

Physician Recruitment and Retention Working Group

Tuesday, August 19, 2025 | 7:30-8:30am

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Anton Alerte, Margaret Gradie, Diana Paez, Traci Marquis-Eydman, Katie Cullinan, Steven Angus, Khuram Ghumman, Jill Banatoski, Rémy Sirken.

Members Absent: Mariam Hakim-Zargar, Stephen Huot, Andrew Lim, Emily Byrne, William Petit, Krishnan Narasimhan.

Introduction

- Margaret Gradie called the meeting to order at 7:32am.
- Steve Angus motioned to approve the July 2025 minutes and Anton Alerte seconded. The minutes passed without discussion.

Behavioral Health and Graduate Medical Education Presentations by Rémy Serkin and Diana Paez

Presentation 1: Behavioral Health and GME

- Rémy Sirken discussed the current state of behavioral health and the impact of Graduate Medical Education (GME) on addressing mental health shortages.
- Rémy shared data on the projected shortages of psychiatrists, similar to other professions, but highlighted that psychiatrists tend to be older and many are hitting retirement age.
- Approximately 8-13% of students from Connecticut medical schools matched into psychiatry programs during the last 6 years – hard to know how many stay in state
- CT residency programs:
 - Institute of Living/Hartford Hospital Program
 - University of Connecticut
 - Yale-New Haven Medical Center Program
 - Connecticut Institute for Communities Health Program, FQHC Program
 - Eastern Connecticut Health Network Program
 - Quinnipiac University Frank H. Netter MD School of Medicine Program, Rural Track Program
- Adding up to 12 more graduates per year

- Increasing access by developing community systems of care
- Spoke about the work she is doing in the NW corner
- HRSA grants supporting rural residency programs and teaching health centers.
- Recruitment and retention strategies include flexible schedules, adequate compensation, and attractive positions.

Presentation 2: Case Report on Integrating Graduate Medical Education with Behavioral Health Treatment and Physician Recruitment

- Diana Paez spoke about her work at the first FQHC-based psychiatry residency program in the state
- For the program's second cycle, they received 650 applications. Diana theorized the popularity was in part due to geography, and the popularity of psychiatry as a field among medical graduates.
- As this type of program evolves, reliance on a pipeline should be internally created
- She spoke about developing tools to refine applicant screening and interviewing, and the importance of aligning applicants with the program's mission and values.
- Diana framed behavioral health recruitment and retention in terms of a simplified self-determination continuum, noting that a lot of residents begin with more extrinsic motivations, and it is in part the job of programs to move them towards internal motivations.
- Diana spoke about challenges in recruiting faculty for residency programs and the need for flexible work arrangements to engage with prospective candidates.

Discussion

- Margaret flagged that the entire state of Connecticut is designated as a mental health shortage area.
- Khuram brought up some federal challenges with residents who did not train at ACGME (Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education) Institutions. Not all residents who want to stay may be able to stay in the state because of external factors outside of the group's scope. He also brought up the challenge of recruiting US-based local graduates into specialty areas.
- Margaret asked about continued funding for their two programs. Both Rémy and Diana indicated that as of now, they are still receiving support. Rémy spoke about her experience, HRSA continues the support even past the end of a program's grant, to build a community in rural health.
- Khuram asked if the large health systems in CT might be willing to continue support for these behavioral health programs if federal funding lapses. Rémy spoke to the

commitment to training more psychiatrists, and that although she cannot predict what happens, she is positive. Diana shared that although Nuvance Health is a partner of her FQHC, they are a separate program.

- Amy Kohn brought up the difficulty of finding preceptors for residents and fellows. In response, Rémy brought up how her program recruits specifically for teaching, giving preceptors time in the day to teach, and how this was highly attractive.
- Margaret asked if there was any data on FQHC-based residency retention rates. Anecdotally, Diana shared that the FQHC has successful retention rates.

Closing

- Margaret will review presentations from the previous meetings, draft recommendations for the report to the legislature, then circulate them with the group.
- Starting in September and October, the group will begin refining recommendations that were proposed.
- Next scheduled meeting: September 16, 2025.
- The meeting adjourned at 8:20am.