

Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Program

Academic Years 2014-2019

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is the primary federal agency for improving health care to people who are geographically isolated or economically or medically vulnerable. HRSA programs help those in need of high quality primary health care by supporting the training of health professionals – focusing in particular on the geographical distribution of providers to areas where they are needed most.

HRSA's Bureau of Health Workforce's (BHW) Area Health Education Center (AHEC) grant program develops and enhances education and training networks within communities, academic institutions, and community-based organizations. In turn, these networks support the BHW's strategic priorities to increase diversity among health professionals, broaden the distribution of the health workforce, and enhance health care quality in rural and underserved areas¹. AHEC grantees provide specialized community-based training, develop strategic partnerships, prioritize rural and underserved areas and populations, emphasize practice transformation, and deliver inter-professional education and training.

This report analyzes data from Academic Years (AY) 2014 through 2019.

Program Overview

- Between AYs 2014 and 2019, **43 states, the District of Columbia, and Guam** received AHEC grant award funding (see Figure 1).
- During this five year span, AHEC grantees trained **over 1.8 million** individuals and recorded **over 1.7 million** program completers.

Figure 1: AHEC Participant Summary Map (AY 2014-2019)

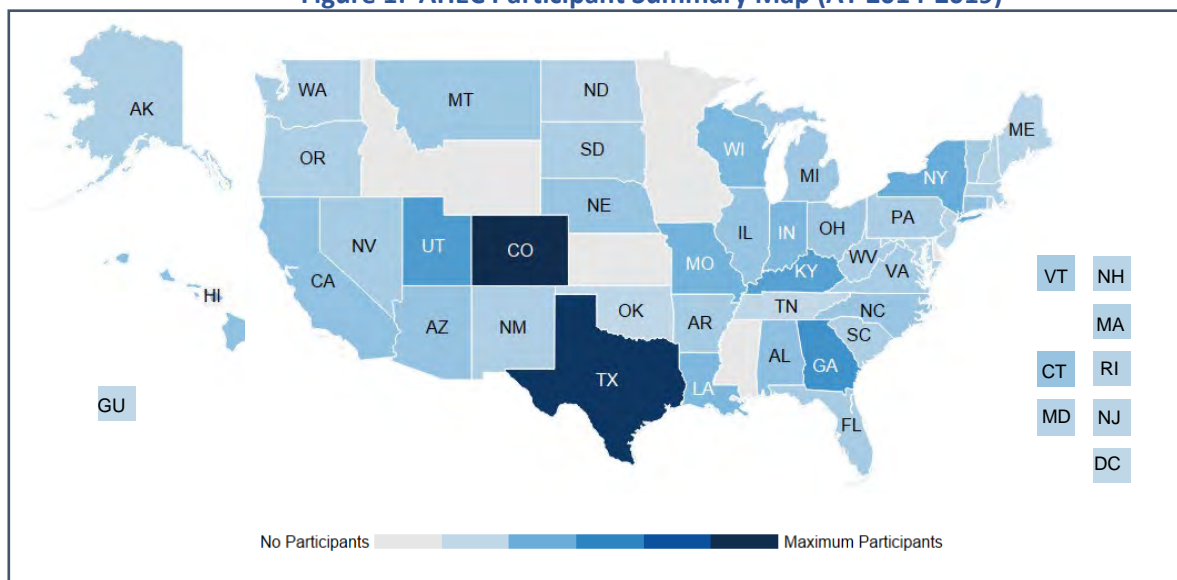
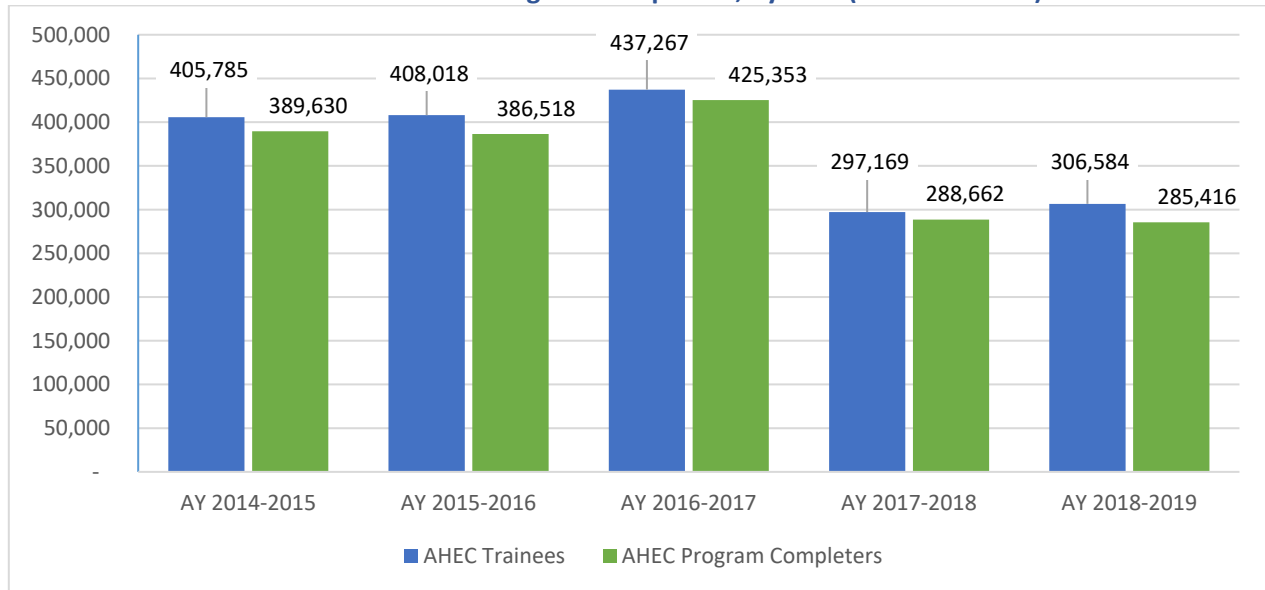


Chart 1: Number of AHEC Trainees and Program Completers, by Year (AY 2014-2019¹)



¹ AY 2017-2018 represents the start of a new project period for AHEC. Numbers of trainees and program completers are often less during the start-up period of a grant.

Specialized Community-Based Training

- Between AY 2014 and 2019, AHEC delivered **over 21,000** continuing education courses and trained **nearly 1 million** health professionals.
- Between AY 2016 and AY 2019, the most frequent topics for AHEC continuing education courses were **clinical topics, behavioral health, and population-based** (see Table 1).

Table 1: Number Trained and Number and Percentage of Courses Offered, by Topic (AY 2016-2019³)

Continuing Education Course Topic	AY 2016-2017			AY 2017-2018			AY 2018-2019		
	Trainees		Courses	Trainees		Courses	Trainees		Courses
	#	#		#	#		#	#	
Clinical Topics	111,415	1,621	49.0%	80,259	764	39.9%	99,635	866	38.7%
Behavioral Health	14,845	431	13.0%	17,466	301	15.7%	48,899	546	24.4%
Population-Based	21,605	379	11.5%	11,331	212	11.1%	13,814	233	10.4%
Chronic Disease	10,719	269	8.1%	6,664	132	6.9%	8,230	157	7.0%
Infectious Disease	8,165	85	2.6%	3,379	88	4.6%	2,475	78	3.5%
Setting	2,777	67	2.0%	3,018	73	3.8%	5,424	66	2.9%
Other	45,223	455	13.8%	15,184	345	18.0%	13,593	292	13.0%
Total	214,749	3,307	-	137,301	1,915	-	192,070	2,238	-

³ Data for AY 2014-2015 and AY 2015-2016 are excluded because course topics were classified differently at that time. In AY 2014-2015, 10,079 courses were offered and 252,259 health professionals were trained; in AY 2015-2016, 3,553 courses were offered and 203,028 health professionals were trained.

Strategic Partnerships

- With an increased emphasis on partnerships, AHEC improved the number of continuing education courses offered in partnership from **32 percent** in AY 2014-2015 to **75 percent** in AY 2018-2019 (see Table 2).
- For AY 2014-2019, AHEC grantees most frequently partnered with **academic institutions or departments, non-profit organizations, and hospitals** to deliver continuing education courses.

Table 2: Number of Partners Established⁴ and the Percentage of Continuing Education Courses that Partnered with them to Deliver Courses, by Top Partner Types (AY 2014-2019)

Partner Type	AY 2014-2015 (n=10,079)		AY 2015-2016 (n=3,553)		AY 2016-2017 (n=3,307)		AY 2017-2018 (n=1,915)		AY 2018-2019 (n=2,238)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Academic Inst. or Department	1,169	11.6%	1,217	34.3%	1,159	35.0%	792	41.4%	1023	45.7%
Non-Profit Organization	881	8.7%	819	23.1%	813	24.6%	493	25.7%	322	14.4%
Hospital	819	8.1%	706	19.9%	735	22.2%	449	23.4%	318	14.2%
Health Center or Health Clinic	602	6.0%	642	18.1%	481	14.5%	206	10.8%	185	8.3%
Federally Qualified Health Center or Look-Alike	376	3.7%	254	7.1%	354	10.7%	125	6.5%	172	7.7%
Professional Association	245	2.4%	207	5.8%	310	9.4%	170	8.9%	159	7.1%
Health Department	503	5.0%	546	15.4%	308	9.3%	183	9.6%	150	6.7%
Federal Government	387	3.8%	355	10.0%	360	10.9%	177	9.2%	144	6.4%
One or More Partner or Consortia	3,255	32.3%	2,711	76.3%	2,526	76.4%	1,638	85.5%	1,680	75.1%

⁴ Partner count is not unique; a partner may be reported by a grantee for more than one continuing education course.

- In AY 2018-2019, **82 percent** of AHEC non-degree, practica, and field placement training programs reported one or more community-based collaborator. This is an improvement from the **74 percent** who reported one or more collaborator in AY 2015-2016.
- Between AY 2015 and AY 2019, AHEC non-degree, practica, and field placement training programs most frequently collaborated with community-based **area health education centers and rural health clinics** (see Table 3).

Table 3: Number of Community-Based Collaborators⁵ and the Percentage of Training Programs that Collaborated with them, by Type (AY 2015-2019⁶)

Type of Community-Based Collaborator	AY 2015-2016 (n=4,542)		AY 2016-2017 (n=4,805)		AY 2017-2018 (n=3,637)		AY 2018-2019 (n=3,377)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Area Health Education Center	2,750	60.5%	2,864	59.6%	2,615	71.9%	2,147	63.6%
Rural Health Clinic	1,041	22.9%	1,572	32.7%	883	24.3%	1,314	38.9%
Community Health Center	366	8.1%	413	8.6%	293	8.1%	327	9.7%
Federally Qualified Health Center or Look-Alike	277	6.1%	350	7.3%	368	10.1%	325	9.6%
Critical Access Hospital	165	3.6%	243	5.1%	224	6.2%	278	8.2%
Other Community-Based Organization	105	2.3%	233	4.8%	133	3.7%	171	5.1%
Community Mental Health Center	31	0.7%	95	2.0%	64	1.8%	85	2.5%
One or more Collaborator Reported	3,343	73.6%	3,817	79.4%	3,009	82.7%	2,768	82.0%

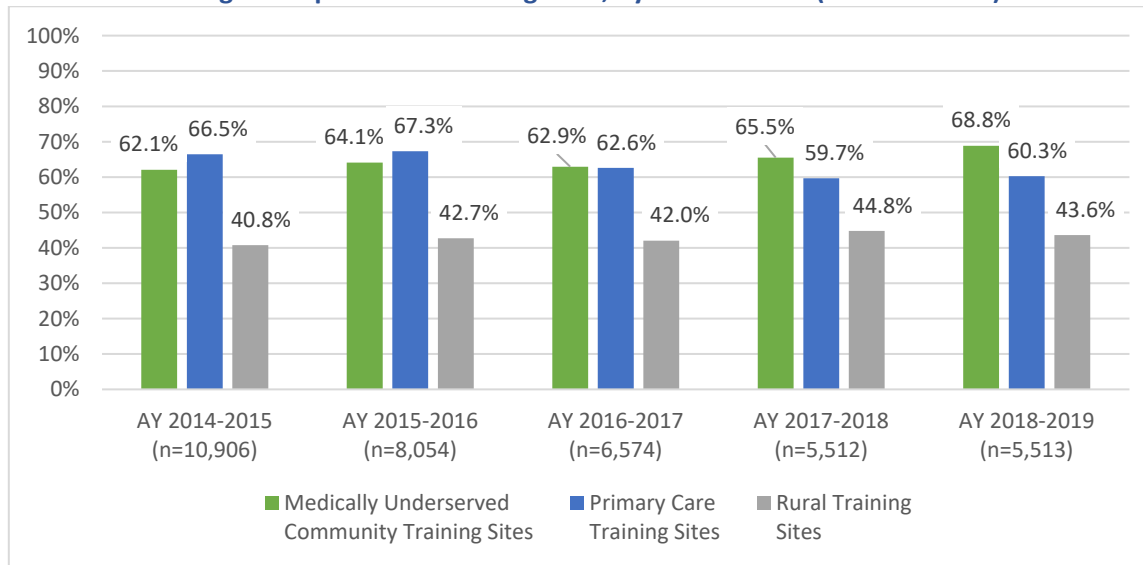
⁵ Collaborator count is not unique; a collaborator may be reported by a grantee for more than one training program.

⁶ Data on community-based collaborators is not available for AY 2014-2015.

Rural and Underserved Areas and Populations

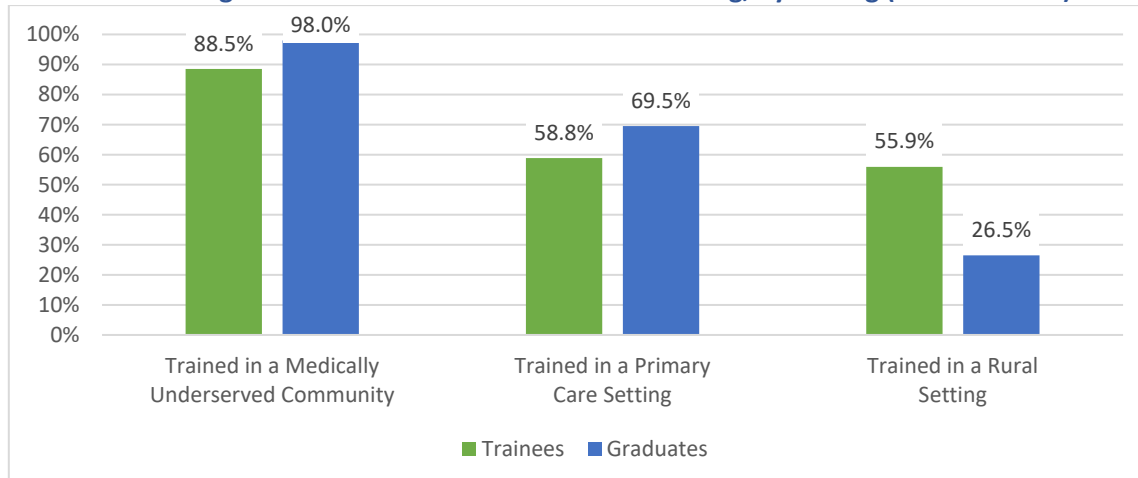
- Between AY 2014-2019, **42 percent** of AHEC's program completers (n=1,775,579) were from a rural background, **40 percent** were from disadvantaged backgrounds, and **29 percent** were underrepresented minorities.
- Each of the five years, **62 percent or more** of AHEC's experiential training sites were in medically underserved communities, **60 percent or more** were in primary care settings, and **40 percent or more** were in rural areas (see Chart 3). These sites offer in-person training to health professionals participating in community-based training and education programs and to AHEC scholars.

Chart 3: Percentage of Experiential Training Sites, by Site Location (AY 2014-2019)



- AHEC scholar programs supplement existing health profession programs. Training must be conducted in rural and/or underserved settingsⁱ. In AY 2018-2019, the first year AHEC scholar data was reported, **98 percent of the 200 graduates** and **89 percent of the 1,098 trainees** received training in medically underserved communities, **70 percent of graduates** and **59 percent of trainees** in primary care settings, and **27 percent of graduates** and **56 percent of trainees** in rural settings (see Chart 4).

Chart 4: Percentage of AHEC Scholars who Received Training, by Setting (AY 2018-2019)



Practice Transformation

- AHEC activities must target the specific skills and competencies needed to prepare students and practicing health professionals to effectively practice in a transforming health care system.ⁱ
- In AY 2018-2019, approximately **24 percent** of AHEC continuing education courses included practice transformation-related competencies, **35 percent** of AHEC practica and field placements included practice transformation topics, and **63 percent** of AHEC scholars received practice transformation-related training (see Table 4).

Table 4: Number and Percentage of Efforts focused on Practice Transformation (AY 2017-2019⁷)

Type of Effort	AY 2017-2018		AY 2018-2019	
	#	%	#	%
Continuing Education (CE) - <i>number/percentage of CE courses</i>	521	27.2%	533	23.8%
Practica and Field Placements - <i>number/percentage of training programs</i>	66	14.3%	173	35.2%
AHEC Scholars Program - <i>number/percentage of scholars trained</i>	n/a	n/a	695	63.3%

⁷ Practice transformation data was not collected in prior years.

Inter-professional Education and Training

- Inter-professional education encourages increased knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of other disciplines and improves communication and collaboration among disciplines in future settings.ⁱⁱ For the five-year period, **approximately 1.7 million AHEC trainees (92 percent)** participated in multi-disciplinary, non-degree training programs such as enrichment activities; college academic support; community-based outreach and education; pre-college or pre-diploma/certification preparation; summer programs; and training activities for current health profession students, residents, and fellows (see Table 5).

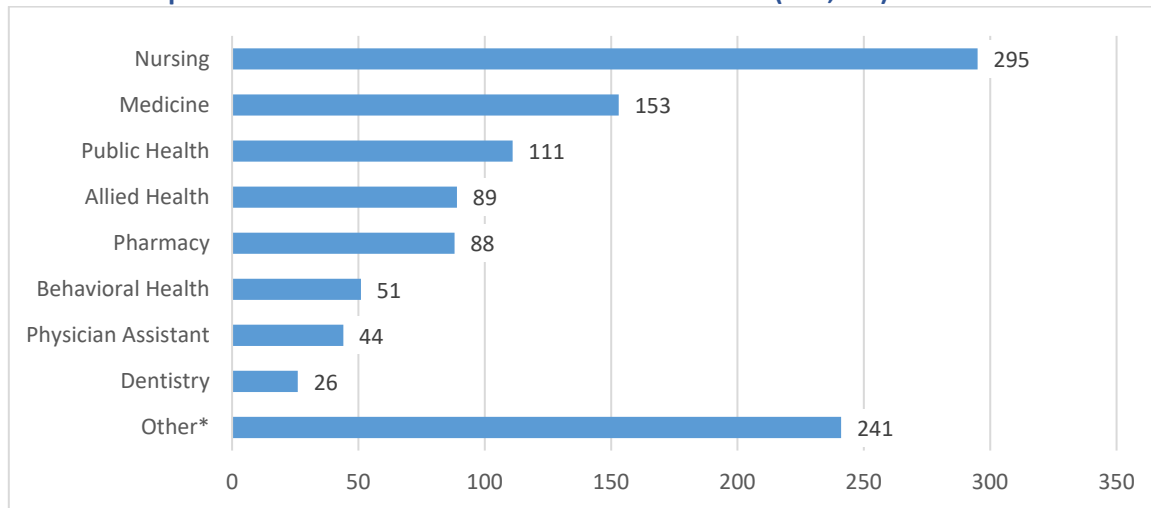
Table 5: Total Trained⁸ by Training Program Type and Discipline (AY 2014-2019)

Discipline	AY 2014-2015	AY 2015-2016	AY 2016-2017	AY 2017-2018	AY 2018-2019	Total AY 2014-2019	
						#	%
Non-Degree (Structured & Unstructured) Training Programs including Continuing Education							
Multiple Disciplines	372,366	369,929	402,045	270,380	282,408	1,697,128	91.5%
Practicum/Field Placement and Degree/Diploma/Certificate Academic Training Programs							
Student	30,135	35,022	31,867	24,070	22,011	143,105	7.7%
Medicine	2,317	1,806	2,274	1,757	1,380	9,534	0.5%
Behavioral Health	128	351	172	133	293	1,077	0.1%
Nursing	412	359	186	409	169	1,535	0.1%
Dentistry	43	44	43	10	21	161	0.0%
Public Health	21	28	11	2	7	69	0.0%
Physician Assistant	10	33	0	0	0	43	0.0%
Other	353	446	669	408	295	2,171	0.1%
Total Trained	405,785	408,018	437,267	297,169	306,584	1,854,823	100.0%

⁸ A trainee may be part of AHEC for more than one year. Total trained may include duplicates who participated in multiple programs.

- The AHEC scholars program provides interdisciplinary clinical, class-room, and community-based training activities. In AY 2018-2019, **100 percent** of trainees (n=1,098) and **100 percent** of graduates (n=200) received inter-professional education. Trainees reported **over 51,000 hours** of inter-professional education with an average of **47 hours** per person.
- **27 percent** of trainees were nursing students, **14 percent** were medical students, and **10 percent** public health students (see Chart 5).

Chart 5: Disciplines of AHEC Scholars Trainees in AY 2018-2019 (n=1,098)



*The majority of "other" disciplines (78 percent) are undefined. The remainder are physical therapy (11 percent), community health workers (eight percent), clinical laboratory services (two percent), and respiratory technicians (one percent).

ⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, 2017. Area Health Resource Center Program, Notice of Funding Opportunity - <https://www.hrsa.gov/grants/find-funding/hrsa-17-071>

ⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, 2019. Health Workforce: Glossary - <https://bhw.hrsa.gov/grants/resourcecenter/glossary>