

East Tennessee Area Health Education Center (AHEC)

In September 2007, Cherokee Health Systems (CHS) entered into a partnership with the Meharry Medical College Area Health Education Center (AHEC) to provide education and training in east Tennessee. Tennessee currently has three regional AHEC centers: CHS serves as the center for both east and west Tennessee, Matthew Walker Comprehensive Health Center in Nashville fills this role for central Tennessee.

Tennessee AHEC promotes an interprofessional and coordinated approach to education and training and is committed to transforming the health care delivery system. TN AHEC and its regional partners, in collaboration with statewide and local community partners, implement an array of programs and initiatives designed to enhance health care equity and increase the diversity and distribution of health care professionals who provide culturally competent, quality healthcare services, especially in Rural and Urban Medically Underserved Areas (RUMUAs).

One key AHEC initiative is the **Scholars Program**. This unique interprofessional training opportunity is designed to prepare a diverse, culturally competent health care workforce that is representative of the communities it serves. The program involves a two-year commitment; in each year, Scholars will receive 40 hours of team-based, interprofessional clinical experience and will participate in a 40-hour didactic program that addresses six core topics: Patient Centered Clinical Practice Transformation; Interprofessional Education, Cultural Competence, Social Determinants of Health, Behavioral Health Integration, and Current/Emerging Health Issues.

CHS invites eligible trainees to apply to participate in this training opportunity.

Eligibility

Eligible trainees will be in good academic standing and have at least two years remaining in their required health professions program (except medical students who may enroll in years 1-3). Interested applicants must commit to participate in the two-year program (40 hours of clinical and 40 hours of didactic training each year).

Once placed, scholars will also be asked to complete workplace satisfaction surveys periodically.

Each of the three regional AHECs aims to admit 15 Scholars each year, and each AHEC hopes that at least 80% of AHEC Scholars will continue to practice in RUMUAs upon the completion of their health professions training program.

Program Components

The clinical training component will involve at least 40 hours of patient care in one or more of CHS' clinics, as arranged with the applicants' educational program.

The didactic component will include a 40-hour curriculum of required (and supplemental) readings with related assignments that will be presented and discussed among the interdisciplinary Scholar cohort, with feedback from one or more clinical supervisors. At the end of each year, Scholars will complete post-tests that assess knowledge and attitudes in the six core curricular topics.

Benefits

- *\$500 Participation Award upon completion of Year 1 requirements and an additional \$500 Participation Award upon completion of Year 2 requirements.*
- Opportunities to participate in training programs designed for CHS staff providers.
- Increased understanding of the influence of provider and patient attitudes and beliefs, including mistrust, subconscious bias, and stereotypes, on clinical encounters and the effectiveness of clinical interventions.
 - Heightened awareness of the pervasiveness and magnitude of health disparities, including the multi-factorial causes and the many solutions required to diminish or eliminate them.
 - Enhanced skills for effectively communicating and negotiating across cultures, languages, and literacy levels.
 - Information about Loan Repayment Programs.
 - Opportunity to become part of a network of current and future leaders in health care.
 - Certification as a TN AHEC Scholar, a prestigious honor in an increasingly competitive work environment.