

The logo for SLO Healthcare Workforce Partnership is an oval shape with a blue border and a green shadow. The text "SLO Healthcare Workforce Partnership" is centered inside the oval in a blue, sans-serif font.

**SLO Healthcare Workforce
Partnership**

Community Partner Interviews

**Summary of Key Themes
Spring/Summer 2023**

32 Interviews Conducted

- **Direct Services (Medical, Behavioral, and Oral Health):**
 - Tenet Health
 - Dignity Health
 - CenCal Health (Medi-Cal Services)
 - Tolosa Children's Dental Center
 - Transitions Mental Health Association
 - County of SLO Public Health, Oral Health, Behavioral Health
- **Community Health Workers:**
 - Center for Family Strengthening, Promotores Collaborative
 - Dignity Health – Central Coast, Community Health Worker Program
 - Herencia Indigena (Mixteco, Spanish, English Translation Services)
- **Education:**
 - California Polytechnic State University, SLO
 - Cuesta College
 - California State University, Monterey Bay (BS Nursing Program Partnership with Cuesta)
 - SLO County Office of Education & SLO Partners
- **Physician Services, Workforce Development, & Economic Development:**
 - Central Coast Medical Association
 - County of SLO, Workforce Development Board (WDB)
 - REACH/Uplift Central Coast

Top Barriers to Access

- Lack of providers, particularly specialists
- Long wait times for an appointment
- Language (Spanish, Mixteco)
- Transportation
- Lack of infrastructure/facilities, particularly in remote areas
- Affordability for working families who don't qualify for Medi-Cal
- Out of pocket expenses and/or waiting for insurance reimbursement
- Lack of livable wages for Community Health Workers



SLO Healthcare Workforce Shortages

Physical Health: Shortages & wage gaps reported in all occupations.

- **Physicians:**
 - Primary Care and specialists (dermatology, endocrinology, gastroenterology, etc.)
 - Physician Assistants (PAs), Nurse Practitioners (NPs)
 - Many ***not accepting new patients or Medi-Cal / Medicare*** recipients
 - Some shifting to ***concierge services***, charging clients \$2,000+/year
- **Nurses (RN, LVN, CNA):**
 - Vacancies in acute care, long-term care, clinics, CMC, ASH
 - Using traveling staff to fill vacancies (at higher cost)
 - Wage gap: RN grads in SLO Cty. Hospitals earn = \$43 to \$46/hour but SF Bay Area hospitals = \$86/hour.
- **Medical Assistants**
- **Emergency Medical Services (EMT/paramedic):**
 - Wage gap: Top pay for paramedics in SLO = \$22/hour, but EMT job in the Valley is \$35/hour & bonuses.
 - Some paramedics switching to nursing or fire-fighting for more pay
- **Community Health Workers:**
 - Needed to support bilingual, bicultural service delivery.

SLO Healthcare Workforce Shortages

Behavioral Health: Shortages & wage gaps reported in all occupations.

- **Shortage of Providers:**
 - Psychiatrists (adult and pediatric, private practices)
 - Mental health professionals (MFTs, CSW, Psych RNs, Counselors)
 - Psychiatric Technicians: Expanding Cuesta program to meet AHS needs
 - Pediatric services for children on mild to moderate autism spectrum
- **Lack of Psychiatric Facilities:**
 - Lack of private psychiatric beds; no psychiatric children's hospital in the County
 - Attempting to open Psychiatric Urgent Care in the County.
- **Lack of in-person services**, in addition to Telehealth.
- **Bilingual, bicultural CHWs needed** to provide support to mental health groups, under supervision of social workers.
- **“Walking Well”**: Number of **people needing services increased dramatically** due to impact of pandemic and reduction in social stigma

SLO Healthcare Workforce Shortages

Oral Health:

Shortages & wage gaps reported in all occupations.

- ***Dentists & dental specialists***
(i.e., pediatric dentists, oral surgeons, endodontists, periodontists, etc.)
- ***Registered Dental Assistants (RDA)***
- ***Registered Dental Hygienists (RDH)***
- ***Dental providers that accept Medi-Cal patients.***

Barriers to Provider Recruitment

- High cost of living, housing, and childcare
- Low wages
- Low reimbursement rates for Medi-Cal / Medicare

“SLO County is a healthcare desert with shortages in many positions.”

“SLO County is so healthy, because if you get sick, you have to leave and move closer to specialty care.”

Recruitment & Retention Initiatives

- **Partnerships with Schools:**
 - HS programs to introduce healthcare careers.
 - Paid or unpaid volunteer, internship, externship opportunities.
- **Rehire & Referral Campaigns:** Recruit employees who left during the pandemic and solicit referrals by current employees to new applicants.
- **Financial Incentives:**
 - Sign on bonuses.
 - Student loan forgiveness programs, loan repayment programs.
 - Scholarships, tuition reimbursement for new or existing employees.
 - HRSA, HCAI, DHCS grants/funding opportunities
 - CenCal Foundation: Restarting efforts to provide grants to support recruitment.
 - Increased compensation packages to retain existing staff.
 - Stipends to provide access to care in remote areas.
 - CHW training and certification.
- **SLO Chamber of Commerce:**
 - Helping new employees find housing, jobs for spouses, etc.
 - Increasing exposure for the benefits of SLO County for external recruiting
- **Housing Communities for Specific Workforces:** Cal Poly staff/faculty, Cal Poly athletic housing village, County of SLO housing incentive, farm workers, etc.

Recruiting to Reflect Community Diversity

- **Equity:**
 - Creating Internal DEI Committees and changing HR internal equity policies.
 - Hiring Health Equity Officers and ensuring that staff reflect the diversity of the community.
 - Implementing DEI campaigns and working with the LGBTQ community.
- **Lived Experience:**
 - Recruiting people with lived experience reflecting the diversity of the community (Latino, bilingual or trilingual with Spanish/Mixteco, bicultural, or experience with a particular health challenge) for CHW, peer counseling, health education, or other staff positions.
- **Recruiting Cuesta/Cal Poly/College Grads:** Drawing employees from colleges for internship programs and providing training hours for licensure/clinical supervision.
- **Publicity:** Using marketing firms to promote positive workplaces, organizational cultures, and commitment to DEI.



Suggestions for the Partnership

- **Reduce “silos”** and leverage work being done in the community.
- Create **intentional, collaborative partner projects**.
- Support **affordable housing** for educational and healthcare professionals.
- Explore entire **education pathway to:**
 - Develop K-career pipelines (include AT Still and Allan Hancock).
 - Sponsor middle school/HS healthcare career programs.
 - Increase internship and co-op experiences.
 - Avoid redundant programs that split students between schools.
 - Address concerns about transferability of courses from one institution to another.
- Cultivate **community donors** for:
 - Scholarship/financial aid opportunities for students.
 - Donations for equipment/facilities.
 - Incentives or support to lure faculty / healthcare professionals to the area.
 - Housing at reduced costs.



Suggestions for the Partnership (cont.)

- **Funding:** Create centralized tracking / dissemination of opportunities and explore collaborative approaches to apply for funding.
- **Integrated Healthcare Approach:** Build up Enhanced Care Management to integrate service delivery and cultivate more pathways to serve the Spanish and Mixteco communities.
- **Inter-agency job-sharing** of FT employees (Part-time positions at 2 agencies)
- **Collaborate with the Chamber** on how the region is being marketing to prospective healthcare/dental professionals.
- **Creative Recruiting:** Get creative about how to recruit and retain talent.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Address the discrepancies in the shortage area designations (state level) to take advantage of funding resources.
- **Technology:** Promote telehealth, data sharing

