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Health care continues employment growth

Idaho's continued population growth — even through the Great Recession — made health care one of just four sectors of the economy to post an increase in jobs despite the economic slowdown.

A report released Tuesday by Health Care Business Scan, which collects data from state labor departments, found that health care jobs in Idaho jumped nearly 10 percent from 2007 to 2009, an average increase of 5,900. The other three sectors — private education, social services and utilities — added fewer than 1,600 jobs combined. Every other major sector of the private economy lost jobs during the recession.

South-central Idaho has the third largest number of health care jobs in the five-region area of Idaho, with more than 8,400 jobs in health-care related fields. Southwest and eastern Idaho were the only two regions to surpass south-central Idaho.

According to the report, the health care industry in Idaho is expected to add 5,000 jobs through 2011. Registered nurses, pharmacists, dental hygienists and physical therapists are expected to be the fastest growing occupations.

The Health Care Business Scan was developed to determine how accessible the department's statistics on the health care sector are. The information includes types, number and regional location of businesses, employment, occupations, current and projected jobs, job ratios by population and wages and educational requirements.

Some occupational data is not available because there are too few jobs for a representative sample. Wage comparisons can be made with national and border state averages.