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Retaining Incumbent Health Care Workers

- 1. The Community College Role in Workforce Partnerships** – Community colleges can prepare frontline incumbent health care workers and low-income individuals for family-sustaining careers in health care – including advancement to allied health care and nursing jobs. Colleges can partner with a local health care employer or in collaboration with employers, workforce development agencies, community organizations, and other funders of and players in local and regional workforce development endeavors. Employer/college partnerships focus most often on incumbent workers. The college's role will often be to:
 - Offer a comprehensive set of services;
 - Customize curricula and courses;
 - Collaborate with the employer to create or enhance career pathways;
 - Develop services that address particular barriers (e.g., mentoring or supplemental tutoring to address specific skill needs); or
 - Offer training at the workplace so that more workers can access it.

Frontline health care workers make up the body of “nontraditional students” that community colleges are leaders in serving: low-income individuals, students of color, new immigrants, and working adults studying part time. Front line workers often face significant barriers to obtaining educational credentials. Community college programs that increase the skills, education attainment, and advancement opportunities for frontline workers can contribute to a variety of benefits:

- Filling higher-level jobs by training entry-level workers;
- Reducing turnover and the associated costs to employers;
- Helping frontline workers achieve economic self-sufficiency;
- Creating openings in entry-level positions to reduce unemployment rates; and
- Improving the quality of care and services.

Please go to the following link for more information:

<http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/MetLife-OppsinHealthCare-040711.pdf>

- 2. Opportunity Partnership & Empowerment Network (OPEN)** – A collaboration between Community Colleges, Health Care employers, and Workforce organizations. The focus was on several key activities:
 - Helping workers address personal challenges that interfere with job performance.
 - Providing educational opportunities and career ladders that allow workers to grow both personally and professionally.
 - Training supervisors and workers to communicate more effectively and build stronger relationships.

An occupational enhancement coordinator was hired for the two-year pilot program. The employers participating in the program contributed a share of the expenses for the program coordinator and core services. The goals of the pilot program include:

- Assisting employees with advancing within participating companies.
- Reduce turnover rates in participating companies.
- Use emergency and social supports in order to remove barriers in people's lives that could negatively affect employment.
- Remain financially self-sufficient by proving to be a cost-effective means of service delivery that ultimately helps the bottom line of business while immediately helping employees.
- Increase number of employer companies that participate in OPEN.

Please go to the following link for more information:

<http://www.directcareclearinghouse.org/download/OPEN%20Report%20final.pdf>

3. **Hospital Employee Education and Training (HEET) Program** – funded by the Washington State legislature to address concerns related to the shortage of qualified healthcare workers. The aim of the initiative was to address the shortage of skilled healthcare workers through the support of incumbent worker training programs developed and implemented through partnerships among labor, management, and community and technical colleges.

Career ladders within hospitals provide workers with an opportunity to move out of entry-level jobs into better jobs with higher salaries. Having a career ladder and promoting from within helps employers recruit employees who want to advance, and it helps workforce retention. Turnover among recent graduates hired by hospitals is the highest in the first two years and is costly and disruptive to the organization. According to one recent study, every percentage point increase in nurse turnover costs the average hospital \$300,000 per year, and hospitals that have high nurse turnover spend about \$3.6 million more than hospitals that have high retention of nurses.

The current nursing workforce does not reflect the diversity of the U.S. population; men and Hispanics are especially underrepresented. This is in contrast to the lower-skilled job classifications in hospitals that have higher numbers of ethnic and racial minorities. Increasing access to nursing programs for incumbents with less skills who are currently working in hospitals is an effective means to increase the size and diversity of the nursing workforce. There is also an urgent need to provide viable pathways for incumbent workers in rural hospitals to become nurses without having to quit their jobs and relocate to larger communities or travel long distances in order to attend existing nursing programs. Educating local incumbent workers in rural communities provides skills to individuals who already have demonstrated a willingness to live and work in those communities.

The colleges provided the instruction, adapting course delivery to the worksites. The colleges were the fiscal agents for the projects, providing administrative support for the funds. In three cases, the labor-management partnerships worked together to provide tuition assistance and space for classrooms. They also managed the worker-learner schedules to facilitate the maximum worker participation in the program as well as “wrap-around” support services to the worker learners. In the Puget Sound area programs, the grants funded a shared labor-management coordinator who facilitated the communication between various partners, as well

as several case managers who worked with the individual students to remove barriers to program completion and provide on-going support in a variety of forms.

For more information please go to the following link:

<http://pages.uoregon.edu/lerc/public/pdfs/heetwhitepaper.pdf>

4. **H-CAP** is a national labor/management organization that promotes innovation and quality in healthcare career education. It provides an opportunity for participating unions, employers, and educational institutions across the county to collaborate and share their experiences with workforce development, exchange best practices, and strategize on how to meet current and emerging patient care needs in the healthcare industry. H-CAP also partners with labor/management training funds and organizations that implement local workforce development and educational programs for career ladder education.

Current Initiatives and Areas of Concentration:

- Innovative career ladder programs that are industry based and meet the needs of the working adult
- Career pathways in healthcare that supports the cultural diversity of the healthcare professional workforce including language diversity
- Preparation for post secondary education and supports that lead to job retention and excellent education completion rates.
- A national, US Department of Labor ARRA project to green healthcare, build environmental sustainability, and support cost savings while promoting worker and labor/management engagement in quality projects
- Curriculum development in career pathway education that supports critical thinking, post secondary success, and quality outcomes
- Promotion of universal, cohort-based general education and nursing prerequisites as pioneered by the City University of NY and 1199SEIU Training and Upgrading Fund
- Development and dissemination of models for increasing the clinical capacity of nursing programs
- Innovative programs for BSN completion
- Program evaluation and research to support continuous improvement and positive outcomes
- Cross institutional partnerships between employers, unions, and colleges
- Grant development consultation and assistance.

Go to the following link for additional information: www.h-cap.org/

5. **Health Careers Collaborative of Great Cincinnati** - In 2003, it became clear that in order to have sufficient healthcare professionals to fill the impending critical skills shortages, the healthcare industry in Southwest Ohio would need to find solutions to this challenge. What started as a series of conversations and discrete programs already taking place between Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, Great Oaks Institute of Technology and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center in Greater Cincinnati, soon grew into a more extensive collaboration, involving an unprecedented level of public and private partnerships among major healthcare employers, education and training providers, as well as community-based organizations. Subsequently, the Health Careers Collaborative of Greater Cincinnati (HCC) was born.

The goal of the HCC is to develop a seamless career pathway into healthcare training for the unemployed, underemployed, displaced workers, and low-income incumbent workers supporting individuals wherever they may be: from pre-GED through entry-level training skills and initial employment, and then onto licensure, an associate degree, and beyond.

Further, the HCC provides student support services, career planning assistance, job placement and retention services to promote student success at every level of their individual career pathway, resulting in stable employment in jobs that pay a living wage with benefits – including tuition reimbursement. The partnership among employers, educational institutions, and service providers ensures that HCC training meets current industry employment needs thus mitigating future skills shortages in healthcare.

While the collaborative has grown in scope and intensity, the core work and vision has remained the same – working together to ensure our regional healthcare employers have a qualified workforce.

Go to the following link for additional information:

<http://www.healthcareerscollaborative.com/>

6. Pre-Employment Health Care Academy

Healthcare Academy goals include:

- Increasing the opportunities for low-income and disadvantaged populations to enter healthcare careers
- Integrating classes into industry specific work sites to ensure the Healthcare Academies are driven by current trends and needs, and that participants are mentored and supported
- Working with businesses to fill job vacancies and increase retention rates
- Providing a more diverse workforce
- The Southeast Minnesota Pre-Employment Healthcare Academy provides an opportunity for participants to:
 - Increase their confidence and help them reach their personal potential
 - Evaluate and plan for a career in healthcare
 - Prepare to be successful in formal college training with tutoring and study skills assistance
 - Understand current healthcare career opportunities and obligations
 - Get help reaching their goals
- Topics covered in the Academy include:
 - Communications
 - Problem solving
 - Decision-making
 - Personal wellness
 - Workplace terminology
 - Achieving your potential
 - Job & career awareness
 - Study & test taking skills
 - Introduction to CNA coursework
 - Workplace culture/job shadowing

Contact your local Workforce Development, Inc. office to learn more about this academy and how you can participate. Go to the following link for additional information:

<http://www.workforcedevelopmentinc.org/Academies/HealthcareAcademy.htm>

7. **Career Pathways** - Since 2003, more than 1,500 hospital employees have received assessment and/or career counseling, and more than 500 have enrolled in subsidized health care training through the Workforce Development Council (WDC) of Seattle-King County hospital partnership, Career Pathways.

Career Pathways stations career specialists from WorkSource at five hospitals in King County. These staff offer career options to hospital employees, not just to nurses and allied health workers who want to move up, but also low-skilled employees in housekeeping and food service who are interested in starting health-care careers.

The career specialists offer a connection to training subsidies (including those funded by the WDC) and other services, such as English-language learning.

Career Pathways currently operates at:

- Swedish Medical Center
- Group Health Cooperative
- Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center
- Virginia Mason Medical Center
- Harborview Medical Center

History of Career Pathways

In 2002, the WDC and the Washington State Hospital Association brought together a group of local hospital executives, labor leaders and college administrators to examine critical staffing shortages in health care. The WDC published the panel's analysis and its recommendations in a February 2003 report called *In Critical Condition: Seattle-King County's Hospital Staffing Crisis*.

Among the problems identified was that despite hospitals' desperate need for nurses and technicians and a high interest in these careers, community colleges and nursing schools could not offer enough classes to meet the demand, due to high costs and reduced state funding. Another challenge was the lack of support for career progression in the health care sector. Those who wish to upgrade their skills—especially those at the lower skill levels—face many barriers in their career path, including the high costs and limited availability of training.

Career Pathways was a direct response by the WDC to face the latter need.

Meanwhile, the WDC, community colleges and hospitals worked together to expand the capacity of two- and four-year nursing and radiology technology programs in King County—essentially, opening the “pipeline” so that more students could be trained in these highly desired but high-cost programs.

Key Partners

In addition to the hospitals listed above, the following organizations participated in the WDC's Health Care Staffing Panel and subsequent sector initiatives:

- WorkSource Seattle-King County
- Bellevue Community College
- Shoreline Community College
- TRAC Associates (WorkSource service provider)
- Pacific Associates (WorkSource service provider)
- Service Employees International Union 1199
- Washington State Hospital Association
- Health Work Force Institute

Funding

The WDC has invested approximately \$1.3 million since 2003 to implement key recommendations of the health care panel, cobbling together federal, state and private funds, as well as industry contributions through our key partner, the Health Work Force Institute.

Funding for Career Pathways career specialists comes from the WDC's federal and state funding, as well as participating hospitals. When hospital employees enter career training at a local college, the career specialist works with them to apply for financial aid and helps them access other subsidies, including federal training accounts through the WDC.

The hospitals ensured the sustainability of Career Pathways in spring 2005 when they agreed to fund 50 percent of the cost of the on-site staff. Now in its third year, this investment is more than \$210,000.

Hospitals have also contributed generous in-kind support, such as paid release time for employees to attend training, use of equipment for clinical training and office space and equipment for the on-site career specialists.

Expanding College Capacity

The WDC pursued federal and state grants to invest more than \$1 million to expand the capacity of two- and four-year nursing and radiology technology programs in King County. Community colleges were close partners in adding these dollars to state funding to make the best use of limited resources. The hospitals also contributed \$300,000 to leverage the WDC's state incentive grant to add 90 new slots in community-college training programs.

Go to the following link for additional information:

<http://www.seakingwdc.org/industry/health-care-pathways.html>

8. **Health Careers For Youth** - Health Careers for Youth (HCY) is an award-winning public-private partnership focused on making education and employment in health care more accessible to underrepresented youth, including bilingual youth of color.

HCY keeps young people engaged in school, enhances their opportunities for economic and employment success, and builds the workforce needed by one of our state's key industries. The model meets industry needs in two ways: by getting more youth in the pipeline generally, and by increasing diversity among candidates coming out of training programs.

Successes

Four cohorts of King County high school students have participated in Health Careers for Youth to date. Some notable highlights:

- Of the 68 students in these cohorts, 93% completed CNA training, approximately two-thirds of whom earned national certified nursing assistant licensure.
- Of the 40 students in the first two cohorts, 75% successfully completed rigorous college coursework while in high school, such as math, English, nutrition, biology, chemistry, and psychology.
- More than half the Health Careers for Youth students overall have participated in or are scheduled to begin paid internships/work experience in the health care field, and several others participated in competitive career exploration programs such as ProjectHOPE and Seattle Pacific University's Nursing Camp.
- Students in the second cohort collectively earned more than 500 college credits during academic year 2007-08. At current community college tuition rates, this amounts to nearly \$40,000 in savings to students and their families compared to the cost of taking these classes after high school and paying tuition.
- In addition, the state's investment in Running Start is doubled when students are enrolled at the colleges because they earn both high school and college credits. The Health Careers for Youth students, on average, earned more than a full year of high school credit and accumulated valuable college credits and experience at no additional cost to them or the state.

RECOGNITION

The Health Careers for Youth model developed in King County has been replicated in two other areas of Washington, Yakima and Spokane. HCY also earned the WDC of Seattle-King County a Governor's Best Practice Award in 2009, and a "Bright Idea" designation from the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the Harvard Kennedy School.

Go to the following link for additional information:

<http://www.seakingwdc.org/industry/health-care-HCY.html>

9. **Jobs To Careers** - Work-based learning is a cornerstone of Jobs to Careers. It is an approach to adult education and training that emphasizes the employee as learner, and the work process itself as a source of learning. It involves methods of education and training that capture, document, formalize, and reward learning that occurs on the job.

In *Jobs to Careers*, the promise of work-based learning is to improve employee performance and, ultimately, the quality of care by enhancing the ability of frontline workers to apply the content knowledge inherent in tending to patient and client needs. Better-skilled, better-educated caregivers commit fewer errors and understand *why* they carry out certain tasks, not just *how* to do them. When tied to career advancement and educational opportunities, work-based learning has the potential to turn dead-end jobs into career opportunities, thereby improving morale and commitment and reducing turnover and disruptions in caregiving.

Go to their website to learn more and to access their toolkit:

<http://jobs2careers.org/>

10. **Welcome Back Initiative** - Welcome Back Centers provide orientation, educational counseling, and support to internationally trained health professionals in a variety of ways. Through educational case management services, educational interventions, group activities, and referrals, the center assists these individuals in meeting their career goals in the U.S. For example, one critical strategy the centers use is helping participants develop a career pathway plan that builds on their healthcare background and experiences. In the process of receiving support in obtaining the appropriate professional credentials and licenses for their health professions, Welcome Back participants are also presented with other viable options or alternatives to consider.

All immigrant health professionals – whether nurses, doctors, dentists, pharmacists, physical therapists, psychiatrists, social workers, midwives, or laboratory technicians – who currently live in the geographic area served by a center are eligible for the free services. These services are normally provided in at least two languages, e.g. English and Spanish; whenever feasible, interpreters are used for speakers of other languages.

In California, Welcome Back Initiative is available in San Francisco and San Diego. See the website for more information: <http://welcomebackinitiative.org/wb/index.html>.