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Workforce Development Partnership Serves Both Employers and Employees

By Cheryl Feldman, Executive Director, District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund, Philadelphia

The health-care industry is the largest employer in Pennsylvania, and as a result, this industry has a huge impact on the state's economy.¹ As baby boomers age and their health-care needs increase, however, the state is facing a health-care workforce shortage that is magnified by high turnover rates, an inadequate pool of qualified employees, and a lack of qualified instructors.^{1,2}

In Philadelphia, the workforce crisis is further exacerbated by candidates' lack of basic skills. Literacy skills are essential in the health-care field. The health-care industry, which constituted 20.8 percent of private employment in Philadelphia in 2009, has shown growth during the recession, but new jobs require literate, trained employees.³

¹ Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board, "Health Care Industry Partnerships and the Pennsylvania Center for Health Careers: The Interconnected Relationship," December 2010, available at <http://tinyurl.com/3hne8sw>.

² Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, "Retooling for an Aging America: Building the Health Care Workforce," Fact Sheet, April 2008, available at <http://tinyurl.com/6d8vbq2>.

³ This statistic is from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Employment Survey from 2009.

The District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund (Training Fund) has a dual mission:

- Provide health-care employers with qualified, trained employees who can fill open positions.

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Credit: Maida Odum

During a visit to the Training and Upgrading Fund in February 2011, Arne Duncan (left), U.S. secretary of education; Henry Nicholas, president of District 1199C and of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees; and Hilda L. Solis, U.S. secretary of labor, welcomed students who received asylum from Myanmar.



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- Help low- and moderate-income employees and unemployed residents to increase their skills and access training in order to obtain health-care positions and advance in their careers (see Career Pathways below for more information).

In essence, the Training Fund has two lines of business: 1) a stand-alone educational institution for union members and community residents; and 2) an employer partnership that works directly with employers to meet their training needs.

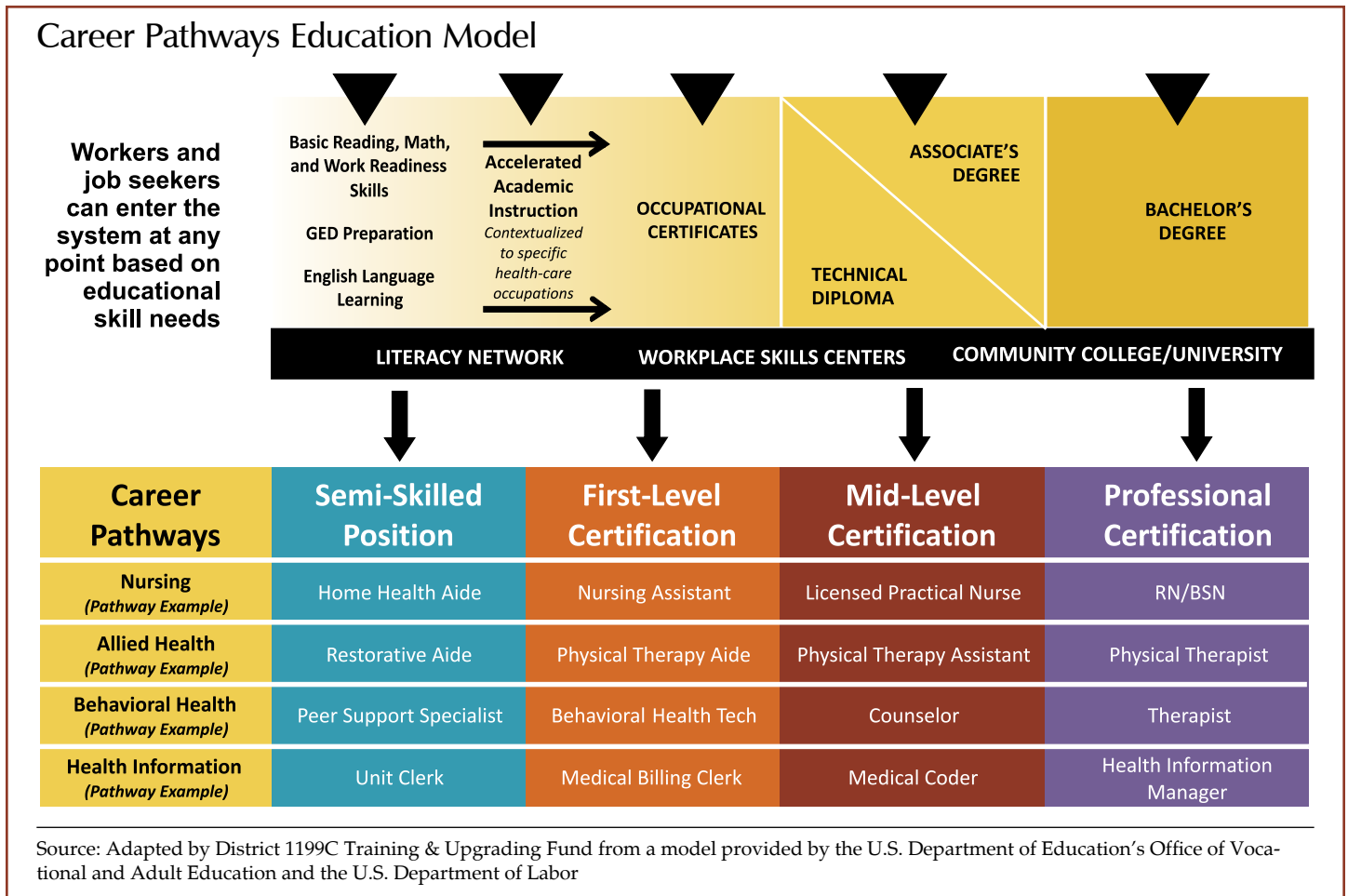
In order to operate an effective sectoral workforce development program, it's important to understand the industry in detail. Employers trust the Training Fund with data and information, and the fund works with employers to use this information to develop a strategy that meets the employer's needs.⁴

At present, 52 health-care employers in the Delaware Valley, primarily hospitals and long-term care and behavioral health providers, work with the fund's staff to identify talent gaps and develop training. The Train-

ing Fund has a staff of 35 full-time and 50 part-time individuals and a 2010–2011 budget of \$5.7 million.

The Training Fund has helped a total of approximately 100,000 employees to advance in their careers since the fund's inception. It is one of very few organizations nationally that serve nonunion residents,⁵ as well as union members, and provide a full range of services encompassing literacy and workforce skills, training, education, industry-recognized credentials, and linkages to community colleges and universities.

⁴A multi-year study of the effectiveness of the sector approach has indicated positive findings in increased earnings, better benefits, and steadier employment. Sheila Maguire, Joshua Freely, Carol Clymer, et al., "Tuning In to Local Labor Markets: Findings from the Sectoral Employment Impact Study," Public/Private Ventures, 2010, available at http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/325_publication.pdf.



Meeting of Health-Care Employers Convened on Workforce Issues

A health-care industry partnership formed by the District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund (Training Fund) is addressing emerging health-care issues and their impact on training and human resources planning. The partnership, called the Pennsylvania Partnership for Direct Care Workers, includes 70 employers, six colleges and universities, five technical training programs operated by nonprofits, and nine workforce development partners. The 70 employers include 18 employers or employer bargaining units that are not part of the Training Fund. The term direct care workers refers to semi-skilled to professional-level employees in nursing, allied health, behavioral health, and health information.

In 2010, the partnership convened a meeting of health-care executives, government officials, and educators for a symposium on how best to prepare health-care and clerical employees for a transition from paper to computerized patient records.

Shortly thereafter, the Training Fund developed a 30-week course in which employees receive credentials in computer proficiency and in creation of digital patient records, as well as training in customer service and medical terminology. The program has proven useful to both employers and employees.

This year, the Training Fund embarked on an important pilot initiative with the Inglis Foundation in Philadelphia. Inglis was concerned about turnover among its first-year nurse's aides and asked the Training Fund to collaborate on designing a three-week program of coursework and on-the-job training at Inglis that goes beyond the state-required nurse's aide certification course. The partnership pays for the costs of providing the three-week program as well as books, uniforms, supplies, and the licensing exam fee. Ten nurse's aides are currently taking the program.



Credit: Harvey Finkle

Wilbur Lo, M.D., speaks at a training session on electronic medical records organized by District 1199C's Training and Upgrading Fund.

The Inglis Foundation has agreed to hire the aides if they pass the licensing exam and the three-week course. The aides have already taken the state-required course at the Training Fund's nonprofit privately licensed school. The Training Fund plans to replicate this strategy of designing pre-employment programs with other employers.

The partnership, established in 2005 with support from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, is funded by the Job Opportunity Investment Network in Philadelphia^a and the National Fund for Workforce Solutions^b and supported by the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board.

—Cheryl Feldman, Executive Director, District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund, Philadelphia

^a See www.joincollaborative.org.

^b See www.nfwsolutions.org.

Background

The Training Fund was established as a labor-management partnership in 1974 through a trust agreement with nine founding employer partners. The initial trust agreement

established that the Training Fund would address the workforce needs of the health-care industry by helping health-care employers in the region recruit and retain a highly skilled workforce, while providing

education and training for incumbent as well as laid-off and unemployed community residents.⁶

The employers contribute 1.5 percent of gross payroll for covered District

⁵ Employers that serve nonunion residents are viewed as good corporate citizens in their communities, since such residents may be able to get training and positions through employer-supported workforce programs.

⁶ The employers agreed to contribute to an education trust fund through collective bargaining agreements with the Philadelphia Hospital and Health Care Employees union, which is now part of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees. The national union is an affiliate of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees.

1199C members into a pooled education trust fund that is governed by the provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 and Employee Retirement Income Security Act regulations. The board of trustees consists of an equal number of employer and labor representatives, with co-chairs representing each group. For the past 20 years, the board co-chairs have been Henry Nicholas, president of District 1199C and of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, and a representative of the Temple University Health System.

Core Programs and Services

The Training Fund provides most of its services at a 35,000-square-foot learning center at 100 South Broad Street, a central location for Philadelphia residents. Programs are also offered at employers' workplaces.

The Training Fund provides:

- Professional vocational and technical programs in nursing, allied health, behavioral health, and health information technology that enable participants to pursue occupational goals;
- Full-time and part-time programs that provide college credit and lead to certificates and degrees at area colleges and universities;
- Reading, math, and accelerated academic skills contextualized in health-care training materials, work readiness, a high school diploma program, and English as a second language;
- Employer-based customized workforce and technical training programs; and

- Employment services in which the fund's staff refers pre-screened candidates to more than 100 health-care facilities.

The Training Fund provided or funded training for 3,557 individuals from July 1, 2009, to June 30, 2010. Of this number, approximately 50 percent were union members and 50 percent were nonunion community residents, including laid-off employees, the unemployed, and immigrants. Of the 3,557 individuals, nearly 80 percent were female and 72 percent were African American, 10 percent were Caucasian, 8 percent were Hispanic, 3 percent were Asian, and the balance was from other groups.

The Training Fund also provided an additional 15,433 individuals with skills assessment, career services, and community services, such as tax return assistance, during the 2009–2010 fiscal year.

The Training Fund blends funds from many public and private sources to operate its programs, which are organized in two nonprofits, including an educational trust fund. For example, it uses Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I funds to train employees; WIA Title II funds to teach employees reading, writing, and math skills; and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds to help low-income residents.

The Training Fund's workforce development programs are funded largely by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Labor, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the Philadelphia Youth Network, the

Philadelphia Workforce Development Corporation, and the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, as well as by foundations, course tuition, and fee-for-service.

Work-Based Education

In one initiative, the Training Fund created a work-based educational model for entry-level mental health workers of Temple University Hospital's Episcopal Campus and the Philadelphia Health Management Corporation. A psychologist at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey developed a curriculum with on-the-job learning assignments instead of traditional classroom instruction.

Employees received wage increases upon completion of training. Employees who were trained at Philadelphia University received 21 college credits toward an associate's degree. The initiative was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Hitachi Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Labor.⁷

Conclusion

Workforce development practitioners must find ways to use and integrate programs that normally function separately. For example, the Training Fund has learned to closely link workforce development and literacy programs. Individual workforce development programs that aren't closely linked to employers, the workforce development system, and higher education often aren't effective in and of themselves.

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⁷ A report on the initiative by the Aspen Institute, titled "Findings from Research into Temple University Hospital-Episcopal Campus's Work-Based Learning Program for Mental Health Workers," is available at <http://www.aspenwsi.org/Publications/10-023.pdf>.