

# HEALTH CENTER WORKFORCE 101

Community Health Center (CHC) staff are key in ensuring America's health care safety net reaches far and wide. From front desk to enabling services and administration to a wide array of medical, dental, and behavioral health provider types, health centers recruit and retain highly skilled health care professionals by leveraging federally funded career pathway initiatives. Some of the larger programs are highlighted below.

## NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICES CORPS (NHSC)<sup>1</sup>

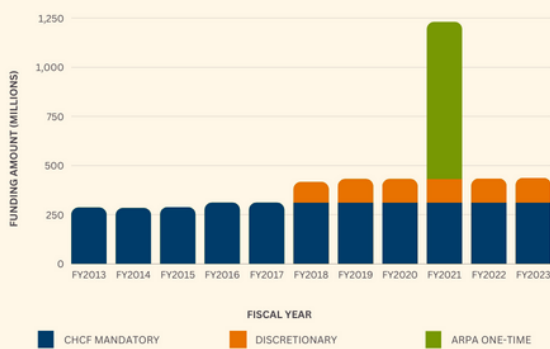
NHSC clinicians serve at over 9,000 Community Health Centers providing care to more than 21 million patients.<sup>3</sup>

- Provides a pathway for providers to work in primary care settings & expands access to vital health services in underserved communities.
- Provides loan repayment and scholarship options for primary care medical, dental and behavioral health providers who commit to serve in rural and underserved areas.

The NHSC connects primary health care clinicians to people with limited access to care in high-needs areas. **FY24 funding request: Support bipartisan efforts to extend funding to enhance the primary care workforce.**<sup>2</sup>

## FUNDING INFORMATION

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE CORPS FUNDING FY2013-2023



In 2011, NHSC was authorized to receive **mandatory funds** through the Community Health Center Fund (CHCF). Since then, the NHSC has continued to receive mandatory funds. In 2018, the NHSC began receiving **discretionary funds** to expand training of and promote retention of substance use disorder treatment providers.<sup>4</sup>

## TEACHING HEALTH CENTERS PROGRAM (THCGME)<sup>5</sup>

- Ensures there are medical residency programs in community-based settings.
- In the academic year 2022-2023, THCGME supported training for over 960 residents nationwide.

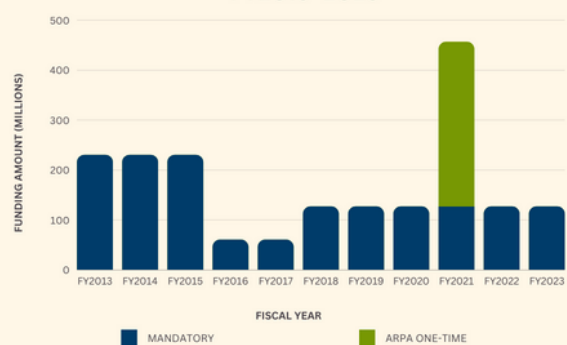
More than twice as many teaching health center graduates practice in underserved & rural areas when compared to traditional GME graduates. **FY24 funding request: Robust funding for a minimum of three years.**<sup>2</sup>

In 2021, health centers and Look-Alikes employed more THCGME graduates one-year post-residency than hospitals and other provider organizations.<sup>6</sup>

## FUNDING INFORMATION

The THCGME program is authorized to receive mandatory funding through the Public Health Service Act in order to support medical residency training. THCGME funding also goes towards medical curriculum enhancement that drives increased quality of care and health outcomes.<sup>4</sup>

TEACHING HEALTH CENTER GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM FUNDING FY2013-2023



**Mandatory funds** are set by statutory criteria and not subject to the annual appropriations process. **Discretionary funds** are subject to the annual appropriations process, where Congress sets new spending levels each year, making discretionary funding levels more variable from year to year than mandatory funding.



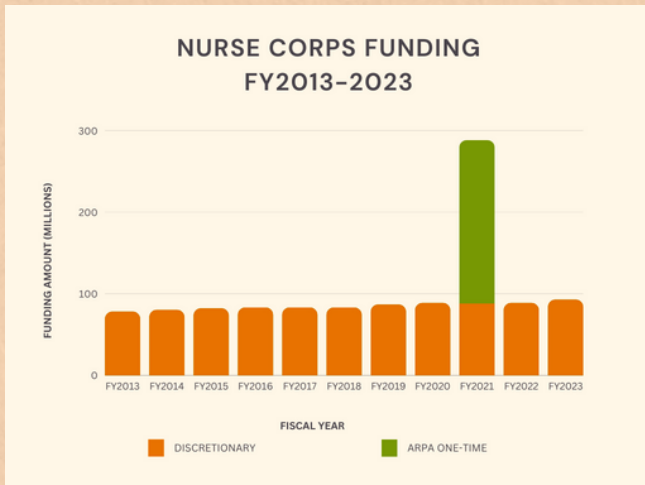
**Supports more than 600 nurses in Community Health Centers.<sup>7</sup>**

## NURSE CORPS SCHOLARSHIP & LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM (NCSP/LRP)<sup>7</sup>

- Provides scholarship to individuals enrolled in various US-based nursing programs (ADN, BSN, MSN, DNP, etc) who commit to working in Critical Shortage Facilities, like Health Centers.
- In 2022, 418 NCLRP recipients worked in Community Health Centers.

The NCS/LRP strengthens the nursing workforce, particularly in health care professional shortage areas. **FY24 funding request: Minimum \$92.4 million in discretionary funding.<sup>2</sup>**

## FUNDING INFORMATION



The NCSP/LRP receives funds through the discretionary process each year. These funds go toward paying tuition fees and other educational expenses for individuals in nursing programs who commit to serving in a shortage area after graduating.<sup>8</sup>

## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS (BHWD)<sup>9</sup>

- Creates education & training programs between academic institutions and health care settings for professional students to gain exposure and experience working in community-based behavioral health.

BHWD programs train incoming behavioral health providers (clinicians, peer support specialists, and others) to work in high-demand areas of the country. **FY24 funding request: Robust funding.<sup>2</sup>**

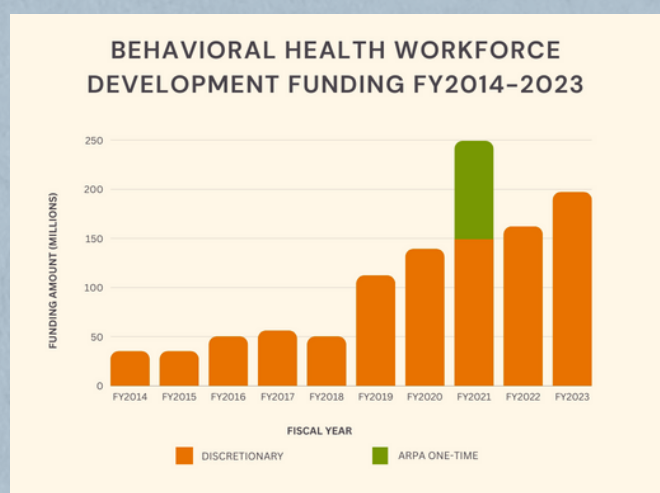


**In 2022, 510 graduates of BHWD programs were working in Community Health Centers.<sup>6</sup>**

## FUNDING INFORMATION

The BHWD programs also go through the discretionary process each year.

Significant investment in this program over the last five years has resulted in an increase in behavioral health utilization. Continued and increased federal appropriations for the BHWD program are critical to address the persisting mental and behavioral health needs in the country.<sup>2</sup>



These programs are critical workforce pipelines for CHCs. Growth in health center staff has more than doubled from 2010 to 2021, and has allowed health centers to nearly double the number of patients they serve. Workforce shortages still persist, and CHCs continue to seek support from the NHSC, THCGME, NCSP/LRP, and BHWD programs to provide high-quality care to more than 30 million Americans.<sup>10</sup>

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish a new Health Care Workforce Innovation Fund within the Health Resources and Services Administration Bureau of Health Workforce. A new flexible fund would enable pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, and career ladder programs that support health care career pathways.
- Additionally, this funding can support incentives, including financial support for health centers to establish formal agreements with academic institutions that educate nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nursing, dental, behavioral health, and medical students.

## References

1. [National Health Service Corps](#)
2. [NACHC Workforce Policy Paper \(2023\)](#)
3. [Building Healthier Communities](#)
4. [Congressional Research Service Report, Jan. 2022](#)
5. [Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education Program](#)
6. [HRSA Data Downloads](#)
7. [Growth of the Nurse Corps Workforce](#)
8. [Nurse Corps Annual Reports to Congress](#)
9. [2024 HHS Budget Justification](#)
10. [NACHC Health Centers' Workforce](#)

## Other helpful links

1. [Budget of the United States Government](#)
2. [HHS Budgets in Brief](#)
3. [Congressional Research Service Report, Dec 2018](#)
4. [NACHC 2022 Workforce Survey](#)