

**Abstract**

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VT AHEC is a network of academic and community partners working together to increase the supply, geographic distribution, diversity, and education of Vermont's healthcare workforce. Established in 1996, VT AHEC has a statewide infrastructure with a program office at the University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine and two regional centers, each a 501c-3 non-profit organization. The overarching goal of VT AHEC is to provide statewide programs that support an appropriate, current and future, healthcare workforce so that all Vermonters have access to primary care, including disadvantaged populations and those who live in VT's most rural and underserved areas. VT is made up of 14 counties and has an estimated state population of 626,999. The Northern VT AHEC serves 8 counties (est. pop. 232,409); the Southern VT AHEC serves 5 counties (est. pop. 229,318), and the UVM AHEC Program serves 1 county (est. pop. 164,572).



VT AHEC is funded through multiple grants and contracts including: Federal HRSA, State of Vermont, Vermont Department of Health, University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine (UVM LCOM), The University of Vermont Medical Center, Vermont's 13 community hospitals, and private foundations.

**The Aims of this project are to:**

- 1) Increase access to primary and preventive health services by promoting an adequate supply and distribution of the Vermont health workforce, and**
- 2) Engage with and respond to community health workforce development needs in Vermont**

VT AHEC works across the healthcare workforce pipeline from middle school to practicing health professionals (e.g., medical, nursing, dental, social work, public health), on programs such as health careers awareness and exploration, preceptor recruitment for medical student clinical rotations, interprofessional and community-based projects, workforce recruitment and retention (e.g., educational loan repayment programs, physician recruitment), quality improvement projects, and continuing education for health professionals. Each program includes a strong evaluation plan. A recently re-designed AHEC data system will allow longitudinal tracking of program participants. This data system is foundational to the new AHEC Scholars program for health professions students and to assess impact of AHEC programs on the VT health care workforce.

In 2018-19, VT AHEC provided continuing education to 2,348 participants, generated more than 1,104 high school and undergraduate student connections, and involved all of the medical students at the UVM LCOM. VT AHEC worked with 168 primary care practice sites in the state, almost half of which precepted UVM LCOM students. Additionally, VT AHEC's physician recruitment program directly facilitated 16 new physician placements in VT: 11 primary care and 5 specialty care physicians (6 placed in rural counties, and 1 placed at Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). VT AHEC supported 656 health professions student clinical rotations.

VT AHEC collaborates extensively with healthcare workforce stakeholders throughout the state including schools, practices, healthcare organizations, professional societies, policymakers, government agencies, and numerous community organizations. VT AHEC is an essential healthcare workforce development infrastructure in the state working to **“Connect students to careers, professionals to communities, and communities to better health.”**