

# **Workforce Shortages in the Allied Health Professions: Barrier to Health Care Access in Texas**

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## **What Are the Allied Health Professions?**

**Clinical Laboratory Scientist  
(Medical Technologist)**

**Radiologic Technologist**

**EMT / Paramedic**

**Physical Therapist**

**Dental Hygienist**

**Respiratory Therapist**

**Medical Records Technologist**

**Medical Assistant**

**Speech-Language Pathologist**

**Audiologist**

**Occupational Therapist**

**Dietitian / Nutritionist**

**Cytogenetic Technologist**

**Dental Laboratory Technologist**

**Respiratory Therapist**

**Physician Assistant**

**etc. . .**

**Over 200 distinct disciplines that provide direct care to patients or essential services to patients and other care providers**

- **Allied health professionals are partners in most aspects of health care: preventing disease, managing chronic disease, diagnosing diseases and infections, providing direct patient care, etc.**
- **Allied health professionals are trained in a variety of educational settings: community colleges, proprietary schools, four-year colleges, universities, and academic health centers.**
- **Allied health professionals constitute 60-65% of the health care workforce.**
- **8-10 allied health professionals are required for every physician.**
- **Half of the fastest growing occupations projected through 2016 are in the allied health professions.**

- **To maintain current levels of care, the collective fields of allied health must increase the number of practitioners by 33.8% in the U.S. by the year 2016.**
- **A shortage of at least 1.6 million to 2.5 million allied health workers in the U.S. is predicted by 2020.**
- **Allied health professionals are a key component in increasing and improving access to health care in Texas.**
- **Workforce shortages in allied health professions in Texas are as severe as in nursing, or worse.**
- **Health care access problems in Texas cannot be solved without addressing allied health workforce shortages.**

## Growth of Health Professions Workforce in Texas, 2004-2014

Profession	Projected Growth, 2004-2014	% Growth, 2004-2014
<b>Physical Therapist</b>	<b>4,050</b>	<b>39%</b>
<b>Respiratory Therapist</b>	<b>2,800</b>	<b>39%</b>
<b>Dental Hygienist</b>	<b>3,550</b>	<b>38%</b>
Registered Nurse	59,600	37%
<b>Occupational Therapist</b>	<b>2,350</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>Speech Language Pathologist</b>	<b>3,100</b>	<b>30%</b>
Physician	2,650	29%
<b>EMT/Paramedic</b>	<b>3,350</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Clinical Laboratory Scientist</b>	<b>3,200</b>	<b>25%</b>
Dentist	1,100	16%

Texas Workforce Commission, Data Link, Future Job Growth by Occupation 2004-2014.

## Number of Professionals Per 100,000 Population in Texas 2007

Profession	Metro Non-Border	Nonmetro Non-Border	Metro Border	Nonmetro Border
<b>Dental Hygienist</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>10</b>
Dentist	42	26	18	12
Primary Care Physician	72	55	51	36
Nurse Practitioner	25	16	17	8
<b>Occupational Therapist</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Physical Therapist</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Physician Assistant</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Psychologist</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Speech-Language Pathologist</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>16</b>

Supply Trends Among Licensed Health Professions, Texas. <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/CHS/hprc>

## Job Openings vs. Supply for Selected Professions in Texas 2006-2016

Profession	# Annual Openings <sup>1</sup>	# Supplied <sup>2</sup>	#/Percent Unfilled Positions <sup>1</sup>
<b>Clinical Laboratory Scientist</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>269 / 52%</b>
<b>Dental Hygienist</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>208 / 39%</b>
<b>EMT/Paramedic</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>204 / 43%</b>
<b>Occupational Therapist</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>199 / 60%</b>
<b>Physical Therapist</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>375 / 71%</b>
<b>Physician Assistant</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>16 / &lt;1%</b>
<b>Respiratory Therapist</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>27 / 7%</b>
<b>Speech Language Pathologist</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>171 (est)</b>	<b>339 / 66%</b>
<b>Registered Nurse</b>	<b>8,565</b>	<b>7,694</b>	<b>871 / 10%</b>

1. Texas Workforce Commission, Data Link, Future Job Growth by Occupation 2004-2014. <http://www.tracer2.com/cgi/dataanalysis/AreaSelection.asp?tableName=Occprj>
2. Froeschele, Rick. Economist, Texas Workforce Commission. Personal conversation, March 25, 2009

## **Key Strategies for the Addressing Allied Health Workforce Shortages in Texas**

- **Strategy 1: Increase the supply of allied health professionals in Texas**
- **Strategy 2: In order to produce more allied health professionals, educational institutions must be able to:**
  - **admit more students**
  - **hire additional faculty**
  - **increase the number of educational programs**



# **Obstacles to Strategies for Addressing Allied Health Workforce Shortages**

**Strategy 1: Increase the supply of allied health professionals in Texas**

## **Obstacles**

- **Lack of awareness of the allied health professions**
- **Few pre-professional programs to prepare students for professional programs (e.g., JAMP)**
- **Stagnant or inadequate funding for educational programs at all levels**
- **Financial aid is limited, especially for post-baccalaureate entry-level programs (e.g., physical therapy, physician assistant, audiology, speech-language pathology, etc.)**

## **Obstacles to Strategies for Addressing Allied Health Workforce Shortages**

**Strategy 2: In order to produce more allied health professionals, educational institutions must be able to: admit more students, hire additional faculty, increase the number of educational programs**

### **Obstacles**

- Lack of awareness of academic careers among health care professionals**
- Heavy faculty workloads**
- Sharp differences between salaries in academia and the industry**

## **Obstacles to Strategies for Addressing Allied Health Workforce Shortages**

**Strategy 2: In order to produce more allied health professionals, educational institutions must be able to: admit more students, hire additional faculty, increase the number of educational programs**

### **Obstacles (continued)**

- Cost and time to earn an advanced degree to meet accreditation requirements**
- Late point of entry for faculty careers**

# **Recommendations for Addressing Allied Health Workforce Shortages**

## **Strategy 1: Increase the supply of allied health professionals in Texas**

### **Recommendations**

- **Encourage partnerships between high schools, community colleges, universities, and academic health centers to promote allied health professions (e.g., dual credit courses, pre-professional training, etc.)**
- **Increase financial aid for students in allied health education programs (grants, scholarships, work study, etc.)**
- **Extend student loan forgiveness programs to allied health professionals; expand loan forgiveness programs in medically-underserved areas**

## **Recommendations for Addressing Allied Health Workforce Shortages**

**Strategy 2: In order to produce more allied health professionals, educational institutions must be able to: admit more students, hire additional faculty, increase the number of educational programs**

### **Recommendations**

- Extend student loan forgiveness programs to allied health faculty**
- Offer tuition reimbursement program to children of allied health faculty similar to that offered nursing faculty**
- Offer tuition assistance for allied health faculty who must earn an advanced degree**

# **Recommendations for Addressing Access to Quality Health Care (Recommendations from the Professions)**

## **Recommendations**

- Require licensure for medical technologists and clinical laboratory scientists to practice in Texas (TACLS)**
- Expand patients' access to dental hygiene services to the underserved for triage, preventive care, and education, e.g., collaborative practice in Head Start centers, schools, rural areas, etc. (TDHA)**
- Increase efficiency and effectiveness of dental care by allowing dental hygienists to administer local anesthesia (TDHA)**

## **Recommendations for Addressing Access to Quality Health Care (Recommendations from the Professions)**

### **Recommendations (continued)**

- Increase reimbursement and grants to improve emergency medical services in medically underserved, rural, and border communities (TAA)**
- Fund emergency medical service training in underserved, rural, and border communities (TAA)**
- Preserve the current practice act for respiratory therapy – no changes (TSRC)**
- Allow patients full, direct access to physical therapists for diagnosis of movement disorders and therapy services (TPTA)**

## **Recommendations for Addressing Access to Quality Health Care (Recommendations from the Professions)**

### **Recommendations (continued)**

- Increase dual credit high school courses to include pre-health topics, e.g., anatomy and physiology, pharmacology, medical terminology, pathophysiology (TxHIMA)**
- Add medical assistants to the Texas Medical Practice Act for physician's authority to delegate (TSMA)**
- Require certification for medical assistants to practice invasive procedures, e.g., injections (TSMA)**



# Texas Society of Allied Health Professions Institutional Members

- **Baylor College of Medicine**
- **El Centro College**
- **El Paso Community College**
- **Lamar State College – Orange**
- **Midwestern State University**
- **St. Philip's College (San Antonio)**
- **Texas State University – San Marcos**
- **Texas Woman's University**



## **Texas Society of Allied Health Professions Institutional Members (continued)**

- **Texas Tech University Health Science Center**
- **The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College**
- **The University of Texas at El Paso**
- **The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio**
- **The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston**
- **The University of Texas – Pan American**
- **The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center**



## Professional Associations Consulted for this Testimony

- American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA)
- Texas Academy of Physician Assistants (TAPA)
- Texas Ambulance Association (TAA)
- Texas Association for Clinical Laboratory Science (TACLS)
- Texas Dental Hygienists' Association (TDHA)
- Texas Health Information Management Association (TxHIMA)
- Texas Occupational Therapy Association (TOTA)
- Texas Physical Therapy Association (TPTA)
- Texas Society for Respiratory Care (TSRC)



# Professional Associations Consulted for this Testimony

- Texas Society of Medical Assistants (TMA)
- Texas Society of Radiologic Technologists (TSRT)
- Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association (TSHA)



**The Texas Society of Allied Health Professions is a professional organization dedicated to enhancing and promoting education, research, and clinical practice of allied health professionals within the state. TSAHP provides a vital forum in which allied health educators and practitioners can address and act on mutual concerns.**



**[www.tsahp.org](http://www.tsahp.org)**

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