

Position Statement

Medical Laboratory Professional Recruitment and Retention Strategies in Rural and Remote Communities

The Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS) believes it is the responsibility of governments (provincial, territorial and federal) in partnership with employers and unions, to implement strategies for recruitment and retention of medical laboratory professionals (MLPs) in rural and remote communities.

Strong recruitment and retention strategies will ensure Canadians living in rural and remote communities receive the same quality of health care as other Canadians living in more populated areas. Successful recruitment and retention will improve patient care by ensuring the availability of high-quality diagnostic testing services in a timely manner. Moreover, having laboratories staffed with MLPs will help attract and retain physicians and nurses to these rural and remote communities.

Effective strategies for recruitment and retention in rural and remote communities can include the following:

- Recruitment
 - The recruitment of internationally trained MLPs
 - Effective integration of individuals who wish to return to practice
 - Selection of MLP students based on rural background
- Financial incentives for MLPs in rural and remote areas
 - A loan forgiveness program for students that would include loans contracted in any province/territory
 - Targeted funding (i.e., bursaries) for rural students with return to service agreements
 - Funded rural and remote clinical placement for students (i.e. travel and accommodations support)
 - Funding and accessibility for continuing education opportunities
 - Sliding scale financial incentives for rural and remote MLPs that increases for a defined number of years that an MLP continues to practice in an underserved region
- Realistic workload and reasonable work schedule
 - Accessibility to support and expertise for MLPs working in solo practice

- Workloads that allow balanced lifestyles
- Availability of relief to ensure that MLPs practicing in underserved communities have similar work-life balance as their colleagues practicing in urban settings
- Support from within and external to the organization
 - Employee Assistance Programs
 - Staff recognition (i.e. events, awards, bonuses, certificates, etc.)
 - Spousal employment assistance and family support programs
- Promotion of the medical laboratory profession by the employer
 - Organize laboratory tours for students and the general public
 - Represent the laboratory at career days
 - Help staff celebrate National Medical Laboratory Week each year
 - Visit community schools, and provide class presentations about medical laboratory careers

References:

CFMS Position Paper - Physician Recruitment and Retention Strategies <http://www.cfms.org/files/position-papers/CFMS%20Position%20Paper%20Physician%20Recruitment%20and%20Retention%20Strategies.pdf>

Interventions for health workforce retention in rural and remote areas: a systematic review <https://human-resources-health.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12960-021-00643-7>

Rural Health Services in BC: A Policy Framework to Provide a System of Quality Care 2015 - Accessed June, 2016 <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2015/rural-health-policy-paper.pdf>

CSMLS Position Statements:

- Quality Work Life Environments for Medical Laboratory Professionals
- Medical Laboratory Professionals: Integral to Patient Safety
- Human Resource Allocation for Medical Laboratories