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Thursday, September 25, 2025

WHA Council on Workforce Development Explores Career Pathways

Health care apprenticeships continue to grow Wisconsin opportunities

At the Sept. 19, 2025, meeting of the WHA Council on Workforce Development, the agenda started with health care apprenticeships and how they're opening pathways for hundreds on new entrants to the health care workforce. Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards Director David Polk provided an update to the council on the rapid growth of health care apprenticeships.

Polk shared DWD data showing the number of health care employers sponsoring registered apprentices has increased from less than 5 in 2021 to more than 40 in 2025; the number of occupations with a Wisconsin registered apprenticeship has increased from 1 in 2019 to 12 in 2025; and the number of health care apprentices was less than 20 in 2018 and is 385 year-to-date in 2025. Polk underlined the role hospitals and health systems play, noting "Health care is doing a good job of using the workforce building ecosystem of apprenticeship by recruiting to youth apprenticeship and, if health care feels like a good fit for them, transitioning those youth into registered apprenticeships."

Workforce Council members shared their current apprenticeships, including medical assistant, surgical tech, pharmacy tech, respiratory therapist and registered nurse. Polk and the Council also discussed how they have overcome challenges to launch apprenticeships and how DWD and employers can partner to break down barriers to grow the health care workforce through apprenticeship programs.

Anyone interested in either utilizing a current registered apprenticeship or developing a new apprenticeship, please contact: apprenticeship@dwd.wisconsin.gov. Thanks to employers and DWD working together to provide a pathway, an upcoming apprenticeship for in-demand MRI technicians is scheduled to launch in late 2025 or early 2026.

You can reach out to WHA's Ann Zenk with questions about the Council on Workforce Development, apprenticeships or any other workforce issue.

IN THIS ISSUE

- WHA Council on Workforce Development Explores Career Pathways
- Potentially Avoidable Emergency Department Visits Dashboard Update
- Wisconsin Hospitals State PAC & Conduit Update
- GUEST COLUMN: The Value of Getting it Right: Why Employers Can't Afford to Stay Silent
- Secure Your Spot Today for Important Hospital Board Education Event
- Fast Facts from the WHA Information Center: September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month

EDUCATION EVENTS

Nov. 6, 2025

Hospital Board Education

Jan. 28, 2026

2026 WHA Health Care Leadership Academy