Proposal to Establish the Missouri Health Professions Workforce Data System

**Problem Statement:** Appropriate planning for and assessment of health professional needs are dependent upon the availability of accurate, timely, and reliable data. Currently, Missouri has no reliable information about the practice characteristics of health professionals in the state. With a major health professional manpower shortage looming, the absence of such information threatens to thwart policy efforts seeking to expand the numbers of health professionals. Judgments are clouded about how many and which kinds of professionals and specializations should be encouraged to practice in what regions. While other states with reliable systems are using their information to guide policy, Missouri is unable to do so. Consequently, without such information, Missouri risks seriously misallocating expensive resources, confounding opportunities to improve health access and health quality, and jeopardizing economic development initiatives that are highly valued in quality health systems.

**Purpose:** The MO Healthcare Workforce Project provides a snapshot of access to healthcare for Missouri residents. A significant and diversified healthcare workforce ensures Missourians have an opportunity to live healthy, productive lives throughout the lifecycle as well as contributes to the strength and stability of Missouri’s communities and local economies. Access to appropriate, quality healthcare services is both a core determinant of a healthy population and a core economic driver. The MO Healthcare Workforce Project is intended to support state and local policymakers and planners and public health and healthcare providers in understanding local strengths and needs.

The MO Healthcare Workforce Project provides annual state and county-level analysis of the types of healthcare professionals available as well as population health and demographic characteristics. The MO Healthcare Workforce Project Advisory Committee determined the Project’s content and will provide ongoing input into the structure and content of the report.

**Background:** Currently a maldistribution of healthcare workers exists nationally and at the state level. Missouri is falling behind several states in its ability to assess the types, number, and practice locations of its own healthcare professionals. Missouri is a diverse state with differing workforce needs in central cities, suburbs and rural areas. These regional differences cut across the availability of professions and specializations. Additionally, the looming aging of the baby boom generation will have a double effect. First, an increasingly elderly population will generate increased demand for health care services. Second, the retirement of this large cohort including a big segment of the healthcare workforce threatens increasing labor shortages. Yet, Missouri has been without reliable information about its health workforce to guide policy. Missouri’s system of gathering health workforce data for licensing functions is disconnected from information about practice locations and characteristics.
Several years ago an Advisory Board was established to address the need for a MO Health Professions Database. Board members include representatives from:

University of Missouri School of Medicine, School of Dentistry, Sinclair School of Nursing and School of Health Professions
A.T. Still University
St. Louis University
Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis
Missouri Hospital Association
Department of Health and Senior Services
Missouri Academy of Family Physicians
Center for Health Policy
MO Nurses Association
Missouri Foundation for Health
Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City
Professional Registration
MO Action Coalition
College of Optometry

We worked to define the Health Professionals data we wanted to include in the database in addition to Community and Health Indicators.

The MO Healthcare Workforce Data will Benefits Missourians by:

- Monitoring longitudinal trends in supply and distribution of healthcare professionals
- Inform healthcare workforce policy makers and advocacy organizations (such as the Center for Health Policy and the Missouri Hospital Association)
- Inform training programs that will determine quantity and distribution of healthcare professionals
- Identify emerging healthcare workforce issues
- Answer specific questions such as:
  1. How many practicing physicians are there in Missouri? Where are they practicing? How old are they and how long do they plan to continue practicing?
  2. Is there a shortage of nurses in the state? If so, where?
  3. Will Missouri’s supply of dentists keep pace with projected population growth?
  4. How many health professions trained in Missouri are retained?
  5. How closely does the race and ethnicity of Missouri’s health professionals mirror the population?