

Developing Career Pathways in Healthcare for Waukesha County: A Strategic Partnership

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Introduction

Wisconsin is facing a severe shortage of health care workers in the coming decades – state officials project a need to fill about 10,180 health care jobs every year for the next 10 years. The July 2006 Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Office of Economic Advisors data forecasts Wisconsin's total health care work force to grow 27.1 percent by 2014.*

Waukesha County also faces great shortages in the healthcare field. Waukesha County Technical College and Partners are expanding efforts to address the healthcare worker shortage. We are seeking to engage Waukesha County community leaders, encompassing all levels of education, business, industry, and the workforce investment system. The Partnership seeks to continuously examine, improve, and expand their range of education opportunities and resources, such as developing career pathways with multiple entry and exit points that are aligned with local industry career ladders.

Background

A planning team began focused discussions in the spring of 2005 in an effort to develop strategies for career pathways and a sustainability plan to meet the high growth demands in the health care field. The partners believe that creating strategic partnerships is vital and they seek to inform, inspire and support communities that are building comprehensive workforce and education solutions. The core partners have already demonstrated their ability and commitment to working together.

The following members comprised the core group:

- The Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Workforce Development Board
- Waukesha County Technical College
- The Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center
- The Waukesha School District and Academy of Health Professions located at Waukesha South High School
- Alverno College
- Waukesha County School-to-Work Partnership

In the summer of 2005 WCTC and partners submitted a proposal to the U.S. Department of Labor to receive funding to support an effort to address the high demand for health care workers. Grant funding was awarded, and supported not only the many facets of the grant initiatives for workforce expansion, but also has allowed the partners to increase awareness of capabilities to move ahead strategically. Eight members of the partners participated in an Institute for Building Partnerships and Career Pathways in the Healthcare Industry co-sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of Education in May 2006. They began initial work on outlining strategic actions and directions that would lead to success in melding together the healthcare profession training and credentialing process with employment demands of local healthcare industries.

Need

There is a critical need in Wisconsin and Waukesha County to recruit, train, retain and provide advancement opportunities for healthcare workers. In Milwaukee and Waukesha counties, there are 122 hospitals, clinics, and specialty facilities providing health and medical services to a population of approximately 1.4 million. The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development's Office of Economic Advisors has studied the demand for health care workers and has recently issued its projections through the year 2014. For the four-county Milwaukee area, the health care jobs that have the greatest shortage of credentialed workers are shown below.

Occupation Title	2004 Estimated Employment	2014 Projected Employment	2004-2014 Employment change (new)	2002-2014 Employment change (replacement)	Total Employment change (new and replacement)
Registered Nurse (RN)	48,410	64,420	16,010	10,100	26,100
Practical Nurse (LPN)	11,040	12,650	1,600	2,400	4,000
Nursing Assistant (CNA)	38,630	45,320	6,690	5,100	11,800
Medical Assistant (MA)	5,890	8,640	2,750	1,100	3,900
Total	103,970	131,030	27,060	18,700	45,800

Age is the biggest factor behind the need for more health care workers. Today, one of eight Wisconsin residents is 65 years or older, but that ratio is expected to be one of six by 2020 and one of five by 2030. The 2004 -2014 projected growth of these four selected health occupations is 4,580 openings annually. The combined efforts of all colleges, universities, and teaching hospitals do not have the resources to educate and train sufficient number of individuals to satisfy this demand.

Mission

To develop a sustainable strategy through community partnerships to expand health occupation career pathways for potential health care workers to meet the demand of Southeastern Wisconsin health care industry.

Vision

To provide seamless professional development and opportunities for advancement to expand the number of credentialed health care employees to meet industry demand for new and replacement workers.

Strategy

To achieve the vision the Strategic Partnership will incorporate a three pronged strategy.

- Building and strengthening partnerships
- Developing and expanding career pathways
- Information sharing

Time to Move Forward

Successful career pathways are built on trusting relationships and clear lines of communication among private and public partners. Vital to the success of the process is participation of all the players. The Strategic planning team is seeking partners willing to:

- Support student efforts to advance in a career pathways
- Share best practice
- Commit to working collaboratively
- Participate in advisory meetings
- Participate in coordination of efforts to utilize resources effectively
- Sponsor efforts to outreach, recruit and support students

Partnership Benefits

In the process all Partners will benefit as they will:

- Acquire new skills and knowledge
- Expand and strengthen the partnership
- Build capacity of strategic partners
- Navigate the policy environment.

Approach/Evaluation

There are steps for developing and implementing career pathways and building healthcare workforce expansion. To begin this process, the Strategic Planning Partnership formed with the intent of expanding efforts to respond to the labor force needs of regional employers and link with preparing workers to enter and advance in the career track positions.

5 Steps to Building a Competitive Workforce through Career Pathways

1. Economic and Gap Analysis to Drive Strategic Planning
2. Career Pathways Planning Partnership Development
3. Implementation
4. Continuous Improvement and Accountability
5. Expand the Pathways Process

The Strategic Partnership is building a better community – one learner at a time. Through collaboration, career pathways serve to meet the needs of the high demand high growth of the health care industry.

* Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Office of Economic Advisors July 2006

** Building a Health Care Workforce for Wisconsin's future: Hospital's Contributions , A report by the WHA January 2006