

Fiscal Highlights

Medical Education Council's Rural Residency Program - Angela J. Oh

The Medical Education Council (MEC) was created during the 1997 General Session. The MEC primarily focuses on the following areas:

- 1) retaining the Utah trained healthcare workforce,
- 2) strengthening public-private partnerships, and
- 3) facilitating rural training opportunities.

The Legislature appropriated \$300,000 to the MEC to create a program to place physicians into rural residency training programs throughout the State. As physicians experience the practice of rural medicine, some elect to permanently work in rural communities once their residencies are finished.

Although 15 percent of the state's population resides in rural regions, only seven percent of Utah physicians provide services in these areas. About 31 percent of rural physicians are 55 years or older; therefore are likely to retire within the next 10 years. This amounts to replacing 13 physicians annually in rural Utah. The rural residency program is one way that MEC helps to address this need for the state.

During FY 2013, 20 physicians spent a 2-4 week residency in rural locations such as Blanding, Montezuma Creek, Mount Pleasant, and Nephi. The program also supported residencies for 35 pharmacy students, 18 physician assistants, and three family nurse practitioners. Additionally, dental residents rotated at a clinic in Montezuma Creek.

Additional information about the needs of physicians in rural Utah can be found at MEC's [website](#).