

Project Title: Montana Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (MGWEP)

Organization Name: University of Montana, 32 Campus Drive, Missoula, MT 59812-1522

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The Montana Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (MGWEP) has three initiatives: (1) to integrate geriatrics into primary care; (2) to develop the interprofessional geriatric workforce; and (3) to provide education and support to older adults, family caregivers, and communities. MGWEP is unique among the GWEP programs in several ways. MGWEP targets populations that are largely underserved, including those living in rural, frontier, and tribal communities, and our primary care partners are Community Health Centers (CHCs) that serve low-income populations. To meet the grant initiatives, MGWEP developed and helps support activities by partnering with a number of different programs and clinical sites. MGWEP is collaborating with other GWEPs to provide ECHOs addressing the healthcare needs of older adults in the community and long-term care environments, is participating in a policy academy addressing mental health in older adults, and is part of a multi-GWEP consortium providing training to improve the health of older adults in indigenous communities. As part of the Nursing Home Supplement, MGWEP has also partnered with several nursing homes, universities, and one hospital to provide training designed for nursing students and CNAs currently or soon to be in the workforce.

Initiative 1 Activities: MGWEP funds 3 programs to integrate geriatrics into 3 CHCs. These are RiverStone Health (RSH) in Billings, Partnership Health Center (PHC) in Missoula, and the recent addition of Southwest Montana CHC (SWMT) in Butte. Activities include, but are not limited to, promotion of the Medicare Annual Wellness Visits and Advanced Care Planning, as well as training of family medicine residents. RSH has been successful in achieving Level-1 recognition as an Age-Friendly Health System and is planning to seek out Level 2 recognition; PHC has yet to apply for Level-1 recognition and plans are in place to do this. SWM, who became a clinical partner in March of 2023, plans to pursue Level-1 recognition as well. The CHCs collect data on outcome measures of dementia education and support, risk of opioid misuse, advance care planning, screening for future fall risk, poor diabetes control, and use of high-risk medications.

Initiative 2 Activities: MGWEP provides training opportunities to develop the interprofessional geriatric workforce through webinars, conferences, online modules, in-person trainings, and interprofessional student trainings. Many of these training activities focus specifically on dementia care. Some of these trainings are a collaborative effort with other GWEPs. Through the live, online, simulation, and hybrid models MGWEP is able meet the learning needs and time demands of students and providers, including those living and working in the more rural areas of the state. Our certified dementia trainers travel across the state to provide Positive Approaches to Care training and experiential learning with our geriatric empathy suit. On site Geriatric Health Screens are provided across the state, and we now help support a fall risk reduction program on UM campus, both of which provide interprofessional student training in community-based settings.

Initiative 3 Activities: MGWEP supports a number of evidence-based interventions to educate and support older adults and caregivers, such as Powerful Tools for Caregivers and two fall risk reduction strategies through New Directions and the Matter of Balance program hosted by our local Area Agency on Aging. MGWEP continues to provide Dementia-Friendly Community Awards annually to Montana communities, providing support for dementia related educational activities that are developed and delivered locally. In addition, support and leadership are provided for the ADRD State Plan, which is dedicated to provide education to all stakeholders about dementia.