

## Meeting Minutes: Health Care Workforce & Education Committee

May 10, 2023

### Committee Member Attendance

- Bradley Benson – M Health-Fairview
- Susan Culican – University of Minnesota
- David Dahlen – Mayo Clinic
- Roger Dearth – Mayo Clinic
- Kelly Frisch— HealthPartners
- Miranda Gilmore – Fraser Integrated Healthcare
- Badrinath Konety - Allina
- Kimberly Lakhan – College of St. Scholastica
- Deborah Mayland-Poyzer – Fairview Health System
- Rebecca McGill – St. Catherine University
- Robert Miner – Allina Health/Abbott Northwestern
- Christine Mueller—University of Minnesota
- Nate Mussell —Fairview
- Peter Nalin – University of Minnesota Medical School, Duluth campus
- Michelle Noltimier, Chair – HealthPartners Institute
- Thomas Satre – Vice Chair – CentraCare Health
- Troy Taubenheim – Chair - Metro Minnesota Council on GME
- Meghan Walsh – Hennepin County Medical Center
- Lynda Welage – University of Minnesota

Not in Attendance:

- Miranda Gilmore, Fraser Integrated Healthcare
- Kathleen Macken – Allina Health
- Sheila Riggs — University of Minnesota

**Health Department Staff:** Cirrie Byrnes, Nitika Moibi, Zora Radosevich, Diane Reger

**Department of Human Services Staff:** Susan Hammersten

MERC staff can be contacted at [health.merc@state.mn.us](mailto:health.merc@state.mn.us)

Meeting Website <http://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/ruralhealth/merc/committee/index.html>

## Agenda Items

- Welcome – Troy Taubenheim, Chair  
Committee & Membership Updates/ Second Vice Chair Nomination
- Legislative Update – Zora Radosevich, MDH
- Grant Updates
  - Residency Grants
  - Medical Education & Research Costs (MERC) Grant
    - Legislative Update – Zora Radosevich, MDH
    - Grant Cycle Update – Diane Reger, MDH
- Workforce Presentation – Nitika Moibi
- Future Meetings
  - August 2 and November 1, 2023, web-based teleconference, 1 – 3 p.m.
  - Submit topics to committee chairs or MDH staff

## Meeting Notes

**Welcome and Membership:** Troy Taubenheim, chair, called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. He reported that the committee is seeking nominations for a second vice chair position. Interested committee members can submit their name to [health.merc@state.mn.us](mailto:health.merc@state.mn.us).

### **Legislative Update – Zora Radosevich:**

Ms. Radosevich reported that she continues to track several legislative proposals. The Revitalize the Health Care Workforce legislation retains components of the bill to include an increase in funding for research looking at provider shortages and maldistribution of providers across the state, and funding for rural training tracks, rural clinical rotations, and training for primary care providers, including oral health providers. Also continuing to be tracked is additional funding for the International Medical Graduate (IMG) Program which serves as an entry point to encourage employment for health care providers medically trained outside the country. The clinical training component of this program has been found to be very effective for getting international providers into a residency program. Another component of the bill provides for site based clinical training; MDH is interested in exploring factors to address why sites are not currently offering clinical training and identify those sites that could possibly offer more clinical training experiences.

- Additional funding continued to be pursued to provide a two-year extension of funding for the new Mental Health for Health Care Providers program. Applicants would be encouraged to address systemic changes to aid retention and avoid burnout of mental health providers.
- Another provision would allow a pilot using loan forgiveness as a recruitment tool. The recent addition of loan forgiveness to the Home and Community-based Services program will give us some insight into the

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potential for this use of loan forgiveness to help alleviate the shortages for these needed providers in areas of the state who have had extreme difficulty in hiring.

- Continuing the funding for the Dental Innovations grant that had historically been funded through the MERC program but was eliminated when CMS did not renew the 1115 Waiver.
- Expansion of the Loan Forgiveness Program to include all psychiatrists.
- Seeking Pediatric Mental Health Training to support pediatricians across the state.
- Ms. Radosevich encouraged committee members to express their support for these legislative proposals, if appropriate.

#### **Grant Updates:**

Primary Care Residency Grants: Ms. Radosevich explained that these grants will start in 2024, but that the funding for them is being set in place now. Timing was discussed to allow enough lead time for a July 2024 residency. RFPs would open in July 2023, remain open until September, be reviewed in mid-October, and announced in November. The membership agreed. Contracts should be in place and start with the new year.

Medical Education and Research Costs (MERC) Grant: Susan Hammersten, DHS, gave an update on the proposed model for the continuance of MERC funding after the expiration of the current PMAP waiver (\$49.5 m). She explained the Fee-for-Services (FFS) option for hospitals and their affiliated sites that would be implemented under the proposal. The proposed change would be accomplished through an increased FFS hospital payment rate. This will account for approximately 97% of current MERC funding and 70% of grantee sites. Those sites not affiliated with hospitals would continue to be eligible for funding from tobacco (\$7.5 million) and from a combination of funding from the General Fund and Health Care Access Fund (\$2 million). The proposal includes a limitation to the sites that would be eligible for the \$2 million; those funds would no longer be available to sites affiliated with a hospital.

- Ms. Hammersten noted that as of July 1, 2023, the hospital rate will be updated. These rates are set every two years. The earliest date for the proposed changes remains January 1, 2024.
- While the same MERC formula will be used to calculate the grants that will determine the medical education rate component, timing will require the use of historical data to set rates for 2024/2025.
- Rates for 2026/2027 will be based on clinical training applications for training in fiscal years 2022/2023.
- The \$21,714,000 which currently includes the University of Minnesota Board of Regents, Hennepin County Medical Center and the Dental Innovations Grant will not be included in the proposed model.
- Clinical training for FQHCs and Rural Health Clinics will be excluded from the formula. Susan Hammersten indicated that a medical education component will be included in their Medicaid rates. FQHCs and Rural Health Clinics should no longer apply through the MERC program.
- There was no impact on the April 30, 2023, MERC funding of \$59.1 million.
- Troy Taubenheim noted that the Expenditure Work Group should be reconvened to discuss indirect costs. Standardization will make the process more efficient.
- Members asked if there would be any MERC funding for the months from July to December 2023 and were advised that no authorization was included; the existing grant cycle of July to June funding will shift to begin January 1, 2024 with monthly payments.

Grant Cycle Update: Diane Reger, MDH, reported that there was \$59 million in MERC funding distributed this grant cycle.

- Funding was released at the end of April to all Sponsoring Institutions. They have until June 30 to complete their GVRs confirming disbursement of all funding to all training sites. Select training sites will then complete GVRs confirming they received funding. The current cycle closes July 15.
- The next application cycle will open August 15, 2023.

**Workforce Presentation on Psychiatric Nurse Program – Nitika Moibi, MDH:**

- Ms. Moibi reported that she recently attended a conference in Colorado where there was a presentation on “Grow Your Own APRNs and Keep Them Forever”. She spotlighted that growing up rural, having loan forgiveness programs in place and offering training in rural remain top factors for practitioners to end up actually practicing in rural settings. She asked that all members consider how best Minnesota can grow their own and welcomes further discussion of this issue.

With no further business, Chair Troy Taubenheim adjourned the meeting at 2:37 p.m.

## Next Meeting

August 2, 2023, 1 – 3 pm, via Teams.

- Agenda and call-in information will be posted on the [committee website](#) a week before the meeting. Submit possible agenda items to the Committee Chair and/or MERC staff.