

## Healthcare Sector

### Summary of key themes, needs, and opportunities: June 2026

Prepared by the SEIU Healthcare 1199NW Multi-Employer Training and Education Fund

#### (1) What are the top 3-5 themes you hear from employers in your sector related to workforce development?

- Longstanding healthcare **workforce shortages in occupations like CNAs, nurses, and nursing assistants** were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic as fewer individuals entered and completed training during and immediately after pandemic closures. Those entering healthcare occupations often face **longer work hours and larger workloads**, which can lead to increased turnover and necessitate the training of both replacement workers and new staff for existing openings.
- Increased **behavioral health** issues require more workers with behavioral health expertise, but relatively few programs exist to meet the demand, exacerbating workforce challenges.
- **High turnover** disrupts continuity of care and adds to the operational strain on healthcare institutions. Strategies to reduce turnover include improving work conditions, offering competitive compensation, and providing mental health support, all of which have implications for staffing and costs.
- Targeted programs are needed to address the unique challenges of **rural healthcare** providers, including incentives for healthcare employees to work in underserved areas and support for rural health clinics and hospitals.
- **Licensing and certification delays** for NA-Cs, SUDPs, and other credentialed occupations impact the ability to fill these high-demand occupations and limit opportunities for individuals interested in these occupations.

#### (2a) What are the 3-6 occupations that employers in your sector indicate should be high-priority for workforce development to help meet their hiring needs?

- Nursing Assistant-certified/CNA as part of the nursing pathway
- Medical Assistant
- Behavioral Health Technician/Peer Counsellor/Substance Use Disorder Professional
- Radiologic Technicians and Technologists (Imaging Technologists)

#### (2b) Which career-connected learning programs are effectively meeting the hiring needs of employers in your sector?

In addition to the programs listed below, the Washington Association for Community Health offers a statewide MA Registered Apprenticeship program. Many colleges and a variety of high schools, private training organizations, and nursing homes offer NA-C training. A full list of programs that are certified or pending certification is available at <https://nursing.wa.gov/education/nursing-assistant-training/nursing-assistant-training-programs>.

Most colleges also offer MA programs.

- (Eastern WA) CHAS Community Health MA Programs in: Adams, Asotin, Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, and Whitman Counties.
- (King/Piece) WABS Nursing Pathway; Next Move Nursing Internship; Tacoma Healthcare Career Academy; Training Fund NA-C Apprenticeship Prep and Behavioral Health and Registered MA Apprenticeships; Radiology Programs at UW Medical Center, Lake Washington RAYUS, Bellevue College, Multi-care and Tacoma Community College, Highline, Edmonds, and Seattle South Central addiction and SUDP programs.
- (West Sound) SUDP and Medical Assisting programs at Olympic College.
- (West) Jefferson Healthcare Career Explore and Preparatory Programs and Prep MA Program, Goodwill Industries STEM, Training Fund Pharm Tech Registered Apprenticeship at Sno-Isle Skill Center, Whatcom Nursing Internship.
- (Capital) New Market Skills Center, Training Fund NA-C Apprenticeship Prep and Behavioral Health Registered Apprenticeships.
- (East) Washington State University, Stevens County Health Mentorship Program, WSU Healthcare Career Prep (Stevens), Training Fund MA Apprenticeship, Radiologic Tech Programs, Spokane Community College, and Wenatchee Valley College
- (Mid-Columbia) Training Fund, MA and Behavioral Health Registered Apprenticeships, and NA-C Apprenticeship Prep Program, WSU/Tri Cities Nursing Bridge Program, Radiologic Tech Programs at Columbia Basin College
- (North Central) Foundation for Youth Resiliency, Training Fund NA-C Apprenticeship Prep and MA Registered Apprenticeship, New Health Programs, MA Apprenticeships (Stevens, Whitman, Spokane).
- (Northwest), Sno-Isle Skills Center, New Health Programs, WABS, Whatcom Community Behavioral Health Center, Training Fund Behavioral Health Apprenticeships, Radiologic Tech Programs, Bellingham Tech College
- (South) Foundation for Youth Resiliency, Training Fund NA-C Apprenticeship Prep and MA Registered Apprenticeship, New Health Programs, MA Apprenticeships (Stevens, Whitman, Spokane).

**(2c) Which career-connected learning programs could be adjusted, expanded, or scaled to other regions to meet the hiring needs of employers in your sector?**

- Preparatory programs such as the Training Fund's **Introduction to Healthcare Apprenticeship Programs (IHAP 1)**, **Jefferson Healthcare Care Team Specialist**, and **NA-C program can be adapted to various contexts and communities**. The Care Team Specialist is a Career Prep introductory program that can lead to various administrative entry-level roles at Jefferson Healthcare. IHAP 1 is designed for occupational awareness in entry-level health career opportunities and can lead to direct employment, to pre-apprenticeship/post-secondary NA-C training, or to apprenticeship. It provides recruitment, career planning, work readiness, interview prep, and job placement navigation. While there are multiple NA-C programs running across the state at Long Term Care facilities, Skills Centers, CTCs, and other partners, current program offerings do not meet the demand and should be scaled to support industry needs. These programs, and similar career preparatory programs, would be expandable to support employer needs.

- The **WSU/Tri-Cities Nursing Bridge Program** is in the early stage of expansion and can be replicated by ESDs and academic institutions. Recently, the program narrowed its geographic focus and is in contact with the Healthcare Sector Intermediary regarding progress.
- The Training Fund's **College in the HS Pharmacy Technician and Medical Assistant apprenticeship program**, offered in partnership with Sno Isle Skills Center and North Seattle College, is ready for replication. Expansion plans are in process to add additional apprenticeships with other Skill Centers across the state, based on the Sno Isle Skills Center, HCAC, and North Seattle College model.
- ESD123 Career Networking Program for Children of Migrant Farmworkers, AHEC (Eastern Region) Teddy Bear Clinic, ESD105 Summer Academy, WABS Job Shadowing, and Northwest ESD189 ECHO Tours **effectively expose students to healthcare in early grades** and can lead to healthcare careers when they are followed by Career Prep and Launch programs. Programs such as these should be replicated in more regions in the state.

**(2d) Which career-connected learning programs should be developed to meet the hiring needs of employers in your sector?**

- Post-COVID, there was a drop in interest in various healthcare occupations. While a focus on Career Explore programs doesn't meet immediate employer needs, it increases the number of youths who see healthcare as an exciting and rewarding career, and these programs can be easier to implement in the short term. The Healthcare Sector Intermediary recommends **developing healthcare Career Explore programs**, as well as interactive career fairs such as those mentioned above, that can lead to the eventual development of Career Prep and Career Launch programs.
- Apprenticeship offers another pathway to address healthcare workforce needs. Apprenticeship allows employers to train current and new workers in their specific environments, reducing onboarding, while providing individuals with portable credentials and pay while in the program. Apprenticeship requires more employer engagement than traditional education and training programs, but has a direct impact on both participants and employers. Healthcare Sector Intermediary recommends **CCW expand and build more apprenticeship opportunities that do not already exist**, as funding resources are limited in the current environment. In addition, program design should be taken into account for educational pathway opportunities for learners. The Healthcare Sector Intermediary recommends that programs be designed with college credits that allow future career pathway opportunities, which should be considered for program builders to support apprenticeship programming.
- **Technical program expansion** should be supported to address industry needs, such as Jefferson Healthcare Explore and Prep Medical Assisting Program, Surgical Tech and Pharmacy Tech certification programs, and the Mason General Medical Assisting Program.
- **Skill Center College in the High School programs** can expand opportunities for career-connected learning and can be another mechanism to address industry needs.

**(3) What are the top three efforts, initiatives, or investments that could meaningfully support the workforce development needs of employers in your sector?**

- Invest in Recruitment, Retention, and Upskilling for the Existing Workforce
- Implement Statewide Workforce Data and Forecasting Systems
- Scale Registered Apprenticeships, earn as you learn models, and "Grow your Own" models

**(4) What are the top 3-5 approaches you recommend to increase participation of underrepresented students in your sector's high-priority occupations?**

**Statewide Employer Engagement Accelerator for Apprenticeship Expansion**

**Goal:** Systematically expand apprenticeship opportunities across multiple occupations by deepening employer collaboration, showcasing success models, and providing implementation support.

**Why:** Apprenticeship offers a high-value, equity-focused model, and the intermediary is in a prime position to scale its adoption. However, employers need consistent support to replicate successful models.

**Additional Key Actions:**

- Launch an **Employer Apprenticeship Modeling Series**: quarterly peer learning forums where early adopters present replicable models (with operational detail, ROI data, and lessons learned).
- Develop an **Apprenticeship Playbook** aligned with CCL criteria and DEI principles, to be used statewide across sectors and occupations.
- Offer **rapid-response technical support teams** (1–2 consultants or specialists) to help employers implement new apprenticeships, especially in rural and underserved areas.
- Continue to partner with the Healthcare Workforce Ecosystem and Build 2 Lead to develop approaches that recruit more BIPOC youth into healthcare training programs and support their success.
- Continue efforts to expand Jefferson Healthcare Care Team Specialist, IHAP 1, and other entry-level preparatory programs, which have been developed specifically to recruit more BIPOC and underrepresented youth into healthcare occupations and programs. These programs provide career readiness, wrap-around services, stipends, and job placement services to participants as well as support for them to transition into Nursing Assistant Certified training or other jobs in healthcare after program completion. These programs can be modified to focus on the needs of diverse populations and can be offered in various settings to meet students where they are.
- Expand community outreach and early exposure, creating more Career Explore and Prep programs. Conduct these programs in schools and community centers that serve target populations to introduce underrepresented students to healthcare careers early, including internships, job shadowing, and summer programs to spark interest and provide hands-on experience.
- Develop inclusive educational environments with culturally responsive curricula and robust support services, such as tutoring and counseling, to ensure that underrepresented students feel welcomed and supported throughout their studies.

Host local **convenings with partners that serve underrepresented populations** to help guide program development that is centered around the needs of underrepresented communities.