Abstract

Alaska has continued to experience health care workforce shortages, especially in rural areas of the state. During the 26th State Legislature (2009-2010), several bills addressed behavioral health, primary health care, and dental health care workforce shortages in Alaska. The potential impact of state legislation on the above three high-priority health care occupational categories was evaluated through bill tracking, literature searches, and key informant interviews. Statewide difficulties with recruitment and retention of health care professionals were confirmed. Successful strategies for recruitment and retention vary among provider level and type, as well as geographical area. Successful strategies included support-for-service programs (SFSPs), mentor/supervisory presence and professional development opportunities, and in-state health care professional training. SFSPs are a promising recruitment strategy for most professionals. However, in-state training and collaboration are necessary to build Alaska’s health care infrastructure. Successful policy changes require continuing statewide support to prepare Alaska for increasing health care demands.