians. Third by comparison was the 40 locations (24%) which indicated they were recruiting for only specialist physicians. A small number (17) of the 170 locations reported recruiting but did not indicate the type of physician being recruited.

Of the 82 nurse practitioners being recruited, most (n=24) were being reported by local health departments, followed by independent practices and hospitals each reporting 16 positions being recruited. Of the 33 physician assistants being recruited most of the demand was by independent practices (n=16) and hospitals (n=9).

In summary, more than 739 positions for health professionals were reported as currently being recruited. Of those more than 605 were positions for physicians being recruited by 170 different facilities throughout the state in many types of diverse communities and locations. While specialists continue to be in demand, approximately 230 primary care physicians were being recruited for Family Medicine (n=114), Internal Medicine (n=69), OB/GYN (n=24) and Pediatrics (n=21). Additionally, 134 advanced practice nurses and physician assistants were also currently being recruited in many similar locations throughout the state. These findings indicate an obvious continuing demand for both advanced practice nurses and physician assistants in Tennessee's non-metropolitan practices.

A total of 170 (35%) of the 480 responding organizations indicated they were recruiting for one or more physicians. Each location that reported recruiting also indicated the primary reason(s) for recruiting. If physicians were being recruited, the three most frequently cited reasons were first, a loss of a provider on staff (56%), followed by an increase in patient load (49%), and then a service area expansion (37%). Of the 170 locations indicating they were recruiting for physician providers, 69 (41%) were looking for only primary

