National Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the National Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education?
On September 10, 2012, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced the University of Minnesota will be the lead organization for the Health and Human Services (HRSA) five-year $4 million cooperative agreement. The national center will become a public-private partnership that contributes to the transformation of health care by identifying ways to improve health, enhance patient care and control costs through integrating interprofessional practice and education. By rigorously aligning and integrating the needs and interests of health professions education with practice, the center aims to create a transformational “nexus” to incubate ideas, define the field and guide program development and research.

Who are the initial private partners?
On June 4, 2012 four leading foundations focused on health, health professions education and patient care, announced they will support the creation of a new, National Center for Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice. The Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and The John A. Hartford Foundation have collectively committed up to $8.6 million in grants over five years to support and guide the center.

Is the national center about practice or education?
The national center is about both. Health systems and health professions education have a symbiotic relationship to support learning in practice and for educating health professionals. The vision for the center is that practice and education must align for health outcomes linked to interprofessional collaborative practice. HRSA criteria for funding the center require that the center has strong relationships with practice partners. For example, the University of Minnesota has formed partnerships with practices throughout Minnesota to form the Minnesota Interprofessional Practice and Education Network as well as a national Innovations Incubator. National partnerships with delivery systems will also be formed.

Why is this center being created now?
Many forces are coming together to make this an optimal time to create the national center. In the U. S., we are currently being swept up in the swirl of the promise of new collaborative practice models to improve health; cost pressures are challenging health systems and payers; national health care reform is taking shape; and we are experiencing health professions workforce shortages. Clearly, one way or the other, U.S. health care is transforming. On the other hand, over the past few years, we are experiencing a renewed and revitalized interest in interprofessional health education as a promising approach to preparing health professionals for the collaborative, team-
based practice. The time is now for U.S. health care and health professions to transform together.

What’s different this time?
Interprofessional education is not a new field. In fact, IPE was proposed in the 1972 Institute of Medicine’s report, “Educating for the Health Team,” but was never mainstreamed as an approach in health professions education for a variety of reasons. In 2012, however, we have considerable experience and evidence that team-based, collaborative practice makes a difference based upon excellent work in patient safety, quality and systems improvement initiatives. As a result, many health systems are transforming rapidly in a way that demands the attention of higher education. The renewed interest in interprofessional education is based on the promise that educating health professionals together in the practice environment will make a difference in health care delivery and ultimately the health of the nation. That’s what the national center will be focused on.

What’s a “nexus?”
We believe that a new “nexus” needs to develop between transforming health care and health professions education. Generally a nexus is a link or connection. In our case, the nexus creates shared goals, shared conversation and shared language necessary for true collaboration between interprofessional practice and education. It is a dynamic, forward-thinking approach that benefits all parties and accelerates progress toward our shared goals. It is strategic, systematic and sustainable.

What’s the national center’s vision?
Our vision is to make a difference in health of people and communities through connecting and integrating interprofessional practice and education. Our goal is to close the gap between higher education and practice communities by rigorously aligning their needs and interests in educating and training. Through interprofessional education, we are working to add value, increase quality, and promote the health of the U.S. population through collaborative practice.

What is the national center’s role in coordinating?
Many health systems, health professions education schools and programs, professional associations and organizations are doing excellent work in interprofessional practice and education across the country. The national center is a hub to bring the best thinking, the most important information and the right people together. Our goal is not to duplicate efforts; we will complement them. Our role will be to convene and coordinate in a highly engaged, collaborative way.
What are our initial priorities?
Our work is focused on five core domains: leadership; collaborative practice and health system transformation, education and training, research, evaluation and scholarship, and innovative and novel models. A mark of distinction for the national center is its concentration on research and evaluation to demonstrate that interprofessional learning approaches add value to interprofessional collaborative practice and make a difference in health outcomes.

How does national center relate to other organizations working on interprofessional education?
We are conveners and coordinators, not duplicating the work that others are doing. We strive to be the expert resource, advisor and evaluator for those who are working in the areas of interprofessional education and collaborative practice.

Does the national center make grants?
Not at this time.

Where will the national center be in five years?
After five years America’s best thinkers about interprofessional practice and education will be fully engaged in the national center’s priority projects and recognized for their work publicly and across and within the professions. Our public and private partners and funders will be receiving the highest ROI possible, based on conclusions of our rigorous evaluation process. We will be the model for using technology to achieve the greatest results through the greatest collaboration. We will have made significant contributions to improving health outcomes by adding value to the U.S. health care system, controlling costs of health care, improving quality and contributing to the health of the U.S. population.

How might I learn more about National Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education?
Log onto www.ahceducation.umn.edu/nexus-ipe for the latest information about center activities and to be added to the email list for regular updates.