
FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

June 3, 2020



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NCSL COVID-19 WEBINAR — MOBILIZING A SAFE AND ADEQUATE HEALTH WORKFORCE

Webinar Series. On April 17, 2020, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) held a webinar on mobilizing a safe and adequate health care workforce in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The webinar is available on the NCSL's website [here](#).

Federal and State Actions. Representatives from George Washington University (GWU) discussed some of the health care workforce problems that were in place prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the problems highlighted included historic geographic and specialty maldistribution, competition between various professional interest groups, and lack of national standards on occupational safety for airborne pathogens. The presenter recommended state and federal leaders address system constraints to achieve three goals:

- Surge the number of health care workforce individuals.
- Flex where, how, and by whom care is delivered.
- Protect the workforce.

The presentation then included a list of ideas to increase access to care through scope of practice expansion, ideas for expedited or temporary licensing to surge capacity, and other benefit ideas to support the workforce. GWU also has a data tool for state health workforce estimators and contract tracing workforce estimators available at: www.gwhwi.org/covid-resource.html.

Telehealth Trends. The next part of the webinar addressed leveraging telehealth to increase access to care while limiting exposure. The discussion mostly focused on Medicare policies for Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) and Rural Health Clinics (RHC) relating to telehealth and its challenges, primarily involving reimbursement. There were brief highlights of Medicaid policies and private payer requirements.

State Trends on Waiving Licensing Requirements. The final part of the webinar highlighted the NCSL's efforts to track states that have been taking some sort of action related to health care licensing. The NCSL highlighted that states are increasing reciprocity, modifying regulatory review, utilizing retired health care workers and students to enhance capacity, and reducing administrative burdens for current workers through delaying renewal requirements and waiving fees or continuing education requirements.

Additional Information. Additional information is available from the LSA upon request and from the following sources:

- Iowa COVID-19: coronavirus.iowa.gov/
- Department of Public Health COVID-19: idph.iowa.gov/Emerging-Health-Issues/Novel-Coronavirus
- LSA COVID-19: www.legis.iowa.gov/publications/information/covid19Resources
- NCSL COVID-19: www.ncsl.org/research/health/ncsl-coronavirus-covid-19-resources.aspx

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Doc ID 1136397