



Increase The Number, Types, And Skills Of Health Professionals Through Distance Education

The Challenge: Healthcare services in the state are primarily affiliated with three principal cities: Cheyenne, Casper, and Laramie. Consequently, healthcare resources are geographically regionalized. Of Wyoming’s twenty-three counties, twelve are currently designated as a Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA), thirteen are designated Dental HPSAs, while all twenty-three counties are designated Mental Health HPSAs. Several counties are designated in all three areas. This means that many of Wyoming’s residents must travel long distances to access even basic care services, and often seek healthcare in neighboring states when unable to access needed care locally.

Distance Education as a Solution: Use technology to provide new, continuing, and upgraded education for place-committed providers through three types of educational activities:

- **Training new professionals**
- **“Upgrading” existing health professions workforce**
- **Continuing education for physicians and other health professionals**

Creating new providers will improve access. Increasing the knowledge base of existing professionals will improve quality, increase retention, and in some cases, upgrade professionals to primary care level (e.g., RN to advanced practice nurse).

The mission of the Wyoming Network for Telehealth (WyNETTE) project is to improve access to, and quality of, health care in Wyoming through information and telecommunications technology. The project’s primary objectives are (1) ***increase health care opportunities*** for the state’s residents through telemedicine; (2)

increase the number, types, and skills of health professionals in the state through distance delivery of health care education; and (3) ***increase access to information*** to support both health care and the administration of care through informatics and information technology, research, and policy development.