



DIVISION OF HEALTH SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATION

Health Protection
Licensure and Certification
Public Health Preparedness and
Response
Rural Health

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday, May 04, 2007
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Healthcare workforce summit set for July 24

PIERRE, S.D. – The second South Dakota Healthcare Workforce Summit, “*Preparing for the Challenge,*” will be held July 24 at the Ramkota in Pierre. The summit is sponsored by the South Dakota Departments of Education, Health and Labor, together with the South Dakota Board of Regents.

The purpose of the summit is to present state strategies for addressing healthcare workforce shortages and to provide participants with tools they can use for building the state’s healthcare workforce.

“The challenges facing South Dakota’s healthcare workforce are immense,” said Sandi Durick, Assistant Administrator of Rural Health for the South Dakota Department of Health. “At the same time the healthcare workforce in our state is aging and nearing retirement, we’re looking at a shrinking pool of potential replacements.”

As of June 2006, at least 50% of registered nurses, LPNs, pharmacists, dentists and physicians in the state were age 46 and over. In addition, the South Dakota State Data Center projects the numbers of South Dakotans of retirement age will increase 58% between 2005 and 2025, which means South Dakota is projected to need an additional 13,000 healthcare workers between 2004 and 2014. Healthcare facilities facing this increased need for providers are looking at fewer high school graduates to fill those slots. The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education estimates the number of students graduating from South Dakota high schools will decrease by 16.5% between 2002 and 2018.

“The economic and social impact of this issue is far-reaching. The widening gap between the supply and demand of healthcare professionals could mean longer waiting periods for care and greater distances to obtain healthcare,” said Durick. “That’s why stakeholders from both healthcare and education are working together on strategies and recommendations to meet the critical need for healthcare workers in our state.”

For more detail about the summit see the Health Department website at <http://ruralhealth.sd.gov> or call the department’s Office of Rural Health at 1-800-738-2301. Online registration for the summit is available at www.ruralhealthevents.sd.gov.