Overview

In partnership with training providers, employers and community organizations, Central Iowa HealthWorks, a program of United Way of Central Iowa, has provided support to almost 500 individuals looking to launch or advance their career in health care. We have successfully targeted those with barriers to employment and underrepresented in health care, including people of color (71% of participants), refugees/immigrants (37%), people with criminal backgrounds (13%), people with disabilities (5%) and people below the federal poverty level (58%).

HealthWorks provides funding for all aspects of the training, including tuition, books, supplies, and testing costs. The biggest strength of our program is its hands-on approach. Case managers cater their support to the needs of each participant, from helping them get enrolled in class all the way through accepting their first training-related job. HealthWorks can even help cover the cost of transportation to get to class or provide rental assistance if an emergency arises. So whether it’s working on a resume together or creating a plan to bring up a grade, case managers have the skills to knock down any barrier that prevents participants from succeeding.

By leveraging other funding streams, like grants and scholarships for nursing students, HealthWorks has been able to serve 40% more participants than anticipated. Almost 90% of participants earn at least one credential, which amounts to hundreds of health care professionals entering the workforce.

Program Highlight

Central Iowa HealthWorks has successfully partnered with employers to support apprentices advancing their careers as Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA) and Certified Medical Assistants (CMA).

HealthWorks has supported Broadlawns Medical Center’s TEACH program, a Registered Apprenticeship, since its inception in 2017. TEACH, or Training and Education for Adults seeking a Career in Healthcare, draws from adults in the public hospital’s own community, the most economically distressed neighborhood in the area. The apprentices complete basic and advanced CNA classes on-site and job shadow across departments, all while getting paid at a rate increasing with each new credential.
At UnityPoint Health Des Moines, CMA apprentices work at their previously held positions Monday through Thursday, attend classes in the evening and complete their CMA clinicals on Friday. This allows them to advance their career while earning a full-time salary.

HealthWorks was able to support these programs with increasingly important case management. This is a critical piece when apprentice’s plans change, and they need help navigating their next steps.

**Regional Workforce Partnerships and Sector Strategies**

United Way of Central Iowa pursued the America’s Promise grant largely due to the existence of a strong regional employer partnership in health care, and we have seen that partnership continue to grow through these four years.

The sharing of information and best practices has encouraged others to launch similar successful programs, such as a Patient Care Tech (PCT) apprenticeship. Within the last few years, all three hospital systems have begun programs to internally train PCTs. HealthWorks is now seen as a leader in expanding the health care workforce in Central Iowa with employers looking to us for direction as they develop employee retention and case management programs.

Our program has also benefited from the partnerships United Way has in all sectors of social service. As we attempt to target specific populations, from refugees to people with disabilities, these connections have increased access to these groups. And when a participant faces a barrier, like a loss in income or childcare, relationships with social services organizations help us reach a positive solution.

**Success Story and Impact**

Maria is originally from Colombia where she worked as a primary care physician. When she moved to Des Moines at 53 years old, she was unable to get her credentials transferred and was back to square one. Maria needed to start earning money to support her family and didn’t feel she had enough time to retrain as a doctor.

She enrolled in the nursing program at Des Moines Area Community College, but after running into financial difficulties, she wasn’t sure she’d be able to complete the 2-year degree. Maria was introduced to Central Iowa HealthWorks, which provided her funding for tuition, books, supplies and the testing costs to obtain her nursing license. She credits the program’s support as the only way she could have completed her degree.

“Am I the most qualified nurse in Des Moines? I hope so!” Maria laughingly added.

**Central Iowa HealthWorks**

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