

Health Human Resources Action Plan

Highlights

- The Government of Saskatchewan's ambitious Health Human Resources (HHR) Action Plan was launched in September 2022 to stabilize and steadily grow the provincial health care workforce.
- The \$300 million investment into the four-point Action Plan has contributed to many highlights and positive health system outcomes to celebrate at this two-year milestone.
- *Recruit, Train, Incentivize and Retain* are the four pillars that help guide these initiatives that have benefited Saskatchewan healthcare workers and patients as we continue building a stronger, more sustainable healthcare workforce.
- This historic HHR Action Plan directly connects to Saskatchewan's evolving Growth Plan to ensure a stable and growing healthcare workforce supports the growth occurring across the province today and into the future.

Recruitment

Physicians

- Over 218 physicians have been recruited to Saskatchewan from outside of the province, with 35 physicians from outside the country since September 2022. This includes 87 family physicians and 131 specialists.
- Highly sought medical specialists include pediatric gastroenterologists (one recently hired), psychiatrists (four recently hired), perfusionists (two recently hired) and physician assistants (in final hiring stage).

Nurses

- The HHR Action Plan supported the hiring of over 1,400 recent nursing graduates from Saskatchewan and out-of-province since December 2022.
- 27 new permanent Nurse Practitioner positions are posted in rural communities. Of these postings, eight positions are filled.
- Nearly 400 Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs) from the Philippines have been recruited. Of these IENs, approximately 280 have completed training and are now working in various communities with the remaining IENs undergoing the training process.

- A first-of-its-kind 14-week Transition to Registered Nursing in Canada (TRNC) program was developed and implemented, which includes online training, in-person lab and clinical work, and transition to employment for hundreds of IENs to join the Saskatchewan workforce.
- Navigators have assisted all the IENs from the Philippines with settlement guidance to aid their transition to employment and supported several hundred individuals who have initiated action to gain licensure in their respective healthcare profession.
- Over 70 communities have benefitted from initiatives targeted to IENs.

Other Recruitment Highlights

- In total, 750 internationally educated health care professionals (IEHPs) have been engaged with and are living in the province. Of those, over 380 are now working in the health care system; the remaining 370 are in various stages of hiring, training, immigration or credentialling.
- The Saskatchewan Healthcare Recruitment Agency (SHRA) was created as a new, agency dedicated to the recruitment of high priority professionals, including physicians, nurses and other health professions. The SHRA is coordinating recruitment activities and connect job seekers with employment opportunities at the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA), Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, and health employers throughout the province.

Training

- Since the start of the Health Human Resources Action Plan, Saskatchewan has invested over \$100 million to support approximately 870 new training seats in 33 programs. These seats will produce graduates in critical health care fields such as nursing, mental health, medical diagnostic imaging and many others.
- This investment also supports the creation of four new domestic training programs including Occupational Therapy, Speech Language Pathology, Physician Assistant, and Respiratory Therapy as well as training of IENs in the TRNC program.
- These new and expanded training opportunities for Saskatchewan people are available at post-secondary institutions across the province so that students can train close to home. This includes culturally relevant health care training opportunities for Indigenous students at Indigenous post-secondary institutions (e.g. Indigenous Practical Nursing).
- Investment in health care training is a key deliverable of our ambitious Health Human Resources Action Plan. It will help build a stronger, more robust health care workforce to help meet residents' needs now and in the future.

Incentivize

- Over 50 communities across the province have benefitted directly from the Rural and Remote Recruitment Incentive (RRRI).

Professionals

- Over 350 applicants in nine high priority positions have qualified and been paid through the RRRI initiative and are currently employed in rural and remote communities across the province representing a \$15.3 million investment.
- The Rural Physician Incentive Program was enhanced to \$200,000 over five years has over 300 applicants, with nearly 140 grants awarded, surpassing the goal of 50 participating physicians.
- Competitive incentives packages are available to support recruitment and retention of specialists in high demand, such as anesthesia, psychiatry; breast and interventional radiology in approved sites; and certain pediatric subspecialties (pediatric gastroenterology, pediatric allergy/immunology, pediatric neurology, and pediatric medical genetics).

Students and Recent Graduates

- The province offers up to \$20,000 in Saskatchewan student loan forgiveness to nursing graduates working in designated rural and mid-sized Saskatchewan communities.
- Graduates who stay and file income taxes in the province are eligible for up to \$20,000 in tax credits through the Graduate Retention Program.
- Over \$1.3M in bursaries, such as the Final Clinical Bursary, paramedic bursary and other scholarships and grants have been awarded to encourage students to pursue their health care career goals.
- A new Interprovincial Agreement Incentive will assist students in specialized health training seats reserved by government or purchased by health sector partners in other provinces. The incentive is designed to attract graduates to return to Saskatchewan to practice their profession.

Retention

Position Enhancements

- 245 targeted new and enhanced full-time positions in high-priority occupations have been filled, including registered nurses, to stabilize staffing in rural and northern areas.
- Another 65 registered nurse positions increased from part time to full time in rural and remote locations with 36 now being filled.
- Scope of practice for pharmacists, nurse practitioners and advanced care paramedics has been expanded to benefit patients and increase access to services for people living in rural communities, shorten wait times for primary care and give more options for obtaining certain health services.

Supportive Programs

- The SHA implemented a mentorship program in November 2023 and now have over 200 participants.
- The SHA has engaged with First Nations and Métis communities and educational institutions to develop a First Nations and Métis recruitment and retention strategy.
- Multiple volunteer, Job Shadow and career learning opportunities are made available to provincial high school students.