

Crain's Detroit Business

Prognosis positive for health care jobs

By [Jay Greene](#)

If health care jobs were a patient, the medical prognosis would be that the patient has been stabilized and full recovery is expected.

Mirroring other industries, hospitals, nursing homes, health insurers and even physician offices in Southeast Michigan have laid off or downsized hundreds, if not thousands, of full-time and part-time employees.

An improving economy in late 2009 and now this year — spurred in part by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act — has slowed the job losses and, in some cases, led to some new hires.

Nationally, health care employment crept up 0.2 percent in March to 13.7 million workers. The gains were fueled by hiring by ambulatory-care providers, home health care, nursing homes and residential facilities. Hospital employment has been flat.

Since 2008, Michigan's hospitals have laid off more than 3,000 workers, said the **Michigan Health and Hospital Association**. Layoffs have occurred at many Southeast Michigan hospitals, including **William Beaumont Hospitals**, **St. John Providence Health System**, **Oakwood Healthcare** and the **University of Michigan Health System**.

In 2009, **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan** offered voluntary retirement packages to about 1,000 workers that were accepted. Several other health insurers had either small layoffs or hiring freezes.

Health care is still Michigan's largest private-sector employer, providing or creating jobs for nearly 914,900 residents who earn more than \$45 billion a year in wages, salaries and benefits, said the MHA.

Over the past year, Michigan has received more than \$12 million in federal stimulus dollars to expand services offered at more than 29 community health centers.

Last summer, Detroit's five federally qualified health centers received more than \$3 million in federal stimulus dollars to fund much-needed capital expansion projects to accommodate a growing number of uninsured patients.

The health centers also are using money to create or retain about 150 health center jobs and to provide care for nearly 54,000 additional patients.

"This is something we sorely needed because we have a backlog of patients and don't want to turn them away," said Wayne Bradley, executive director of **Detroit Community Health Connections**, a federally qualified health center. Two of its five centers will be expanded, he said.

More money is coming to Southeast Michigan from the recently approved federal health care reform bill — the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and its accompanying Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010.

Because of its high levels of unemployment, lack of insurance and proportion of people with chronic diseases, Southeast Michigan is expected to garner more than its share of \$14 billion in federal funds for community care clinics, said Kim Sibilsky, executive director of the **Michigan Primary Care Association**.

“We expect to be able to hire more doctors, nurses and support staff to take care of additional people in the system,” Sibilsky said.

Nearly \$3 billion in federal dollars will be made available each year from 2011 to 2016 to expand federally qualified health centers, community clinics and to hire additional doctors, advanced-practice nurses and other providers to staff the centers.

More than 100 new jobs are expected to be created from a \$19 million federal grant awarded to Ann Arbor-based **Altarum Institute** to establish the **Michigan Center for Effective IT Adoption**.

Jay Greene: (313) 446-0325, jgreene@crain.com