



ASSOCIATION OF CLINICIANS
FOR THE UNDERSERVED

**ANNUAL REPORT
2022**

INTRODUCTION: STRATEGICALLY EVOLVING TO ACHIEVE HEALTH EQUITY FOR ALL

A Message from Our Executive Director

In 2022, I was continually inspired and humbled by the incredible work and leadership that our network of healthcare professionals, organizations, and partners demonstrated in caring for their communities in a rapidly evolving healthcare landscape. The lingering COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with funding uncertainties, concerns about Medicaid unwinding, and threats to the 340B program, made this a challenging year for health centers and our healthcare workforce. But as always, you stepped up and stepped forward, and we were privileged to continue to support your vital work to care for patients who need it most.

The **Association of Clinicians for the Underserved** (ACU) was also privileged to celebrate two major milestones in 2022: the honoring of the 50th anniversary of the National Health Service Corps—whose members and alumni founded our network—and the creation of a new **strategic plan** to enhance our work. ACU grew exponentially this year, debuting new programming to support **workforce recruitment and retention** and incorporate **justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion** in healthcare, and along with expanded programming and extensive training opportunities, our membership soared to record levels this year. We continued our initiative to **prepare new members** of the NHSC to improve care for underserved communities. With best practices in place to ensure safety, we united our amazing network of members and advocates in Washington, D.C., for our first in-person **ACU Conference** in two years. And we further expanded our advocacy for the National Health Service Corps, Health Center Program, Teaching Health Centers, and other vital health extender programs.

To support the incredible work that you and your organizations are doing every day, ACU is committed to further building our programs, services, and advocacy. We are so pleased to continue dedicating ourselves as a team and organization to supporting member needs and maximizing our collective mission. As we honor milestones and continue to evolve, ACU's core priority will remain the same: to be a **professional home** for those dedicated to caring for the underserved, to health equity, to growing and improving our nation's healthcare system, and to transforming underserved communities into thriving communities.

As we reflect on the incredible accomplishments and advances of 2022, we are re-energized to work with our members, partners, and community at large to achieve our singular vision in the years to come—to **establish a robust and diverse healthcare workforce to help transform communities to achieve health equity for all**. Thank you for making 26 years of ACU possible, and for the lifechanging work and advocacy you do everyday.



**Amanda
Pears Kelly**
ACU Executive
Director

WHO WE ARE: OUR COMMUNITY

A Transdisciplinary Network

For 26 years, the **Association of Clinicians for the Underserved** (ACU) has worked tirelessly to establish a robust and diverse workforce to help transform communities to achieve health equity for all. Incorporated in 1996, ACU's network arose from alumni and members of the **National Health Service Corps** (NHSC).

Today, ACU has risen to become the leading advocate for the NHSC and a national voice for the health center workforce. A transdisciplinary **membership organization**, we lead advocacy, clinical, operational, and equity excellence to develop and support clinicians and the healthcare workforce caring for America's medically underserved communities. Based in Washington, D.C., ACU celebrated our 26th anniversary in 2022, and our membership continues to grow by leaps and bounds.



**ASSOCIATION OF CLINICIANS
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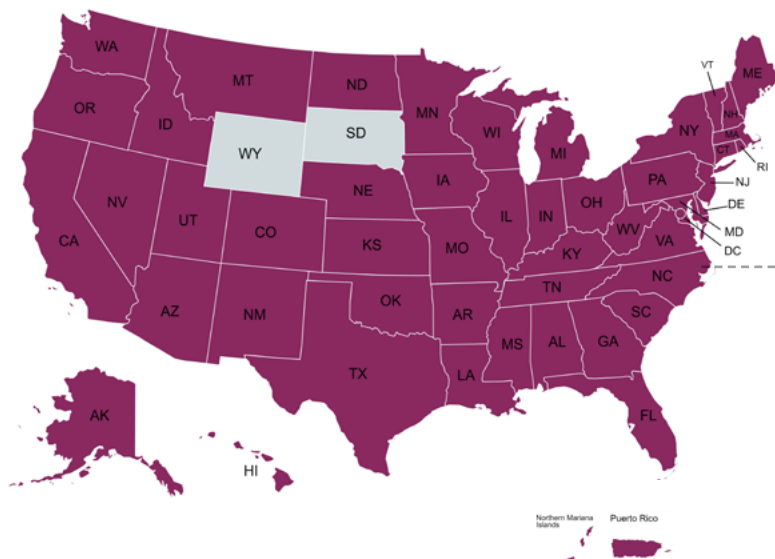
26,000+

Our Collective Community Includes

Organizations, Individuals, & Advocates

ACU unites a **diverse community** of health centers, primary care associations, free clinics, and health departments, as well as healthcare professionals, students, and health equity advocates from across the U.S.

**Organizational and Individual
Members** in 2022 hailed from the
following states (in purple):



AN EVOLVING STRATEGIC PLAN

For 26 years, ACU has been dedicated to supporting the healthcare workforce caring for our nation's medically underserved communities, and COVID-19's devastating impact only heightened that mission's importance. During COVID-19, the communities we serve faced greater mortality and challenges in social determinants of health. These inequities, coupled with the pandemic, placed unprecedented demands on the healthcare workforce caring for those patients.

"In response, ACU has expanded to better meet the needs of our members, network, and communities," said Amanda Pears Kelly, ACU Executive Director. "We recognize that an ever-evolving strategy is necessary to not only meet the demands of the pandemic, an exhausted workforce, and deep inequities in healthcare—but also to prepare for coming challenges and opportunities, and ultimately create a more equitable future."

To that end, ACU's Board of Directors and staff began strategic planning to ensure that we can continue to offer optimal support and interventions in an evolving healthcare system. Leveraging community insights, ACU worked to discern the current needs and future demands facing our network and to redefine our strategic priorities. ACU is proud to unveil our new vision and mission statement:

VISION: ESTABLISH A ROBUST AND DIVERSE WORKFORCE TO HELP TRANSFORM COMMUNITIES TO ACHIEVE HEALTH EQUITY FOR ALL.

MISSION: LEADING ADVOCACY, CLINICAL, OPERATIONAL AND EQUITY EXCELLENCE TO DEVELOP AND SUPPORT CLINICIANS AND THE HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE CARING FOR AMERICA'S UNDERSERVED.

ACU's Board also identified key strategic priorities to guide ACU's work in coming years, which staff are now operationalizing. As Board President Dr. Doug Olson noted, "the healthcare system and the realities facing our communities are everchanging, and we're committed to continually evolving our plan to best meet the needs of our network and the under-resourced communities for whom we do this vital work."

Our Strategic Priorities



Supporting
the
Healthcare
Workforce



Ensuring
Financial
Sustainability



Strengthening
Advocacy for
the Healthcare
Workforce



Elevating
Our
Branding



Ensuring
Justice, Equity,
Diversity, and
Inclusion

A woman with curly hair and glasses is speaking at a podium with a microphone. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. The word "PROGRAMS" is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image, flanked by horizontal dashed lines.

PROGRAMS

THE STAR² CENTER

Working closely with the Bureau of Primary Health Care, our **Solutions, Training, and Assistance for Recruitment and Retention (STAR²) Center** is the leading national organization working to build and sustain a robust health center workforce by providing resources, trainings, and technical assistance for health centers, primary care associations, health center-controlled networks, and other organizations.



Highlights of the STAR² Center's 2022 activities include:

Virtual and In-Person Trainings

96

Trainings

3,332

Attendees

4.4/5

Satisfaction Rating

Learning Collaboratives

32

Sessions

725

Attendees

Including Collaboratives on: Oral Health Workforce, Implementing & Responding to Staff Satisfaction Surveys, Strategic Workforce Planning for HP-ET Retention & Recruitment, Recruitment Boot Camp 4.0, Fall 2022 Recruitment Boot Camp: Mental Health Staff Edition, & Fall 2022 Staff Satisfaction Surveys

THE STAR² CENTER (Cont.)

Selected Resources & Publications

Health Center Comprehensive Workforce Plan Template

This **robust document**—including a template, action plan, and instructions—helps health centers evaluate and enhance their workforce by creating an evolving plan that can be modified to respond to changing needs and evolving healthcare environments.

Recruitment & Retention Data Profile Dashboards

These regularly updated, **comprehensive resources** help health centers assess their data, compare against state and national trends, and reach their recruitment and retention goals.

New Publications

- **Organizational Leadership and Resiliency Toolkit**
- **Pay Equity Checklist**
- **The Emotional Toll of Caring for Others: A Factsheet on Supporting Staff Mental Health Through Compensation Equity and Inclusive Benefits**
- **Best Practices for Adapting to the Remote and Hybrid Workforce in Team-Based Care**
- **Perspectives from the Field: Retaining Medical Assistants and Dental Assistants**

Webinar Series

Series included the **2021-2022** and **2022-2023** PCA & HCCN Workforce Professional Development series, as well as webinars on **Retention and Recruitment of Specific Populations** and **Building HP-ET Programs**, among many individual sessions.

STAR² Center Talks Workforce Success Podcast

Now in its fourth season, this **podcast's latest seasons** explored practical strategies for employee self-care and best practices to combat burnout and compassion fatigue.

Workforce Self-Care and Planning Resource Repositories

These online hubs provide vital strategies to help organizations grow their support of **self-care in their workforce**, to assist individuals to engage in self-care, and to help health centers **develop workforce plans** to support their future growth.

Resource Downloads

at
chcworkforce.org



6,803

NHSC EMPOWERING CLINICIANS FOR RESILIENCY AND TRANSFORMATIVE CARE INITIATIVE

Supporting the National Health Service Corps

In 2021, ACU partnered with Abt Associates on a **Bureau of Health Workforce initiative** to prepare National Health Service Corps (NHSC) participants for the demands of working in health professional shortage areas. In 2023, individuals participating in the NHSC Students to Services Loan Repayment Program and Scholarship Program will have access to 20 webinars and a large array of educational resources to support their work in under-resourced communities. NHSC-Approved Site staff will also be invited and encouraged to attend webinars to improve organizational resiliency.



Key Program Figures

20

Webinars

10

Executive
Summaries

14

Infographics

3

Guides

NHSC EMPOWERING CLINICIANS FOR RESILIENCY AND TRANSFORMATIVE CARE INITIATIVE (Cont.)

Key Program Figures



EXTENSIVE

Resource Compendium



3,000+

Community Spotlights

The Program Will Help NHSC Clinicians Better Understand:

Clinician Wellbeing & Self-Care

The initiative will educate participants about the drivers, symptoms, and consequences of clinician burnout and coping strategies to mitigate its impacts. Trainings will also highlight common burnout self-assessment tools and ways NHSC participants can work with leadership staff to make organizational changes to reduce burnout.

Fostering Resiliency at the Organizational Level

Participants will learn about organizational approaches to cultivate clinician resiliency and create supportive work environments, with a focus on protecting clinician health and well-being during crises.

Health Inequities and Social Determinants of Health

The initiative will show NHSC participants how to identify health inequities in clinical practices and communities and strategies to address those inequities, including the use of community partnerships. Resources will also provide tools to screen for social determinants of health and interventions to address and reduce those determinants.

JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION

Helping Health Centers Work Toward JEDI

ACU strives to achieve justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) both internally and throughout the health center workforce and broader healthcare sector. Integral to ACU's mission, our **JEDI program** conducted a host of trainings in 2022 across the U.S. with primary care associations and health centers to help organizations integrate anti-racist, inclusive workforce strategies.



**Trainings
Conducted**



Attendees



**Organizations
Represented**

In addition to ongoing trainings and curriculum development, ACU also held a two-day **JEDI Champion Train-the-Trainer pilot event** with the support of the Centene Corporation to help health center representatives develop and enhance their skills as JEDI champions, as well as an intensive half-day workshop, "Workforce Resilience & Transformation: Getting Started in JEDI," at ACU's 2022 Conference in Washington, D.C.

Exploring Anti-Racist Approaches to Youth Mental Healthcare

Black, Indigenous, Latine, and other people of color exhibiting mental healthcare needs are less frequently offered appropriate mental health services, are more frequently diverted to correctional facilities, and are more likely to receive lower-quality care than their White counterparts. To help address this, in October 2022, ACU **convened national stakeholders** in Washington, D.C., to address racism in mental healthcare for youth—and to develop anti-racist approaches—with grant support from the CVS Health Foundation.

Over two days, ACU brought together leaders from the American Academy of Pediatrics, National Medical Association, National Hispanic Medical Association, Association of American Indian Physicians, and others to discuss anti-racist strategies for pediatric mental health care, as well as broader policy solutions to mental health inequities. ACU's JEDI program will release its resulting recommendations in 2023 to help set the stage for systemic change.

EYE HEALTH & VISION CARE

Healthy vision is crucial to overall health, but many historically marginalized communities, including those served by federally qualified health centers, have little access to eye health and vision care. ACU is leading the charge to increase access to these services for medically underserved populations with partners across the U.S. Supported by the Centene Foundation for Quality Healthcare, ACU provided **technical assistance and grants** to help five health centers start or expand services in 2022.

Grant Support for Health Center Vision Programs



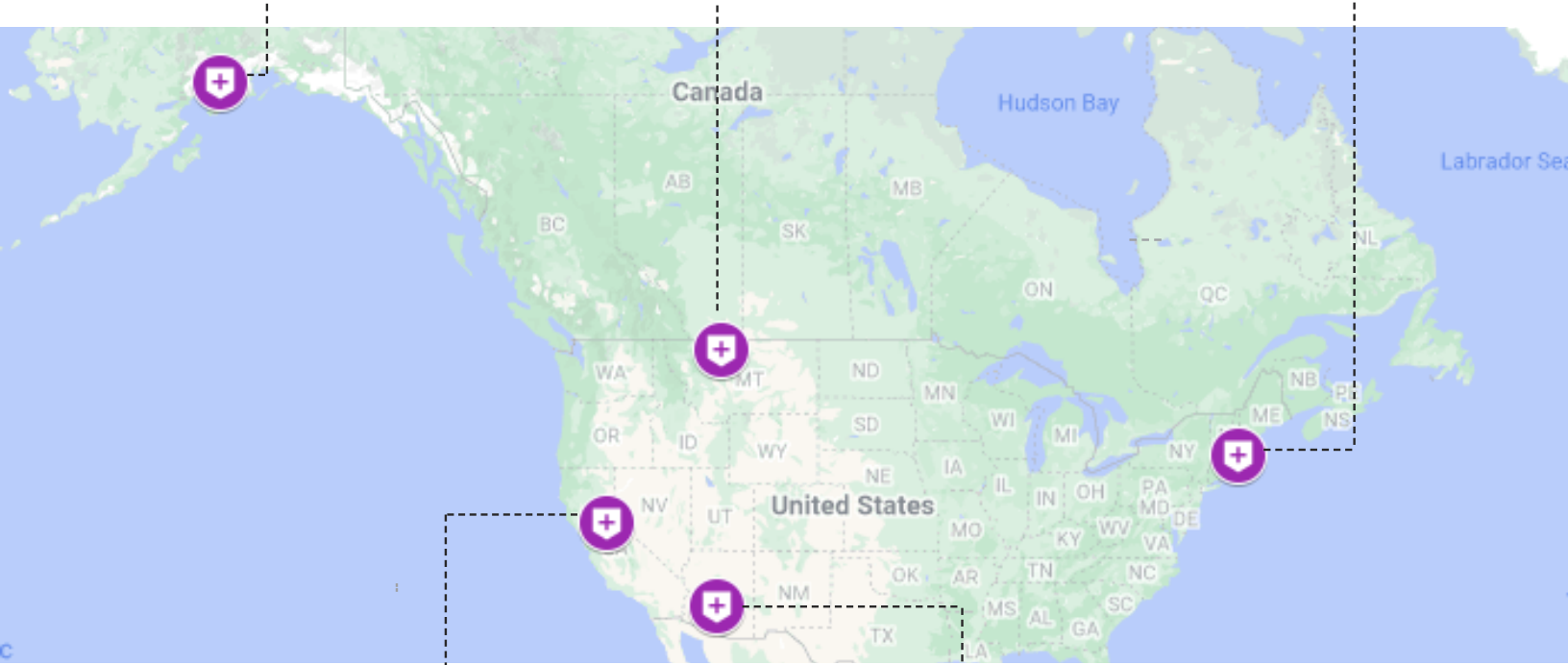
2022 Grants to FQHCs
to
Start or Expand
Vision Programs

Recipients Included

Peninsula Community
Health Services of Alaska
Soldotna, AK

Marias Healthcare
Services
Shelby, MT

Lowell Community
Health Center
Lowell, MA



El Dorado Community
Health Centers
Placerville, CA

Native Health
Phoenix, AZ

EYE HEALTH & VISION CARE (Cont.)

Spotlight on Health Center Impact

Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (CCH)

Denver, CO

Colorado's largest Health Care for the Homeless provider, CCH expanded and enhanced their ability to provide comprehensive vision care to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness by using their grant to purchase a retinal camera, visual field, and tonometer, allowing them to see more patients and reduce wait times.

PrimaryOne Health (P1H)

Columbus, OH

P1H, also known as Columbus Neighborhood Health Center, increased their ability to provide comprehensive care by using their grant to help purchase an optical coherence tomography (OCT) machine. The OCT machine has allowed P1H to diagnose and treat glaucoma and retinal diseases in medically underserved and disproportionately affected populations.

Eyes on Access: Virtual Trainings to Expand CHC Vision Care

In 2022, ACU partnered with Prevent Blindness and the National Association of Community Health Centers to present a **three-part webinar series** to help health centers start and enhance eye health and vision care services. These webinars provided an introduction to CHC vision services, offered lessons learned from organizations that had successfully integrated vision services in care, and explored best practices for creating and staffing optometry departments in CHC settings. A further "office hours" session provided attendees with an opportunity to ask questions of national experts.

4

**Virtual
Events**

908

**Webinar
Attendees**

100+

**Organizations
Represented**

SUICIDE SAFER CARE

The Largest Effort in History to Train Primary Care Providers in Suicide Prevention

In 2022, ACU in collaboration with Concert Health completed the fifth year in the largest effort in history to train primary care providers in suicide prevention—the **Suicide Safer Care (SSC) program**. Generously supported by the Centene Corporation, the SSC program provided resources for, and instructed numerous healthcare professionals in, evidence-based strategies to prevent suicide.

In 2022, **Suicide Safer Care** addressed emerging focus areas through national trainings and publications: pediatric suicide prevention, geriatric suicide prevention, and addressing the risk of suicide in healthcare professionals. Highlights of the program's 2022 activities include:

National Trainings

7

Webinars & Conference Presentations

1,129

Attendees

4.5/5

Satisfaction Rating
(Webinars & ACU
Conference Session)

4.5/5

Knowledge Increase Rating
(Webinars & ACU
Conference Session)

SUICIDE SAFER CARE (Cont.)

Selected Resources

Suicide Safer Care: A Toolkit for Primary Care Providers Working with Geriatric Patients

This detailed toolkit explores the scope and reality of the geriatric suicide crisis, the dynamics of depression in elderly adults, risk factors and warning signs, and screening tools, clinical pathways, and evidence-based interventions.

Suicide Safer Care: Quick Tips for Medical Students & Other Healthcare Professionals in Training

This brief explores suicide risk in healthcare professionals and provides organizational approaches to support employees and reduce suicide risk.



**Toolkits
and
Fact Sheets
Published**

A New Partnership for Youth Suicide Prevention



To help address the crisis of youth suicide, ACU began a new partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) in 2022 on its new **Team: Changing Minds** initiative. In collaboration with BBBSA, Futures Without Violence, and the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, ACU is helping develop materials that will lead to the creation of a national network of

mental health responders to help youth overcome mental health challenges. The partnership will also lead to the creation of instructional videos on youth suicide prevention, as well as informing best practices in prevention for staff working with youth.

CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE

Exploring Standards for CHC Excellence

ACU's **Centers of Excellence** (COE) initiative works to identify standards for excellence in care for medically underserved communities. In its first two years, the COE program explored best practices in JEDI, suicide prevention in primary care, eye health and vision care, and workforce recruitment and retention, creating **four briefs** to assist health centers in quality improvement. ACU's COE program is now building on these findings to develop a framework of standards to help recognize—and help CHCs achieve—excellence in care.

**Briefs
Developed**





NATIONAL CONFERENCES

Health Center Workforce

Health Center Workforce Survey Admin

- Anticipated administration in the Fall
- Administered to all HCO and Local AHA
- 25-30 minutes to complete the survey
- Health center becomes main point of contact
- Clinicians will get HC staff email and survey link
- Two month launch, staggered roll-out
- 30-day window to complete the survey
- Health Centers to receive high-level

Survey information and resources provided on our website (www.clinicians.org) starting in the month of October

2022 ACU CONFERENCE

Resilience & Transformation in Care

ACU united 235 clinicians, administrators, advocates, and public health leaders in Washington, D.C., and virtually at our **2022 Conference**, “**Resilience & Transformation in Care**,” on July 31-Aug. 2. In three days of learning, networking, and fellowship, #ACUConf examined strategies to support the healthcare workforce and bridge gaps for a more equitable, just, diverse, and inclusive post-pandemic healthcare system.

In addition to 24 educational workshops, the event also featured ACU’s first JEDI Pre-Conference Workshop and a unique **National Health Service Corps 50th Anniversary Gala** celebrating the NHSC’s half-century of service. General sessions also explored expanding diversity in the healthcare workforce, federal workforce updates, and more.



Key Figures

24

Workshops

3

Tracks

235

Attendees

138

Organizations
Represented

98%

Agreed that
General Sessions Were
Useful & Relevant

2022 ACU CONFERENCE (Cont.)

Conference Highlights

Dr. Kameron Leigh Matthews of Tour for Diversity in Medicine speaks to attendees in #ACUConf's opening session.

Beth Wrobel, CEO of HealthLinc, accepts ACU's 2022 Marc Wetherhorn Advocate of the Year Award.

ACU's 2022 Congressional Champion winner Senator Jon Ossoff (D-GA) addresses attendees.



Dr. Michele Proser discusses financial health as a social determinant in an #ACUConf workshop.

Jim Macrae, Head of BPHC, prepares to speak in a keynote address on the healthcare workforce.

JEDI PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP

Workforce Resilience & Transformation: Getting Started in JEDI

This intensive half-day workshop introduced attendees to **JEDI** culture in organizations, practical steps to operationalize JEDI within their workplaces, and how to help develop and inform JEDI action plans.

Participants also had the chance to learn firsthand from a panel of health center leaders working to **integrate JEDI principles** at AccessHealth Community Health Centers, Valle del Sol, and San Ysidro Health as they shared successes, challenges, and lessons learned along the way.

Organizations Represented

15

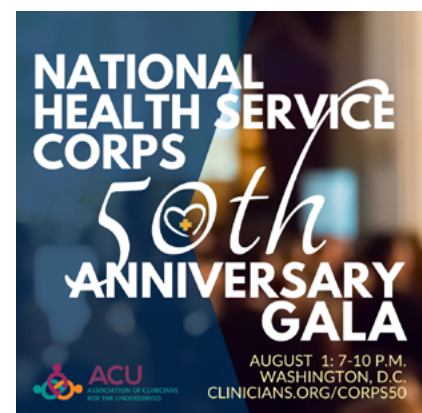
NHSC 50TH ANNIVERSARY GALA



A Singular Celebration

On August 1 in Washington, D.C., ACU united National Health Service Corps members, alumni, and supporters in honoring the NHSC's half-century of connecting clinicians with under-resourced communities in our **NHSC 50th Anniversary Gala**.

The celebration opened with an address from author Eric Redman, a former Congressional staffer who played a pivotal role in drafting legislation leading to the Corps' founding. HRSA Administrator Carole Johnson also **honored the NHSC's history** of "putting critical patient needs up front in under-resourced communities." The night continued with the unveiling of a **video commemorating the Corps' history** and a host of **award ceremonies**.

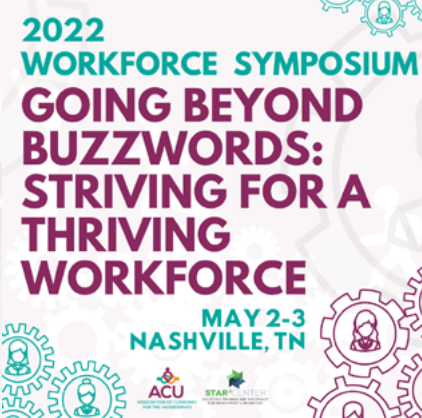


Click on the logo to view the recording of the event!

2022 WORKFORCE SYMPOSIUM

Supporting the CHC Workforce


The ACU STAR² Center's **Workforce Symposium, Going Beyond Buzzwords: Striving for a Thriving Workforce**, united professionals from across the U.S. for two days of learning to enhance health center workforce retention and recruitment. From May 2-3 in Nashville, TN, attendees learned strategies to foster resilience and transformations in care to effectively support CHC teams. A two-day intensive **Retention & Recruitment Planning Workshop** offered further training to help create or revamp health center workforce plans.



34

Organizations Represented

With attendees from 15 health centers, 15 primary care associations, 1 National Training and Technical Assistance Partner organization, and three other entities.



ADVOCACY & SERVICE

POLICY & ADVOCACY

Standing Up for the NHSC & Healthcare Workforce

ACU is the nation's **leading advocate** for the National Health Service Corps, spearheading the effort to protect and secure funding for this and other vital programs to strengthen the healthcare workforce. ACU also works to lift the voices of our patients and clinicians on Capitol Hill, advocating tirelessly for health equity and to make our healthcare system more inclusive, responsive, and accessible. **Join us!**

Selected Policy & Advocacy Activities

Vital Advocacy for the NHSC

ACU continued to build on the unprecedented success achieved in 2021 when we proudly led a coalition of stakeholders to advocate for long-term, stable funding for the National Health Service Corps, ultimately leading to **\$1+ billion** in new NHSC funding as part of the **American Rescue Plan Act, FY2022 appropriations**, and **investment** from the Biden administration. ACU continued to lead a coalition of stakeholders in 2022 to achieve our vision for **strengthening the NHSC and healthcare workforce** in the face of new challenges, rallying health centers, clinicians, and advocates to protect and expand funding for the NHSC, Health Center Program, Nurse Corps, and Teaching Health Centers.

Elevating JEDI in Health Policy

ACU advocated vigorously to integrate justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in care for minoritized communities, as well as the healthcare workforce, in 2022. Additionally, ACU joined the Advancing Racial Equity in COVID-19 Response and Beyond coalition in authoring **recommendations** for COVID-19 vaccine and testing equity, **convened stakeholders** to explore anti-racist approaches to youth mental healthcare, and more.

Educating Our Community

To keep our network informed on an evolving political landscape, ACU released numerous **fact sheets**, **statements**, and analyses on U.S. **midterm elections**, the FY23 **Omnibus Bill**, and more.

Strengthening Access to Care & Eliminating Barriers

In 2022, ACU continued its advocacy for targeted investment to strengthen access to care. Among other activities, ACU signed on to letters supporting the **PA Education Public Health Initiatives Act**, the bipartisan Safer Communities Act's **Medicaid provisions**, and more.

2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



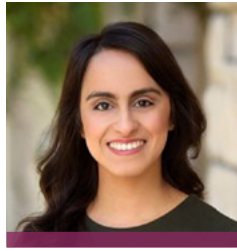
Douglas Olson, MD

President
Connecticut Physician Health Program



Shelley Spires, MHCA

Vice President
Albany Area Primary Health Care



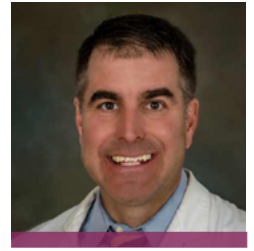
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DC Department of Health Care Finance



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Presidio County Health Services



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Illinois Primary Health Care Association



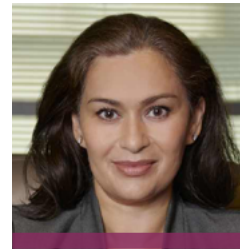
Ellis Frazier, MD

Director
Pike Medical & Surgical Associates



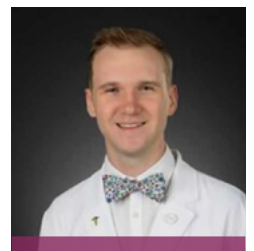
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Cherokee Health Systems



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Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center



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University of Oklahoma College of Medicine



Christian Neal, MD, MPA

Director
Johnson Health Center



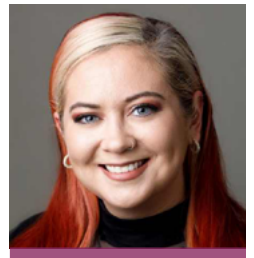
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Director
Health Information Exchanges & Technology



Kirsten Thomsen, PA

Director
Interdisciplinary Care, Homeless & Migrant Populations



Ashley Wallace

Director
Kansas Office of Primary Care and Rural Health

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CVS Health



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