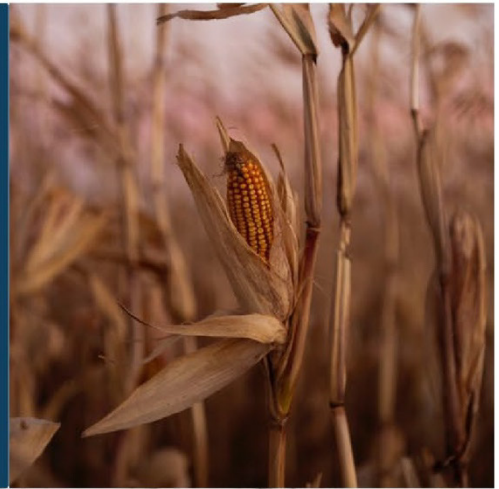


# North Dakota AHEC Scholars Handbook



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# Scholars Overview

## Program Goals

Welcome to the North Dakota Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Scholars Program! Thank you for your interest, this handbook is intended to give an overview of the program and answer frequently asked questions. Let's start with our program goals:

- **Diversity:** We seek to prepare a diverse, culturally competent primary care workforce representative of the communities we serve;
- **Distribution:** We work to improve workforce distribution throughout the state, particularly among rural and underserved areas and populations; and
- **Practice Transformation:** We are developing and maintaining a health care workforce that is prepared to deliver high quality care in a transforming health care delivery system with an emphasis on rural and underserved areas and communities.

The North Dakota Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Scholars Program is a part of a national initiative to prepare tomorrow's health professionals to become leaders in interprofessional, transformative practice for medically underserved communities.

The program consists of didactic and experiential training opportunities with a focus on interprofessional collaborative care and service to rural and underserved populations. AHEC Scholars are eligible to receive an annual stipend upon completion of the program requirements.

North Dakota Scholars join a nationwide cohort of multidisciplinary students committed to rural and underserved communities. North Dakota AHEC is under the umbrella of the National AHEC Organization (NAO), which has ongoing opportunities to connect and learn. Scholars are invited to attend webinars, conferences, and other activities hosted by NAO and states across the country. After graduation, NAO has alumni opportunities as well.

## Our Eight Core Topic Areas

Per requirements from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), all training will be focused on the following eight core topic areas, with a minimum of one hour completed in each core topic:

1. **Interprofessional Education** supports a coordinated, patient-centered model of health care that involves an understanding of the contributions of multiple health care professionals.
2. **Behavioral Health Integration** promotes the development of integrated primary and behavioral health services to better address the needs of individuals with mental health and substance use conditions.

3. **Social Determinants of Health** are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.
4. **Cultural Competency** seeks to improve individual health and build healthy communities by training health care providers to recognize and address the unique culture, language and health literacy of diverse consumers and communities.
5. **Practice Transformation** aims to fully support quality improvement and patient-centered care through goal setting, leadership, practice facilitation, workflow changes, measuring outcomes, and adapting organizational tools and processes to support new team-based models of care delivery.
6. **Virtual Learning and Telehealth** leverages technology to extend access to education and care to individuals who may not otherwise be able to travel or reach health services and learning.
7. **Connecting Communities and Supporting Health Professionals** aims to increase training and development of CHWs and paraprofessionals to be the connectors who are able to serve as liaisons between health professions and the community to facilitate access to service and improve health equity, community/population health, and social determinants of health.
8. **Current & Emerging Health Issues (HRSA approved for North Dakota)**
  - Diseases of despair/illnesses of poverty: high school graduation rates, mental/behavioral health, suicide and suicide prevention
  - Substance use disorders: alcohol, tobacco, opioid use disorder
  - Prevention/health promotion: maternal/fetal wellbeing, physical inactivity, cancer
  - Community health/resiliency: emergency preparedness, pandemic response, emerging diseases, climate change, public health policy
  - Cardiovascular disease/prevention, strokes, diabetes
  - Healthcare workforce shortages, provider well-being, lack of rural preceptors
  - LGBTQ+ health and access
  - Health equity

# Eligibility Requirements

Students are eligible and encouraged to apply to the North Dakota AHEC Scholars Program if they are enrolled and in good academic standing in one of the health professions degree programs listed below. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis, with preferred application times dependent on each program's academic calendar. Per HRSA, participation is during the last two years of these programs, culminating in graduation.

- **Allied Health**
  - Physical Therapy
  - Occupational Therapy
  - Community Health Worker
- **Behavioral Health**
  - Social Work (MSW)
  - Addictions Counseling
- **Medicine**
  - Physicians
- **Physician Assistant**
- **Nursing**
  - Nurse Practitioners
  - Registered Nurse (BSN completion)
  - Nurse Midwives
- **Public Health**
  - Health Policy/Management
- **Other**
  - Pharmacy
  - Radiological Technician

# Program Benefits

- Gain additional leadership knowledge and experience in rural and underserved areas
- Enhance your resume and earn recognition as a student leader in the health community
- National AHEC Organization (NAO) Certificate of Completion and Digital Badge
  - The only national certificate recognizing specialized training in rural/underserved
  - The digital badge links to a description of the AHEC Scholars program and the core topic definitions. [3RNET](#) is awarding a \$5 gift card for AHEC Scholars who download their digital badges, and another \$5 gift card for creating a 3RNET profile
- AHEC Scholars Fund
  - Students are eligible to receive an **annual stipend** upon completion of the program requirements.
- Exclusive access to learning opportunities that enhance preparation for rural and urban underserved patient.

# Program Requirements

To successfully complete the AHEC Scholars Program, students will:

- Complete the application process.
- Maintain enrollment in an eligible health profession academic program and be in good academic standing.
- Complete and report 40 contact hours of experiential and 40 hours of didactic activities during each of the two years of the program.
- Complete AHEC Scholars program evaluation survey(s).
- Complete a follow up evaluation one year after graduation.

## Expectations for Scholars

### Data Collection

The AHEC Scholars program provides students with leading edge learning and interprofessional opportunities focused on building the skills and competencies needed to help transform primary care and improve health equity in underserved areas.

North Dakota AHEC is committed to the delivery of quality services and information to its Scholars. Accordingly, all participants in the AHEC Scholars program will be asked to complete surveys about their involvement. Survey responses help steer ongoing program development and quality improvement.

Additionally, North Dakota AHEC has received federal funds from HRSA to assist in the development and implementation of the AHEC Scholars program. Demographic information and assessment data will be collected and reported as requested by HRSA and our state and local funders and will not identify individuals. If you have any questions regarding the reporting of data, please contact [ndahec@mayvillestate.edu](mailto:ndahec@mayvillestate.edu).

### Program Learning Objectives

Participants will have demonstrated their:

1. Ability to work with individuals from other disciplines within a climate of mutual respect and shared values.
2. Knowledge of team-based professional skills, roles, and responsibilities in order to ensure an environment for safe, efficient, effective, and equitable care.
3. Ability to describe the roles, responsibilities, and contributions of various health professions to patient-centered care.

4. Ability to communicate with team members confidently, clearly, and with respect to ensure a common understanding of information and care decisions.
5. Ability to use the knowledge of one's own role and those of other professions to appropriately assess and address the social and behavioral health care needs of rural and medically underserved populations.
6. Ability to reduce common misunderstandings about the behavioral health needs of rural and underserved populations.
7. Ability to improve understanding of unique cultures and values of rural and underserved communities.
8. Ability to communicate effectively with patients, families and the public, as appropriate, across a broad range of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.
9. Ability to increase understanding of health care delivery that is responsive to the evolving needs of the health care system.

## Didactic Learning

- Didactic education consists of live and on-demand activities; all focused on the eight core topic areas.
- Per HRSA requirements, didactic hours cannot be part of your core academic curriculum, although some programs have rural tracks that are eligible.
- Complete 40 contact hours **per year**.
- Sources of content may include:
  - On-demand
  - Live activities
  - Podcasts
  - Books
  - Content shared in North Dakota AHEC weekly didactic email
  - Other approved activities that cover core topic areas

Didactic learning is obtaining knowledge from a source, and there are many examples of activities that may qualify, such as: Attending the Dakota Conference on Rural and Public Health; podcasts; books; documentaries; some TV shows or movies; and more. If you are unsure if an activity qualifies, please contact [ndahec@mayvillestate.edu](mailto:ndahec@mayvillestate.edu).

***Report all hours using reporting forms on Formstack link available via acceptance email.***



# Experiential/Clinical Learning

- Experiential education pertains to gaining knowledge through experience.
- Students apply/practice what has been learned in settings that are:
  - Team-based and community-based
  - Medically underserved
- Complete 40 contact hours per year.
- Experiential learning can be part of your core academic curriculum.
- Clinical rotations completed at a **rural or urban underserved** site.
- Other activities can qualify, check with AHEC Director.

*Report all hours using reporting forms on Formstack link available via acceptance email.*

## Qualifying Urban Underserved Clinical Sites

- Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs)
- County and State correctional facilities
- Community mental health clinics
- North Dakota State Hospital
- A non-profit facility, with a HPSA for your profession, seeing a minimum of 50% Medicaid patients.
- Other primary care facilities, as identified by the North Dakota Office of Rural Health, with a HPSA score for your profession
- Veterans Affairs facilities-for primary care, cardiology, gen surgery, psychiatry or behavioral health
- LGBTQ+
- Tribal Health clinics

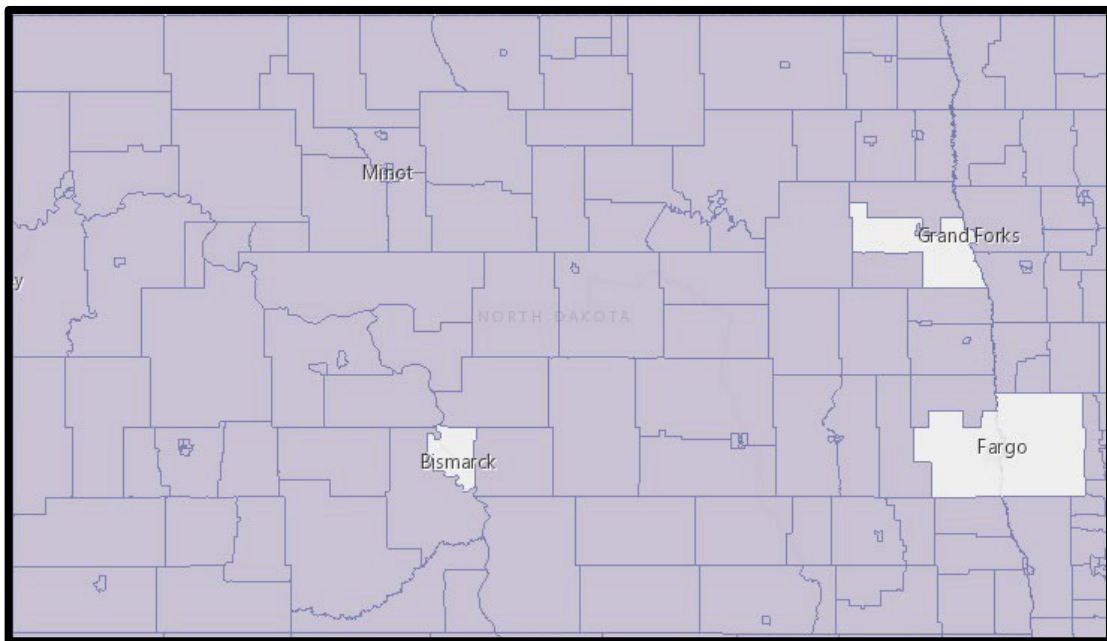
## Underserved Area/Populations

- The elderly, individuals with HIV-AIDS, substance abuse, and victims of domestic violence
- Homeless populations
- Health Professional Shortage Areas/populations
- Medically Underserved Areas/populations
- Migrant and seasonal farm workers
- Nurse shortage areas
- Residents of public housing
- Rural communities
- Transgender health

# Am I Considered Rural?

*The concept of rurality is an inexact term that means different things to different people. Many definitions have been created through the years to be used for different purposes. The North Dakota AHEC Scholars Program follows HRSA's definition of rural. See map and links below for more details.*

The below graphic designates geographic areas in North Dakota that are eligible to receive Rural Health Grants from HRSA. Areas highlighted in grey are NOT considered rural.



**Pro tip:** See the Rural Health Information Hub [Am I Rural? Tool](#) to help inform you about rural/urban boundaries. You can also use the [HPSA Find](#) to see which facilities qualify.

# AHEC Scholars Program Staff

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## Resources

### General Program Information

North Dakota AHEC uses our website to house our program overview and contact information. All forums, reporting forms and submission links, and our library of curated didactic content. Students accepted into the Scholars program will be added to the automated email system.

### Social Media

Connect with staff and peers on Instagram! Follow us for important announcements and to see student activity around North Dakota. Please reach out to NDAHEC staff if you have suggestions of other sites that would enhance the Scholar experience.

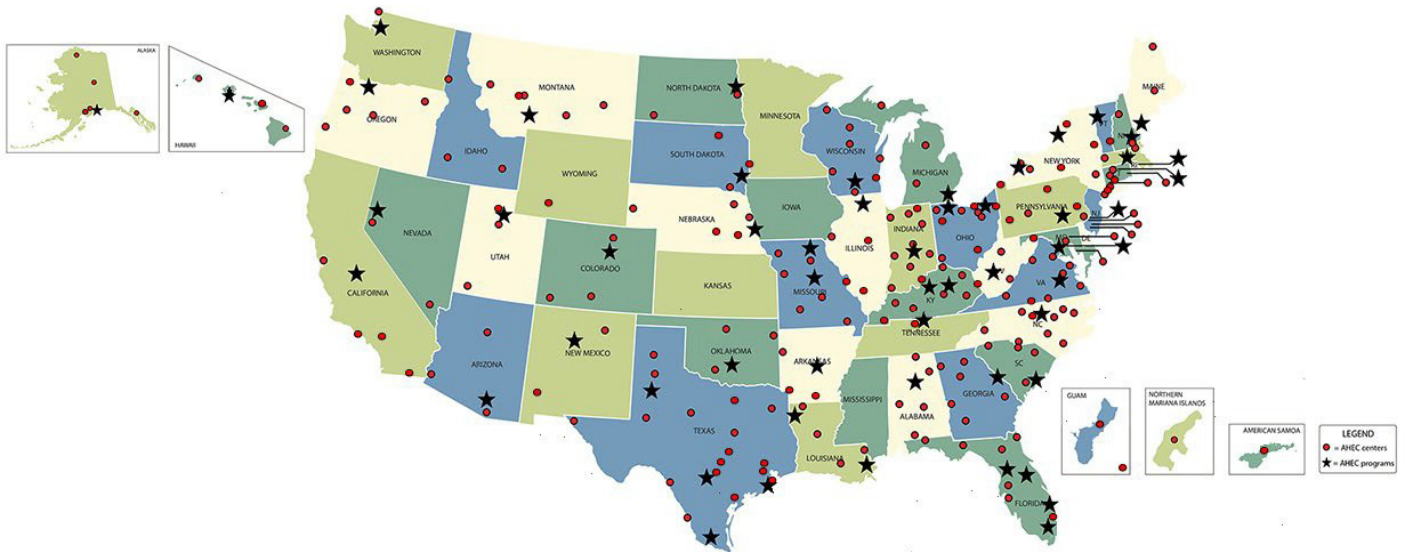
- Facebook: North Dakota AHEC

### Website

- Visit the "[Scholars](#)" section of the North Dakota AHEC website for news and program information.
- We also recommend the following sites: [State Office of Rural Health \(SORH\)](#)

# AHEC Nationwide

As part of a national cohort, you have additional ways to connect and learn. For out of state rotations or residencies, note the location of an AHEC nearest you. Every star on the map below is a program office, and every red dot is a regional center (and more are being added since this map was created).



## Connect with the National AHEC Organization

Access the [NAO website](#) for opportunities both during your time as an AHEC Scholar, and as a Scholar alumnus.

During your time as a Scholar, you are encouraged to engage with your peers nationwide via the Scholars Track at the Biennial Conference, and an ongoing variety of speaker series, case studies, and other events shared by AHECs across the country. Access these from announcements in the monthly didactic email.