

Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Workforce Supports Subcommittee Meeting

Meeting Agenda

Date of Meeting: Thursday, July 11, 2024

Time: 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Virtual: [Zoom Link](#)

This is a meeting of the **Workforce Supports Subcommittee** of the permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. This subcommittee will collect data and analyze initiatives that address the workforce crisis for people who provide services to individuals with disabilities.

Members Participating Remotely	
1	Angela Ortiz (Chair) – Director of Business Development and Strategy, Partners for Youth with Disabilities.
2	Andrew Levrault – Deputy General Counsel, Disabled Persons Protection Commission
3	Chris White – CEO & President, Road to Responsibility, Inc
4	Representative Kay Khan – Massachusetts House of Representatives
Members Not Present	

Action items	Person responsible
1 Invite the Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA) to discuss their workforce survey	Andrew and Imene
2 Set a meeting cadence with Dr. Patricia Yu/EOHHS for quarterly updates on workforce solutions	Angela and Imene

Agenda

- Welcome, Roll Call, approval of minutes
- **Guest Speaker: Patricia Yu, Senior Director of Healthcare Workforce Policy at the MA Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS)**

Dr. Patricia Yu provided an update on the state's efforts to address healthcare workforce challenges. She has been instrumental in navigating the state through critical workforce issues during the COVID-19 pandemic and is involved in building a resilient healthcare workforce in Massachusetts.

Background: Dr. Yu previously worked as the lead policy analyst for the 2015 White House Conference on Aging and has a background in clinical social work. Her research focuses on integrating the immigrant workforce into community-based care settings, improving consumer outcomes, and enhancing the role of workers.

Key Points from Dr. Yu's Presentation:

- **Workforce Issues:** There has been a significant increase in the number of people with disabilities living longer, which is great, but the workforce has not adapted to meet these changing needs. Workforce shortages were an issue even before the pandemic and have worsened over time.
- **Aging Workforce & Burnout:** Many healthcare workers are leaving the field due to burnout, exacerbating the workforce shortage. Efforts are being made at both the state and federal levels to stabilize the workforce, including extensive recruitment initiatives.
- **Massachusetts Workforce Needs:** The state is facing critical shortages in licensing and entry-level roles. Cross-cabinet collaboration has been established, with EOHHS playing a key role. The top priorities are nursing, direct care, and behavioral health (including mental health).
- **Addressing Bottlenecks:** Efforts are underway to streamline policy and regulatory processes, particularly in healthcare licensing, to reduce delays. The Department of Public Health is making it easier for nurses to gain credentials, including out-of-state reciprocity.

Workforce Development Initiatives:

- **Licensing:** New policies are reducing bottlenecks for nurses and healthcare workers. Regulatory changes include allowing self-attestation for abuse and neglect checks for license renewals.
- **Home Grants & Training Programs:** \$3.6 million has been allocated to fund 84 community programs focused on direct care workers. Materials are translated into multiple languages (Spanish, Haitian Creole, Chinese).
- **Career Pathways:** Efforts are underway to develop clear pathways for direct care workers to work across multiple settings.

Nursing & Behavioral Health:

- **Nursing Council:** A public-private council is addressing sustainability issues within the nursing workforce. Recommendations are pending approval by legislators.
- **Behavioral Health Trust Fund:** \$190 million is allocated to support the behavioral health pipeline. Programs rolling out in 2024 will provide scholarships, field placements, and \$20 million for clinical supervision, which is currently underfunded.

Q&A Session:

- **Data Collection:** Questions were raised about how the state tracks workforce data. Dr. Yu explained that EOHHS collaborates with CHIA (Center for Health Information and Analysis) and has rolled out a survey to capture workforce trends across 11 healthcare sectors. There is ongoing work on a nursing dashboard in collaboration with the Department of Public Health to better understand trends and workforce needs.
- **Behavioral Health Trust Fund:** In response to questions about student loan repayment, it was explained that MassHealth oversees a \$100 million loan repayment program for Master's students and clinicians.
- **Direct Support Workers:** Discussion around the recognition of direct support workers as an official worker category in the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which would help track salary trends and support workforce development.

Key Takeaways:

- The state is making significant efforts to address healthcare workforce challenges, with a focus on reducing regulatory barriers and increasing workforce diversity.
- There is a strong emphasis on supporting the behavioral health sector through the Behavioral Health Trust Fund.
- Collaboration between various state agencies and organizations, such as CHIA, is key to tracking and addressing workforce needs.

Next Steps:

- **Follow-Up with CHIA:** Dr. Yu agreed to connect with CHIA to facilitate further collaboration on workforce data and analysis.
- **Workforce Skills Cabinet:** It was clarified that the Workforce Skills Cabinet meetings are not public, but the possibility of meeting with public-facing groups such as this subcommittee was suggested.

Adjournment

Upcoming Meetings:

1. October 10 – Presentation by the U.S. Administration for Community Living, featuring Caroline Ryan, Deputy Director of the Center for Innovation and Partnership.
2. November 14 –