
Workforce Development Series
Enhanced Health Support Specialist
National Apprenticeship Summary

WorkForce21

Innovative Workforce Strategies for the 21st Century

ENHANCED HEALTH SUPPORT SPECIALIST APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Nationally, health care is expected to account for one out of every six new jobs created by 2012, adding 3.5 million additional workers. By then, one in every 11 jobs will be in this sector.

All levels of nursing are expected to grow quickly and substantially; more than 1.9 million new and replacement positions are projected between 2002 and 2012. Researchers have observed that the educational mix of nurses may not be adequate to meet either the current or future demands of a rapidly changing healthcare system.

Many national studies have documented LTC industry paraprofessional turnover in excess of 100%. Turning over so many while not filling over 20% of all openings is a major operations issue. Studies have suggested that primary causes for turnover are inadequate preparation to perform job functions; working conditions, including lack of respect by supervisors; inadequate pay (based on the difficulty of the job and comparable pay in competing jobs elsewhere) and personal barriers to employment including inadequate child care coverage; inadequate health insurance; poorly managed family issues and inadequate transportation.

The industry cost of turnover is staggering. Accounting for direct costs, such as separation, vacancy, recruitment of replacement, new employee training and orientation, and then adding indirect costs from lost productivity, reduced quality of care and decreased employee morale, they have been estimated at 100% of annual salary.

The core strategy behind WorkForce21 CareerWorks is to:

- Help achieve better retention and skill development of LTC care workers to enhance their stability and economic growth.
- Develop employee skills as a "universal healthcare worker" through an apprenticeship program, with enhanced links to employee best-practices retention tools.

To do this, CareerWorks:

- Makes sure all current and new employees receive all entitlement programs, supports and tax credits for which they qualify. (In addition to the economic impact, these supports go to the heart of addressing many of the chronic causes of turnover and failure – inadequate child care coverage and transportation support, poor nutrition, unchecked health issues and depression.)
- Uses an employer participatory Family Savings Account program to encourage retention.
- Coordinates logistics to identify those staff in need of ABE, GED or ESL education.
- Combines culture change training for senior care staff and nursing supervision. This in turn involves:
 - A nursing mentoring/preceptor course, and
 - A multi-cultural/communications focused leadership skills course for nursing management.

- Integrates a Transportation Demand Management Program or TDM, an employer sponsored coordinated initiative to tabulate how employees get to and from work, including tax credits under Federal TEA-21 legislation to fund transportation activities and expenses and employee assist with transit vouchers and automobile purchases.

This then leads into the second core strategy of *CareerWorks* -- the use of two different apprenticeship models: one for CNA and one for LPN/LVN. Much evidence has shown apprenticeship to be a promising approach for healthcare, with positive effects on recruitment, retention, staff diversity, and quality of care.

The apprenticeship models have four major components:

- **Related Classroom Instruction**
- **On-the-Job Learning**
- **Mentoring, and**
- **Incremental Wage Increases**

The mainstay of this portion of the *CareerWorks* program is the **Health Support Specialist Registered Apprenticeship Program** for paraprofessionals. *This apprenticeship was developed in the State of Kansas by the Kansas Department of Commerce (a core project partner) and was submitted and approved by the US Department of Labor, Bureau of Apprenticeship Programs in March, 2006.* This US DoL national registered apprenticeship certification gives participants who complete the program additional recognized, portable certificates attesting to their achievement. The ultimate goal for CNA HSS graduates is to provide an educational and career standard far greater than just state CNA certification.

While other states, community colleges, employers and the DoL's national demonstration project with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) all use variations of the paraprofessional career ladder/lattice apprenticeship model, *only this model has been approved as a national paraprofessional "Universal Worker" eldercare apprenticeship and only in this delivery mode has the program been used long enough to establish a track history and actual HSS apprenticeship graduates.*

The Health Support Specialist Registered Apprenticeship Program allows adult care facilities to assist new and current employees through a career ladder to become a "Universal Workers". Apprentices are able to begin the career ladder while being employed full time at the facility in three different areas involving healthcare. This allows the apprentice to work under the direction of a Mentor and Licensed Nurse (an employee whom is deemed skilled by the participating facility apprenticeship committee in his or her area) to increase their skills and knowledge through additional on-the-job training. Health Support Specialist Apprentices become involved with the residents from a person-centered approach, working with residents together as a team.

This in turn enables new and incumbent workers to bridge into healthcare roles at both entry and advanced levels, depending on their skills and experience. This use of a lattice model builds on and supplements programs already in existence at the sponsoring healthcare employer to create pathways of advancement in both nursing and allied health careers. Participants are encouraged to pursue career tracks within healthcare that may include horizontal and/or vertical career

moves. The model provides support systems that help adult learners continue to earn a living and fulfill family responsibilities while working toward new credentials. The model has been designed to appeal to both individual workers and healthcare employers, since it meets critical employment needs, increases diversity of nursing staff, and provides new growth opportunities and career tracks within healthcare.

Workers Benefit: In the program, workers are given the opportunity to advance in their careers through education. Previously non-existent or hidden pathways for advancement can now open up and become visible. The program also removes a number of financial barriers. All of the tuition is paid for by employer contributions and WIA incumbent worker or Individual Training Account (ITA) resources, and the workers can continue to work and earn a salary while they develop new skills and earn credentials needed for higher level positions. Apprentices obtain state certifications upon completion of training at the facility as a CNA and/or CMA.

Apprentices earn one college credit for each fifteen hours of classroom instruction.

Employers benefit: The program helps employers establish clear career pathways and the means for advancement along those pathways. This helps with retention as well as recruitment for higher-skilled positions facing shortages. In addition, employers gain access to an expanded pool for recruiting new employees for their entry-level positions. Employers also benefit from the connections they gain and relationships they build with the other program partners.

The Community Benefits: The interests of the larger community are met through the program, as it provides simultaneous opportunities for work, training, and career advancement to low-skilled workers. It also helps to avert a growing healthcare crisis that is sure to result unless we are able to meet the demand for higher skilled healthcare workers such as RNs.

The certificate of completion as a Rehabilitative Aide is earned through the community or technical college sponsor. Certificates are also obtained in CPR/First Aid and ServSafe (a National Restaurant Association Education Program). The ServSafe certificate allows for increased knowledge of personal hygiene in relation to food safety, maintenance of sanitary facilities and equipment, and food safety from the purchasing of food through receiving, preparation, and service. Upon completion of the Health Support Specialist Registered Apprenticeship program, the apprentice receives a Completion of Apprenticeship certificate.

Apprentices may be employed in dietary service or environmental services, which do not require a certificate to work in the facility while attending related instruction to obtain certification as a CNA and/or CMA. Related instruction in dietary services and environmental services along with on-the-job learning permits the adult care facilities the advantage of addressing the critical shortage areas in their facilities, while providing increased quality of care and quality of life for the residents of their facilities. A medical terminology course is also required to assist the student with charting and documentation. This course assists employees obtain additional skills and knowledge to help ensure the smooth flow of documentation to other team members.

The work process includes competencies for the Health Support Specialist to increase knowledge and skills necessary to meet the needs of the growing geriatric population beyond the required related theoretical instruction.

Advanced specialty training for the adult care facilities utilizing Home Health Aides (HHA) and Activity Professionals is also taught. Related instruction in dietary services and environmental services along with on-the-job-learning allows the adult care facilities the advantage of addressing the critical shortage areas in their facilities, while providing increased quality of care and quality of life for the residents of their facilities. The Health Support Specialist Registered Apprenticeship Program allows facilities to grow their own employees and be better prepared to meet the needs of our aging population by addressing staff retention with less staff turn over and increased skills. With the addition of Registered Apprenticeship to the current certifications, adult care facilities are able to build a better-prepared and skilled work force.

The outcomes for the student apprentice are multi-fold. The apprentice will receive WIA funding to offset what would otherwise be tuition. They will also receive certificates and licensure as they complete the various courses within the program. **College credit hours are granted for courses completed allowing for the option of transfer into an LPN program or other college pursuit.** They will also realize a raise in hourly wages upon completion due to the contractual agreement signed by them with the employer and local area WIB.

In addition to the formal extension from Health Support Specialist to LPN/LVN, it has the capacity to be adapted to include LPN to Registered Nurse (RN), as well as other healthcare pathways to a variety of healthcare specialties, such as pharmacy, respiratory, radiation, medical laboratory, surgical, pediatric and EEG and EKG technicians. ***No incumbent WorkForce21 CareerWorks apprentice who seeks to these career pathways through One-Stop career counseling will be denied the opportunity to seek any other One-Stop coordinated training at any other community college or technical school.*** And while the program is anchored as an incumbent worker program, it is also designed to interface with new hires referred from the WIA One-Stop Centers.

Like all such nursing career lattice programs that have been developed to date, HSS responds to nursing shortages that impact the delivery of quality healthcare services across the country. These models provide a framework for workforce training that expands the pool of skilled nurses working in healthcare settings, increase the retention of skilled personnel in high demand healthcare roles, and galvanize collaboration across sectors. That general model incorporates a number of key elements and approaches that are all contained within HSS:

- Recruiting participants from broad sources
- Builds on what employees already know
- Creates smooth progressive advancement
- Training approaches to meet the needs of working adults
- Workplace supports for trainees
- Employer-driven design
- Collaboration and partnerships in the broader community
- Local site coordinators
- Multiple funding partners

The career lattice framework encourages entry into nursing roles by individuals either with or without previous experience in the field. Workers can see the nursing career lattice initiatives as

opportunities to move into a new occupation where they can expand their skills, earn higher wages, and have increased opportunities for job mobility. These lattice programs also prepare newly hired as well as incumbent workers for advancement leading to CNA, Advanced CNA, LPN, RN, and allied health positions. Participants in career lattice programs can be drawn from current employees of healthcare facilities as well as jobseekers from One-Stop Career Centers, high schools, and community colleges. Reaching out to traditional and nontraditional sources increases the number of individuals who can be recruited into nursing. Such outreach can also encourage individuals with diverse backgrounds to consider and enter the field. Growing the pool of potential healthcare workers is an important strategy for solving the problem of future shortages. The career lattice model promotes the development of linkages between entry and advanced levels to increase opportunities for individuals to advance their careers. The lattice helps them target levels of training within nursing that best reflect their skill levels, life demands, and the availability of real career opportunities. In nursing career lattice programs like HSS, healthcare employers commit to the concept of building and linking successive training opportunities that enable participants to move from one level to the next – or across levels – within high demand healthcare roles.

Nursing career lattice programs are designed to supplement traditional nursing programs, not replace them. Because traditional programs are not yielding sufficient nurses to meet demand, it is important to examine how other training approaches can support efforts to increase the number of individuals pursuing roles within nursing. By expanding the options for learning, the pool of nurses can grow. Two learning strategies that are ideal for helping reduce barriers to study in healthcare careers are the use of apprenticeships and distance learning. Both training approaches engage and support adult learners whose learning styles may be better suited to “hands on study” or “independent study.” Other benefits of these approaches are that:

- Workers can earn a salary while pursuing learning
- On-the-job training, on-site classes, and online course instruction support
- participation
- Scheduling of coursework is coordinated with work schedules
- Attainment of portable skills through these competency-based programs enables participants to advance in nursing and to increase their earning power

The *WorkForce21 CareerWorks* model also integrates peer-mentoring. We use PHI’s peer-mentoring approach into the HSS apprenticeship to make it possible for experienced apprentices to support new employees during their on-the-job learning. This approach has been proven successful in increasing nursing assistant retention and in providing a career pathway for senior aides. This approach is already part of PHI’s Home Health Aide pilot programs.

We conduct this work in the following ways:

- Train trainers from the CC or TC to enable them to teach facility-based peer mentors using PHI’s published and tested curriculum titled *Peer Mentoring: A Workshop Series for Direct-Care Workers in Home and Residential Care*.
- Work with a regional management and facility administration to design their peer mentor program, including the development of job descriptions, selection criteria and

- Provide telephone consultation to regional and facility management during implementation of the peer mentor program.

Lastly, in the HSS to LPN/LVN apprenticeship, these nurses primarily provide direct patient care in institutional settings under the direction of a physician or an RN. LPNs/LVNs must have state licenses. Our apprenticeship model actively seeks to prepare employees and newly hired workers to sit for the NCLEX-PN (National Council Licensing Examination – Practical Nurse), a national examination required for state licensure.

The clinical component to the apprenticeship takes place on the job, while the theory and didactic portions are overseen by accredited college nursing programs. Requirements for entry into traditional LPN/LVN programs are established by each college licensed to provide this program. The *WorkForce21 CareerWorks* Apprenticeship Program incorporates the same curriculum content as traditional nursing programs, but disseminates the information through formats designed to be supportive of participation by working adults. LPN/LVN apprentices meet minimum standards established in their state prior to training in clinical settings. All programs or proposed changes to current LPN programs are reviewed with State Boards of Nursing. Certifications may be needed for new programs under consideration. In terms of logistics, *WorkForce21* has worked with traditional LPN/LVN training providers to adapt class scheduling to support employee participation in LPN/LVN programs. We have made use of providers' part-time nursing programs to encourage greater worker participation by helping employee students balance their work, family, and educational responsibilities. Graduates of the HSS apprenticeship, incumbent employees, and external candidates learn through clinicals that are within their scope of practice, study theory through any other colleges that are used in the project's implementation and continue working and earning a salary. The program prepares them for the NCLEX-PN exam. However the bulk of the program's education to date is centered with one technical college, as it has the capacity and charter ability to provide learning across state lines; modify curricula to meet multi-state demands and has been willing to make the full technology investment needed for successful distance based healthcare education.

While we have had a two-year success rate of over 90% completion and graduation, we project new programs to meet a minimum 70% success rate. ETA's Common Measurements are used for project evaluation coordinated with all WIB,s.

In summary, these are the generalized outcome benefits:

Benefits to Employers

Greater competence of employees
 Greater employee retention
 Lower investment in recruitment
 Improved quality of patient care

Benefits to Apprentices

Nationally recognized credentials
 Increased wages tied to competencies
 Identifiable career pathways
 Improved self-esteem