

CAPE COD & ISLANDS WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

PREPARING CAPE & ISLANDS RESIDENTS FOR CAREERS IN HEALTH CARE SUPPORT SERVICES



BayStateWorks Promising Practice Case Study

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"Priceless opportunity. I found the way."

"A lot of knowledge, good teaching, classes were helpful."

"I was happy with the program."

- Program Participants

1 Executive Summary

In order to address employers' needs and increase the skills of under- and unemployed individuals, the Cape & Islands Workforce Investment Board formed the BayStateWorks Healthcare Partnership to implement the BayStateWorks Healthcare Training Program. Members of this partnership include: Cape and Islands Workforce Investment Board (WIB); Cape Cod Hospital; Falmouth Hospital; Visiting Nurse Association; Medical Associates of Cape Cod; Community Action Committee; Cape and Islands Career Opportunities, Job Training and Employment Corporation; ACCESS (Cape Cod Community College); Upper Cape Cod Regional Technical High School; Creative Workplace; Cape Cod Economic Development Council; and Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Local 2020.

For the past year, with funding from Commonwealth Corporation, 45 eligible individuals received free training in Introduction to Health Care, Medical Terminology, Math Skills, Business World, Computer Literacy Training, Job Shadowing and Internship. Graduates of this program also had the opportunity to take Medical Transcription and Medical Administrative Assistant courses.

Working together, the BayStateWorks Healthcare Partnership maximized funding and made a difference in the lives of many Cape Cod residents; as of May 15, 2006, 53% of participants had found jobs in healthcare:

- 69% of the participants from the first fast track found jobs in healthcare
- 27% of the participants from the English as a Working Language track found jobs in healthcare.
- 60% of the participants from the second fast track found jobs in healthcare

2 Introduction

In response to the grant solicitation, Cape & Islands Workforce Investment Board (WIB) formed the BayStateWorks Healthcare Partnership. Members of this partnership include: Cape and Islands Workforce Investment Board; Cape Cod Hospital; Falmouth Hospital; Visiting Nurse Association; Medical Associates of Cape Cod; Community Action Committee; Cape and Islands Career Opportunities, Job Training and Employment Corporation; ACCESS (Cape Cod

Community College); Upper Cape Cod Regional Technical High School; Creative Workplace; Cape Cod Economic Development Council; and Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Local 2020.

The partners reviewed Labor Market Indicators data that indicated that the healthcare industry, a major employer in the region, is experiencing labor shortages in a large number of occupation categories. Results from needs analyses indicate gaps in the workforce at Cape Cod healthcare facilities. Employer partners, combined, had an average monthly vacancy rate of twelve openings for support service positions, including Patient Accounts Representative, Transcriptionist, Health Information Coding, Reimbursement Specialist, Health Unit Coordinator, Registration Representative, Central Scheduler, Cashier, Credit and Collection Coordinator, and Accounts Payable Representative. According to the Department of Unemployment Assistance's employment projections for 2000-2010, Medical Records and Health Information Technicians will see 2,030 new jobs created in the next ten years, an increase of 45%. Medical Transcription will see 380 new jobs created, a 22% increase.

During 2004, 116 positions requiring medical terminology, math and computer skills and a GED or its equivalent were filled at Partnership locations. All of these ancillary support positions require ability to speak, read and write English at a high school graduate-level of comprehension. Many individuals capable of filling the ancillary support positions worked in dietary and housekeeping areas of the employer partner organizations. These individuals vary in their language skills and educational backgrounds. In addition, there are many unemployed or underemployed non-incumbents living on Cape Cod. To address employers' needs and increase skills of under- and unemployed individuals, the partners developed the BayStateWorks Healthcare Training Program.

3 Project Goal and Objectives

The overarching goal of this program is to improve the competitiveness and efficiency of the employer-driven partnership members by increasing workers' skills through education and hands-on training. This provides incumbent and under- and unemployed individuals with a skill-set that facilitates entry or advancement into a career ladder, while filling job vacancies at the employer partner organizations. In order to achieve this goal, the partners:

- recruited and tested 45 individuals interested in participating in this training program to identify their specific skill needs and abilities;
- designed a curriculum track, utilizing job competency requirements from employer partner organizations and information obtained from participant testing, to train 45 individuals interested in pursuing a career in healthcare beginning with an entry-level ancillary service position (for example: Patient Registration or Unit Secretary);
- provided case management services to the 45 individuals;
- educated and trained 45 individuals to allow for their advancement into healthcare positions with an opportunity to continue to advance in both position and pay at an employer partner organization;
- provided 100% paid time release for incumbent workers participating in the grant-funded program;

- decreased the number of support service vacancies at employer partner organizations, combined, by a total of 35 filled openings by the end of the funding period;
- employed under-employed or unemployed individuals in positions, either full- or part-time with benefits, by the end of the grant-funding period.
- supported the advancement, education and growth of the program participants after the grant-funding period had ended through participation in existing career ladder programs.

4 Program Development

The Cape & Islands Workforce Investment Board convened meetings between representatives of Cape Cod Hospital, Falmouth Hospital, the Visiting Nurse Association, Medical Associates of Cape Cod, Career Opportunities, the Job Training and Employment Corporation, ACCESS, Upper Cape Cod Technical High School, SEIU 2020, Creative Workplace Learning, the Cape Cod Economic Development Council and the Community Action Committee of the Cape & Islands. These meetings resulted in a program designed to maximize the strengths of each partnering organization to provide all the needed components to eligible students. The partnership determined who was most able to provide services from the matrix of needed services. Each partner had an equal vote in the decision-making process. Memorandums of understanding outlining the agreement between the partners were then executed.

The partners agreed that ACCESS would assess potential participants, Creative Learning would provide English as a Working Language classes, while Upper Cape Cod Regional Technical High School implemented Medical Terminology, Computer, Math and Preparing for the Business World workshops. Cape & Islands WIB offered technical workforce development and labor statistics and supervised the Project Coordinator. Job Training and Employment Corporation served as fiscal agent while Career Opportunities provided outreach, intake, assessment and case management. Community Action of Cape Cod and the Islands recruited the participants. As a result of their efforts, all classes in the training program were filled to capacity.

5 Program Implementation

For the past year, with funding from Commonwealth Corporation, 45 eligible individuals received free training in Introduction to Health Care, Medical Terminology, Math Skills, Business World, Computer Literacy Training, Job Shadowing and Internship. Graduates of this program also had the opportunity to take Medical Transcription and Medical Administrative Assistant. The Partners also addressed the barriers that often prevent adults from pursuing further education, including hiring faculty focused on the adult learner and a case manager to facilitate the enrollment, and securing release time for classes.

Curricula designed to meet job requirements were delivered in a three-track progression based on the language and reading competencies of the participants. Track two, with sixteen participants, was a specially designed course that incorporated medical terminology and English for those in need of improving their English language skills. This track started with English as a Working Language (EWL) and Job Shadowing, then progressed to computer and math courses as well as ancillary service skills taught during job shadowing and internship. Track three,

originally designed for individuals pursuing a GED, along with Track four became “fast tracks,” due to a lack of interest among participants in getting a GED. Track three, serving sixteen participants, and Track four, with fourteen people, were for those with a high school diploma or GED. They took courses in Introduction to Health Care, Medical Terminology, Job Shadowing, Business World Skills, Computer, Math and Ancillary Service Skills during job shadow and internship. The curriculum was based on a variety of adult learning principles; it was best suited for those requiring “hands-on” learning, visual and audio presentations, as well as role-play and situational discussions of day-to-day issues.

6 Outcomes

Working together, the BayStateWorks Healthcare Partnership maximized funding and made a difference in the lives many Cape Cod residents: as of May 15, 2006, 53% of participants had found jobs in healthcare:

- 69% of Track 4 participants found jobs in healthcare
- 27% of Track 2 (EWL) participants found jobs in healthcare
- 60% of Track 3 participants found jobs in healthcare

Once all the participants in Track 3 complete their internship, this number will climb even higher.

This program has changed lives. Prior to joining BayStateWorks Healthcare Training Program, one BayState participant was employed as Program Support, where her job was to cook, clean and provide taxi service. She had always loved the office environment, but due to her financial situation, she could not afford formal education in this field. The BayStateWorks program made her goals a reality. As she says, “The education I have received thus far will serve me well in my future employment and has prepared me for a career in Medical Administration.” Another participant was unexpectedly laid-off from her job due to a slow down in business at a large, established construction company where she had been employed for five years. Wanting a career change, she investigated the job market and was delighted to be accepted into the program. She says: “Thank you to BayStateWorks Healthcare Partnership, the wonderful teachers at Upper Cape Tech Evening Program, Cape Cod Healthcare, Career Opportunities and Falmouth Hospital for the opportunity to advance my current skills in a field where a slow down in business is unlikely in the near future.” The students were happy with the courses at Upper Cape Cod Regional Technical School. BayState participants summarize the program as follows: “A lot of knowledge, good teaching.”; “Classes were helpful.”; “I was happy with the program.” And as one participant describes it, “Priceless opportunity. I found the way.”

Securing a position was not the only benefit to the individuals participating in this grant-funded program. In addition, participating individuals had the opportunity to further develop themselves by taking advantage of the educational and career advancement opportunities available to them at the employer partner organizations. Some of these opportunities were grant-funded programs or were reimbursable through tuition assistance. The cost of future personal and career development could potentially be free to these individuals except for their time and intellectual investment.

To examine the BayStateWorks Healthcare Training Program's success at hiring qualified candidates into administrative and clerical positions to date, Cape Cod Healthcare used the following three measurable areas for data collection and assessment for the time frame 10/1/0–5/15/06.

1. Current clerical openings within Cape Cod Healthcare and the amount of time it takes to fill these openings
2. The quality of candidates for these clerical openings
3. The amount of time it takes a department to acclimate a new employee to that position

Overall, there was a decrease in the time it took to fill open positions noted since September 2005. There was also a slight decrease in the number of positions posted because some participants managed to continue in the same role as they held during their internship on a per diem basis. Therefore, a posting was not required.

The orientation time was reduced significantly over the course of the program. Most orientation times were reduced by over 50%. This was a great selling point for participants applying to positions with Cape Cod Healthcare after their internships. They would not require a significant orientation, if any. In some cases, they only required acclimation to a new shift, department or facility because they were able to bring the basic computer system knowledge and Cape Cod Healthcare procedural knowledge that they gained in their internship. Others managed to continue in the same role as their internship on a per diem or part-time basis due in part due to the fact that they were fully oriented to the job duties during their internship.

7 Lessons

The partnership was instrumental to the program's success. Employers and academic organizations successfully joined with the WIB and the Career Centers around the mutual goal of preparing Cape & Islands residents for careers in healthcare support services. Keys to effective coalitions are excellent communication, clearly defined roles, mutual goals, trust and "buy-in" from all the members. The partnership obtained "buy-in" by involving the partners in all stages of planning, implementation and evaluation.

All the partners met on a regular basis, twice a month in the initial stages of the grant, and then monthly. As a result, the partners were actively engaged with the program. To facilitate communication among the partners and Commonwealth Corporation, a part-time Project Coordinator was hired.

All the partners recognized the need for effective marketing and provided special outreach to the Brazilian Portuguese/Spanish population through radio, schools, organizations, churches and Portuguese newspapers. Flyers were translated into Portuguese and then distributed to area churches, schools, organizations and establishments frequented by Brazilian immigrants.

Some participants failed to recognize their responsibility in the learning and hiring process. They assumed that their internship would be of their choosing and would automatically turn into a full-

time job. As one BayState participant described it, “not everyone got placed where they wanted to.”

Free training alone will not prepare an adult learner for a career in the health field. Positive attitude, initiative, strong work ethic, flexibility, and willingness to take risks greatly determine participants’ success. Those participants who sat back with a sense of entitlement, waiting for an opportunity, did not secure employment after the internship. When selecting candidates, consideration must be given to their commitment, attitude and work ethic.

Utilizing learning contracts is one effective approach often used to foster participants' taking responsibility. In adult education (Knowles, 1984), higher education (Berte, 1975), training settings (Galbraith and Gilley, 1984) and religious education (Sawyers, 1985), contracts have been identified as the most effective technique for assisting students to diagnose their learning needs, plan learning techniques for assisting students to diagnose their learning needs, plan learning activities, and identify and select relevant resources.

Basic computer and keyboarding skills were lacking in a few of the Track three participants. This slowed the rest of the class. As one participant says, “Computers was too basic and slow for me.” Perhaps assessment tests should be given in computers. Those lacking in basic computer skills could take a Computer Basics course.

The EWL track was not fully prepared for the level of jobs that needed to be filled. A few participants had trouble with alphabet-related tasks. Although this Track improved their English skills, they still did not possess the communication skills necessary for customer service positions by the end of the training.

The BayStateWorks program should not be seen as a final destination for these participants, but the beginning of a path to new opportunities. Nearly all the participants need further education, training and work experience to grow in the healthcare industry. It was wonderful to see how the participants grew personally and professionally during their participation in the BayStateWorks Training Program.

Appendix A: Article in *The Barnstable Patriot*

Update on the WIB's BayStateWorks Healthcare Partnership

A few months ago I mentioned that the Cape & Islands Workforce Investment Board had received a grant to train up to 40 low-income individuals into healthcare administrative careers. The funding was made available through an economic stimulus bill that the state legislature passed in 2004. Today I want to provide you with an update on the progress of our grant.

The Cape and Islands WIB formed the BayStateWorks Healthcare Partnership in order to increase the skills of under and unemployed individuals. Once trained these individuals are ready to gain entry level positions or advancement in the health field if they are already employed in health care. At the same time the intent is to alleviate job vacancies at the employer partner organizations. Members of our partnership include: Cape and Islands Workforce Investment Board, Cape Cod Hospital, Falmouth Hospital, Visiting Nurse Association, Medical Associates of Cape Cod, Community Action Committee, Cape and Islands, Career Opportunities, Job Training and Employment Corporation, ACCESS (Cape Cod Community College), Upper Cape Cod Regional Technical High School, Creative Workplace, Cape Cod Economic Development Council and SEIU, Local 2020. I can't stress the importance of the partnership enough. The contributions of each of the partners is what is making this such a successful training program.

For the past year forty- five eligible individuals received free training in Introduction to Health Care, Medical Terminology, Math Skills, and Computer Literacy Training. In addition to this classroom experience our trainees also participated in Job Shadowing activities and worked in a paid internship position. Graduates of this program also had the opportunity to take Medical Transcription and Medical Administrative Assistant. As a result of this program, nine people have already found jobs and three others have received promotions.

This program has changed lives, I'll tell you about a couple of examples:

Prior to joining our BayStateWorks Healthcare Training Program, Rebecca Fluker was employed within a social services agency in a Program Support position where her job was to cook, clean and provide taxi service. She wanted to do something more with the rest of her life. She always loved the whole office environment, but how could she get into that line of work without formal education in this field? College courses were out of the question due to the financial strain it would put on her already tight budget. One day a colleague told Rebecca about our Medical Administration Course that was being offered at no cost to its participants. Rebecca says, "I am very grateful to have been able to participate in this program, and hope to see it continue, so that others may be given the same opportunity I have been given. The education I have received thus far will serve me well in my future employment and has prepared me for a career in Medical Administration". Rebecca became employed as a Switchboard Operator within the Cape Cod Healthcare organization this past November and just recently has been promoted to Clinical Coordinator.

Kathleen Vanderhoop, another participant, was unexpectedly laid off from her job due to a slow down in business at a large established Commercial Construction Company, where she had been employed for five years. Wanting a career change, she started by investigating the local job market. Kathleen shared her interest in the booming healthcare industry on Cape Cod with an employee at the Community Action Committee of Cape Cod and the Islands, Inc.; subsequently this employee took the initiative to refer Kathleen to Career Opportunities in Hyannis. She said they were looking for committed individuals who were interested in working in the medical field. This certificate training program sounded like the perfect opportunity to start a new career for qualified individuals.

Kathleen was delighted to be accepted into our program. The classes took place at Upper Cape Cod Regional Technical School, Evening Program. She says “Thank you to the Cape and Islands BayStateWorks Healthcare Partnership, the wonderful teachers at Upper Cape Cod Regional Technical School, Evening Program, Cape Cod Healthcare, Career Opportunities and Falmouth Hospital for the opportunity to advance my current skills in a field where a slow down in business is unlikely in the near future”.

The program is continuing and will not be completed until this summer. Graduates from the classroom training portion have completed their courses at different times so that the paid internships are not all taking place at once. I will report on the programs full results when we have finished the project. I expect that the completed results will be as encouraging as this mid project report.