

## Building Primary Care from the Ground Up Training Rural Residents in Williston, ND

The literature on recruitment and retention of clinical professionals in rural areas is vast. While there are many strategies, the consensus is that recruitment efforts should first and foremost strive to make an appropriate match between candidates, their families, healthcare facilities, and the community. In the end, according to Matt Grimshaw, president, CHI-Mercy Medical Center, (MMC) Williston, ND, “the most effective way to achieve this is to grow your own.”



Figure 1: CHI-Mercy Medical Center, Williston

Williston is a flourishing community on the western border of North Dakota. Williston has grown rapidly as a result of the Bakken oil boom, from an estimated population of 13,000 in 2009 to the current population estimate of 30,000. The recent population growth has included families, as housing has permitted workers to bring in families. The community has seen a lot of building, not just of housing, but of restaurants, community centers, and schools that have placed additional demands on the local health care delivery system.

[CHI-Mercy Medical Center](#) in Williston is a 25-bed critical access hospital serving as a regional medical facility that is owned by [Catholic Health Initiatives](#), Englewood, Colo. MMC serves an estimated 70,000 people from Western North Dakota and Eastern Montana. MMC is among the fastest growing hospitals in America with volumes not traditionally seen in smaller hospitals. Nearly 800 babies are delivered each year, and the emergency department sees more than 20,000 annual visits. Services also include the new Leonard P. Nelson Cancer Center, which offers the very latest in cancer treatment technology along with a full range of surgical specialties. The staff is comprised of approximately 450 employees making it one of the largest employers in the region.

## Center for Family Medicine in Minot

The [Family Medicine Residency Program in Minot](#) began in 1975 as the first residency program in the state, graduating a total of 166 family physicians. It is administered by the [University of North Dakota \(UND\) School of Medicine and Health Sciences](#) and is fully accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME).



Figure 2: Center for Family Medicine, Minot

The UND-Minot’s unopposed residency accepts six residents each year. It offers residents a full range of family medicine services to a large and varied clinic population. Residents care for patients in the clinic, hospital, nursing home, assisted living and home environments. Maternity care, endoscopy, colonoscopy, colposcopy, vasectomy, and a full range of office-based procedures are provided at the clinic. The residency and affiliated hospital use an integrated

electronic health record, Cerner. UND-Minot participates in the training of third and fourth year medical students with a core faculty of six family physicians and one psychologist assisted by more than 100 community faculty members.

### Minot-Williston Rural Training Track (RTT) Program Overview

A new UND residency in family medicine – the UND-Minot Program Rural Track Williston – was approved by the ACGME to start July 2014. Initially accredited for one resident per year, the program has received a temporary increase to two residents per year in the 2015 academic year. The program emphasizes rural family medicine training in the setting where it is practiced. Residents enjoy a well-rounded first year in Minot, N.D., a small city of 47,000 and the subsequent two years in Williston, N.D. Both sites provide training situations with supervision and teaching by dedicated rural physician educators in the setting of a community hospital.

Led by Kimberly Krohn, M.D., the rural track is a separate 2:2:2 (two residents in each of the three postgraduate residency years) residency program. Applicants interested in both programs must apply to both programs. The first year of the rural track residency is situated in Minot; the next two years of the three-year program are primarily in Williston, N.D. During the first year, rural track residents train alongside core program residents at the Center for Family Medicine, Minot. Residents participate in didactics, care for their patients at the family medicine clinic and complete twelve months of block rotations. According to Dr. Krohn, "The residents in the program will have unlimited opportunities in high volume emergency, obstetrics, and procedural training."



home.

In the first year, two residents are admitted into the RTT program and rotations are completed at [Trinity Health](#), a regional health care system providing a wide variety of services with a catchment area of more than 16 counties in western North Dakota and Montana and a member of the Mayo Clinic Care Network. Trinity Health has a 451-bed hospital with a 230-bed nursing



more rural environment and have intensive training in the heightened responsibility and experience of caring for patients in a more rural setting. The rural track is administered by the staff and faculty of the 6:6:6 core program in family medicine in Minot, ND.

The second and third year of residency will be spent at the new Family Medicine clinic at [Mercy Medical Center](#) in Williston, ND where they will be immersed in a



Figure3: Medical Arts Clinic, Minot

Although the facilities are well-equipped and include a state-of-the-art birthing center, having fewer specialists highlights the importance of the family medicine physician and creates opportunities for developing competence in this challenging environment. Residents located in Williston will continue to have access to the noon conference didactics at the main campus

through video conferencing. The main campus faculty will also remain involved in supervising and mentoring residents and will visit throughout the year.

## Conclusion

The rural track family medicine residency in Williston has received great interest from medical students in both Canada and the United States. The program recently matched its residents for 2015 and looks forward to indoctrinating them into the program at the Family Medicine Clinic, Williston. In the meantime, according to Matt Grimshaw, “the existing residents continue their education and their experience in the RTT while allowing MMC to grow the number of primary care physicians to serve this thriving community.”

Kimberly T. Krohn, MD, MPH, FAAFP  
Program Director, UND Center for Family Medicine Minot  
Program Director, UNDSMHS Rural Track Family Medicine Residency Williston  
Associate Professor, Department of Family and Community Medicine  
University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences  
1201 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW  
Minot, ND 58701  
701-858-6700  
[Kimberly.krohn@med.und.edu](mailto:Kimberly.krohn@med.und.edu)

Matt Grimshaw  
President  
CHI-Mercy Medical Center  
Williston, ND  
(701) 774-7401  
[MattGrimshaw@catholichealth.net](mailto:MattGrimshaw@catholichealth.net)