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Addressing the Healthcare Workforce Shortage and Racial Disparities by strengthening the Youth of Color Pipeline

LOS ANGELES, CA — According to [data](#) compiled by the California Healthcare Foundation, in California, only 11 of 58 counties are meeting required primary care physicians (PCP) rates (60-80 PCPs per 100,000 patients). Furthermore, [2015 data](#) from the California Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development shows that South LA had a rate of 13 PCPs per 100,000. In addition to workforce shortage, [several reports](#) have shown that there is a substantial lack of [racial and ethnic minorities representation](#) in healthcare professions. A youth of color healthcare workforce pipeline program in South LA is especially relevant, as the healthcare workforce in Los Angeles is anticipated to grow by 14% or 83,440 jobs by 2019 according to a recent [report](#) from JP Morgan Chase & Co. A recent report from the [Brookings Institution](#) found that teenagers and young adults experience greater challenges finding employment in Los Angeles than other age groups, and employment is harder to come by in Los Angeles than other metropolitan areas in the country. Developing a healthcare workforce pipeline for youth of color presents many great opportunities as it informs and empowers youth of color to pursue healthcare careers at various levels within their communities.

“The devastating and documented lack of preparation of students of color who are from a low-income background threatens to undermine efforts to improve educational outcomes and to feed a pipeline of skilled workers at a time when such students comprise a majority of the nation’s public school enrollment,” said Veronica Flores, CEO of Community Health Councils (CHC). Thus in 2017, CHC engaged South LA healthcare leaders in the development of a Youth Workforce Pipeline Model at Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) to address the shortage and ongoing racial disparities in the healthcare workforce as well as determine the elements and infrastructure necessary for 1) youth of color to gain the required skills to enter f

Jim Mangia, the President and CEO of St. Johns Well Child Center said, “We were so honored to be able to host some of the students from this amazing program this summer. They contributed so much to our overall efforts to provide high quality healthcare to residents of South Los Angeles. Our youth of color must be given the opportunity to lead.”

Today CHC releases a report that provides a first step toward understanding how we can create a workforce youth of color pipeline in a sustainable manner. Through 1) a literature review and landscape analysis of the healthcare workforce pipeline and 2) the implementation of the pipeline project, CHC was able to identify:

Policy Recommendations for school districts

- Develop or adopt a digital literacy curriculum and essential skills benchmarks to ensure that students at all grade levels are learning the skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly digital society.
- Develop curricula, policies, and programs to ensure students are entering college and/or the workforce with strong communication and literacy skills.

Future Research to financially sustain and improve healthcare workforce pipeline programs

1. Explore novel funding mechanisms to support healthcare workforce pipeline programs to ensure that youth, clinics, and schools are adequately compensated.
2. Identify ways to attract students from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, especially African-American students.
3. Explore entry-level healthcare job requirements and the student preparation necessary to be eligible for these jobs.

Lesson Learned & Next Steps for future iterations of the project

1. Before initiating student internships, involve clinic staff earlier on in curriculum planning.
2. Provide more mentorship opportunities to learn about career pathways during and after work hours.
3. Rotate interns through fewer departments for a longer amount of time as well as have fewer students in each department to increase intern-staff ratio.
4. Provide more soft-skills trainings during in-service sessions.
5. Provide students more opportunities to engage in healthcare policy advocacy.

The report is available online at CHC's website at <https://chc-inc.org/home/community-resources/health-systems/youth-healthcare-pipeline-program-upstream-approach-addressing-healthcare-workforce-shortage-california/>.

Community Health Councils (CHC) is a non-profit, community-based health education and policy organization. Established in 1992, our mission is to promote social justice and achieve health equity in community and environmental resources to improve the health and well-being of under-resourced populations.