

**SkillWorks**<sup>SM</sup>  
PARTNERS FOR A PRODUCTIVE WORKFORCE

## Promoting from Within:

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### A Profile of Partners in Career and Workforce Development

MARCH 2007



# Partners in Career and Workforce Development

## Overview

The vision of Partners in Career and Workforce Development is to expand the tradition of learning that characterizes affiliates of Partners HealthCare to include entry-level workers and to enable low-income Boston residents to advance up the health care career ladder to jobs with family-sustaining salaries. PCWD is led by Boston-based Partners HealthCare, a not-for-profit network of hospitals, physicians, and community health centers that includes Brigham and Women's Hospital, Massachusetts General Hospital, and Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital. The vision emerged from workforce challenges faced by the Partners affiliates, specifically shortages of nurses, radiologic technologists, and allied health workers.

As an employer-led program, a key PCWD strategy for addressing staff shortages is to “promote from within,” providing opportunities for lower-level workers to advance into skilled positions. The program serves neighborhood residents and incumbent employees, providing a variety of career development activities that includes one-on-one career coaching, recognition and support for managers

and supervisors, and resources for human resources professionals.

In its first two and a half years in SkillWorks, PCWD served 459 incumbent workers and 126 pre-employment participants. Ninety-three percent of the job seekers in PCWD's pre-employment training have graduated, and 90 percent have gotten jobs (most at one of the Partners HealthCare affiliates). Over half of those placed are still at Partners, and 331 incumbent workers enrolled in PCWD have participated in career exploration, pre-college courses, and college courses. Many have also taken GED and English for Speakers of Other Languages courses. Over half of the incumbent workers active in PCWD are interested in nursing careers, and over one-quarter are interested in radiologic technologist or surgical technologist careers.

PCWD has raised awareness of health care career options and career paths among job seekers and employees within the Partners network. It also has nurtured partnerships between employers and community-based organizations to make entry to health care jobs more accessible, and between employers and educational institutions to expand opportunities for entry-level workers.

## It Can Be Done

Toddye Anderson had been homeless for nearly a year. She had lost her job and apartment due to medical issues—her own and her family's, and she was living in a shelter. But Ms. Anderson wanted to go back to school, and she knew she needed a good job. She also knew that while she had to rely on herself, she would need help.

That help came from Partners in Career and Workforce Development, which offered her training, placed her in a job, and started her on the path to a career in health care. PCWD also gave her an internship at a hospital and career coaching to help her define and stick to her goals.

Today, Ms. Anderson works full-time in the Pediatric Neurology Department at Massachusetts General Hospital. Her supervisor supports her ambitions, and Ms. Anderson has a flexible schedule that allows her to attend college. As a step toward studying to be a nurse, she has completed her first semester at Bunker Hill

Community College. Ms. Anderson has also moved into her own apartment and won a college scholarship through a program to help homeless women and their families get back on their feet.

“Through PCWD, I was able to get the support I needed to succeed. Everywhere I went, there were people who were willing to take the time to help me and provide information and resources that I might not have seen and didn't have time to look for,” says Ms. Anderson.

“There were five people at my homeless shelter who also tried to pursue education and training, but all of them have dropped out except for me. I worked hard, of course, but the support and resources I received also helped me overcome the many obstacles in my way. Today, I am a board member for Homes for Families, and I encourage others not to give up on their dreams and tell them to pursue education and training. I think I am an example that it can be done.”

## Program Design

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PCWD serves participants in three cohorts, based on their career advancement needs:

*Health Career Starters* include both pre-employment participants and incumbent workers in entry-level jobs. Some of these individuals have low-level basic skills, English skills, and knowledge of health care careers. They also earn low wages: in the first cohort, 83 percent had family incomes below \$40,000.

*College Bound* includes incumbent workers with a high school diploma or equivalent but who need pre-college study to pass the College Placement Exam.

*College Ready* includes incumbent workers with the skills to pass the College Placement Exam. They may have taken some college courses.

### Pre-Employment Program for Job Seekers

PCWD has strict entrance requirements for its five-week pre-employment program to help ensure that graduates will meet employer expectations. Candidates must have: an interest in a health care career; a high school diploma or GED; an eighth-grade reading level; basic computer literacy; and a year of consistent work experience. A community-based organization, Project Hope, serves as a single-point-of-contact for referrals to the program. Project Hope also conducts initial telephone interviews and organizes testing and additional interviews for successful candidates.

The pre-employment program, an outgrowth of a welfare-to-work program, has two parts, each lasting two and a half weeks: classroom training in job readiness and an internship. During the screening process, case managers/career coaches assist each participant and then, upon enrollment, help them find support services, such as child care and transportation. They also coach participants through the training, internship, and placement, and work with individuals on specific asset development issues (e.g., tax information, Food Stamps, financial aid). After placement, the coach checks in frequently with the participant and her or his supervisor. All pre-employment participants also receive financial literacy training.

### Incumbent Worker Education and Training

Career development for incumbent workers is supported by opportunities offered both at individual workplaces, as well as new pilot programs developed and offered by PCWD.

Jewish Vocational Service developed two pre-college courses contextualized to health care:

- A 15-week course, covering remedial math, English, science, and study skills, prepares students for the College Placement Test.
- A 30-week course, Pre-College Reading and Writing for Non-Native Speakers, prepares students for college-level reading and writing in an ESOL-intensive setting.

JVS also offers basic math “brush-up” courses for students not ready to enter pre-college courses, and PCWD has worked with higher education partners to develop college-level courses for “college bound” participants. For example, Mass Bay Community College developed a hybrid Biology 101 course for incumbent workers; offered on Saturdays, it combines distance learning and real-time lab instruction. The course satisfies a prerequisite needed for all health profession programs.

### Career Development

Career coaches help each PCWD participant develop a career plan with specific action steps (e.g., taking the College Placement Exam, registering for classes, applying for financial aid, seeking credit for previous course work, including credentials earned in other countries). Over the first two years of SkillWorks, PCWD staff realized that participants required different amounts of coaching at different times, depending on their level of readiness for career development and their progression through their career plans. PCWD is developing group activities for participants who share similar career development needs.

Coaching is critical, even though the level of coaching varies. While Partners hospitals have long provided education opportunities, their employees were not always aware of these resources or the steps to take along a career path. Often, their expectations about career advancement were not based on realistic assessments of their skill and credential needs. Coaching fills this gap.

In 2004, PCWD launched a Web site, which it continues to refine, that aids in career development. The site gives coaches, program staff, supervisors, managers, and participants access to key information on health careers, training opportunities at each institution, and other career development supports. It includes a career-planning tool developed by JVS. Limited access to computers has not been a barrier to using these on-line tools: a survey found that 95 percent of program participants have access to a computer at home or work; 77 percent have email at work; and 87 percent use it regularly.

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Incumbent workers also get information and support through two type of management volunteers.

*Workforce Development Champions* are supervisors and managers who refer employees to the program and provide pre-employment participants with internships and jobs. *Health Career Ambassadors* are professional staff members who share information about career options and career development through job shadowing and other job exposure activities.

## Partners and Their Roles

### Employers

PCWD began with four Partners HealthCare affiliates: Massachusetts General Hospital, Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, and Whittier Street Health Center. PCWD continues to increase the number of Partners affiliates it serves.

### Community-based Organizations

PCWD has three CBO partners. Project Hope, the community interface, screens, assesses, and orients all pre-employment program participants. WorkSource Partners provides career coaching. JVS developed and provides pre-college classes as well as education programming for pre-employment participants.

### Postsecondary Education Institutions

PCWD engages postsecondary institutions in dialogue relating to the shortage of health care education faculty and perceived barriers to education and curriculum development. Its education partners include Bunker Hill Community College, Mass Bay Community College, the MGH Institute of Healthcare Professions, Roxbury Community College, and the University of Massachusetts-Boston.

### Program Management and Governance

PCWD is managed by four cross-functional teams:

- The *Leadership Team* is responsible for project oversight and direction. It includes senior human resources managers from each of the participating facilities and PCWD project staff.
- The *Administrative Team*, a subset of the Leadership Team, manages day-to-day operations. It includes the PCWD director, the information and communications manager, a workforce development manager for Partners HealthCare, the pre-employment program coordinator, and a workforce development consultant.

- The *Partnership Council* provides a forum for all PCWD partners to meet, including employers, community organizations, and educational institutions.
- The *Pre-Employment Operations Team* has representatives from PCWD, JVS, and Project Hope. It meets regularly during the pre-employment program cycle to discuss the progress of the participants.

In addition, several PCWD working groups were active in the first year:

- The *Workforce Culture Committee* and the *Employer Steering Committee* identified strategies to communicate with supervisors and managers about SkillWorks and workforce development for entry-level workers. It also suggested tools and resources that would facilitate supervisors’ and managers’ investment in entry-level workers, made recommendations for institutional change by employers within the network, and developed a communication plan to heighten awareness of the program and staff development resources for entry-level workers.
- The *Educational Issues Group* enhanced communication and collaboration between employer partners and colleges in order to increase and improve the pool of qualified health workers and promote career-building opportunities for incumbent workers. It consisted of representatives from the educational institution partners and the State Board of Higher Education.

## Outputs and Outcomes

### Partners in Career and Workforce Development

*The data for 2004–2005, covering December 2003 through November 2005, has been validated by the SkillWorks evaluators. The data for 2006 is preliminary; it covers December 2005 through November 2006. The total participants served is a non-duplicated count of people receiving any of the following training or non-training services: occupational training, coaching, literacy, ESL, placement assistance, retention assistance, referrals, tutoring, mentoring, and mapping career pathways. The number of participants completing training includes multiple counts based on incumbent workers who participate in multiple training courses.*

	2004–2005	2006
Pre-employment Participants	95	41
Completed Pre-employment Training (includes vocational and non-vocational skills)	89	36
Placements	62	42
Incumbent Workers Enrolled	349	110
Incumbent Workers Completed Training	380	not available
Incumbent Workers Promoted	109	not available

**PCWD’s Web site gives coaches, program staff, supervisors, managers, and participants access to key information on health careers, training opportunities at each institution, and other career development supports.**

## Systems Change Outcomes

In addition to its quantifiable outcomes for participants, Partners in Career and Workforce Development accomplished several important “systems change” outcomes across and within participating partner organizations.

*Address labor shortages by raising awareness of health care careers:* PCWD partners saw that a major cause of the shortage of skilled workers in key occupations was a lack of awareness among job seekers and entry-level workers of the diversity of health care career opportunities. The initiative is a valuable resource for raising this awareness.

*Exhibiting a model of partnership between employers and CBOs to improve economic opportunity for low-income participants:* The day-to-day operations of the Pre-Employment Program are carried out through a carefully planned partnership between hospital employers and CBOs. The single point-of-contact referral process is especially innovative and effective. It has streamlined the connection between low-income communities and employers and built CBOs’ capacity to understand and work with employers.

*Achieving corporate culture change:* PCWD engages supervisors, managers, and senior leadership to champion career advancement opportunities for entry-level workers. The Workforce Development Champion and the Health Career Ambassador programs achieve this end by building awareness of health careers, internships, job opportunities, and mentoring. And there is evidence of success. By the end of the second year, 125 managers and supervisors were participating as Workforce Development Champions and in the pre-employment program. The number of internships offered by supervisors had more than doubled (from 13 to 30 per training cycle), and the placement rate had steadily increased (from 77 percent to 85 percent).

Reflecting the importance it places on PCWD’s work, Partners HealthCare contributed \$369,588 in PCWD’s third year. In addition, workforce development is a key component in Brigham and Women’s Hospital’s planning for a new building: the president envisions staffing the building with incumbent workers to the extent possible and recruiting community residents to backfill positions where necessary.

*Exhibiting a model of partnership between employers and postsecondary education institutions to address faculty shortages:* A certificate program developed with the

MGH Institute of Health Professions trains clinicians to be part-time adjunct educators. This is a creative, direct strategy to address the serious faculty shortage that limits the capacity of health care programs.

*Collaborating with other promising health care workforce initiatives:* PCWD and the Boston Health Care Research and Training Institute (another SkillWorks grantee) have collaborated to address common employer health care workforce needs. Incumbent workers in the PCWD program at Brigham and Women’s Hospital can attend classes at the institute. In 2006, PCWD and the institute together identified employees to begin a surgical technologist certificate program developed by Mass Bay Community College.

### The Future: Planning for Sustainability

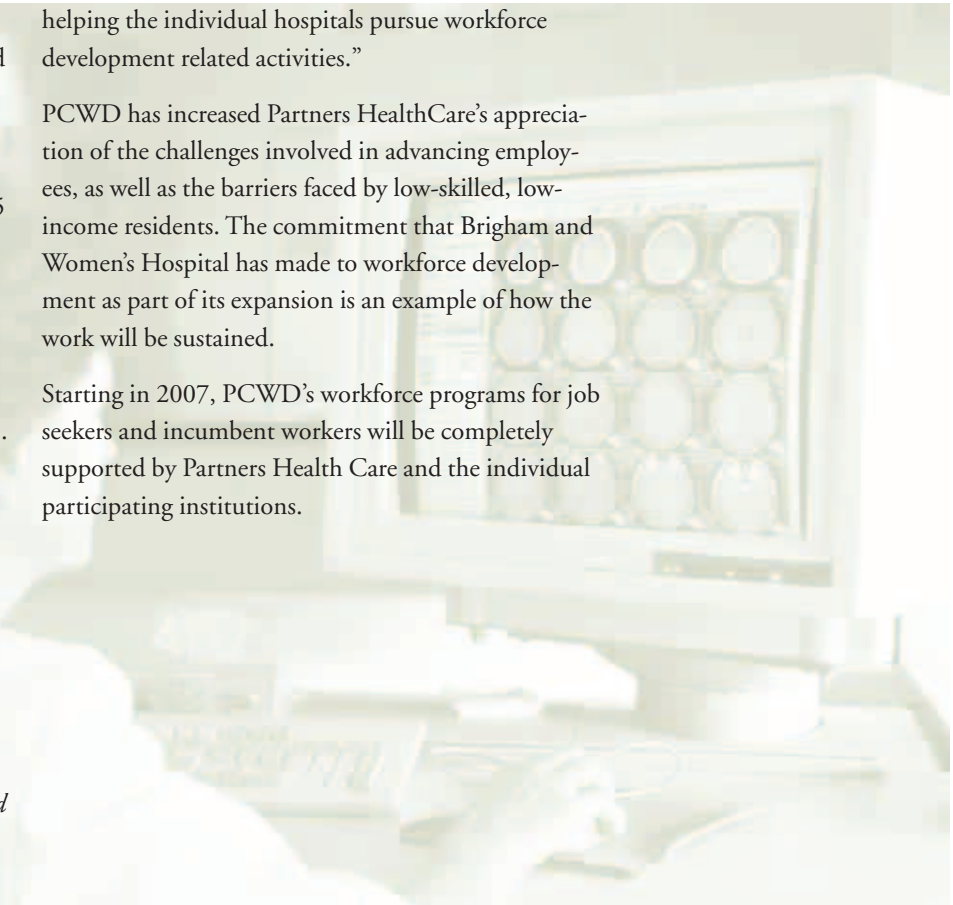
PCWD staff meet regularly with Partners HealthCare’s development office to explore future funding opportunities for program components. Internal commitment to workforce development has increased at both the individual affiliate and system levels.

From the employer point of view, PCWD’s greatest benefit has been the learning that has taken place. According to the manager of workforce development at Brigham and Women’s Hospital, PCWD is “a terrific laboratory for trying out different things and helping the individual hospitals pursue workforce development related activities.”

PCWD has increased Partners HealthCare’s appreciation of the challenges involved in advancing employees, as well as the barriers faced by low-skilled, low-income residents. The commitment that Brigham and Women’s Hospital has made to workforce development as part of its expansion is an example of how the work will be sustained.

Starting in 2007, PCWD’s workforce programs for job seekers and incumbent workers will be completely supported by Partners Health Care and the individual participating institutions.

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## SEEING OPPORTUNITIES. CREATING SOLUTIONS.

**SkillWorks**, a five-year public/private partnership, is addressing the needs of employers for more skilled workers and of workers for more and better access to jobs that pay a family-supporting wage.

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