



Workforce Training and
Education Coordinating Board

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Workplace-based learning helps PeaceHealth workers earn college credits

VANCOUVER, Wash.— Cafeteria workers, housekeepers and janitors keep PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center clean and running smoothly. But soon, frontline hospital staff will have the chance to move into a different kind of health care career with the help of their employer.

A new Workplace-based Learning initiative is helping as many as 40 PeaceHealth workers get the training they need during the course of their work day to move into nursing assistant jobs. It's one of three pilot programs to help workers gain college credit and advance their career prospects through workplace-supported education.

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) awarded Clark College a \$200,000 Workplace-based Learning grant in January. The Corporate and Continuing Education unit of Clark College is administering the grant. The college is providing instructors and online educational support. PeaceHealth is providing employees with an on-site mentor, classroom space, and instructional equipment to accomplish their online coursework.

PeaceHealth workers who complete the program will be able to earn their Nursing Assistant Certified (NAC) credential, as well as earn additional credits needed to enter any of the Clark College Allied Health Division programs, putting them on the path to further education and advancement.

“This pilot will bring educational opportunities directly to workers where they work--during work time--with the help of their employers,” said Workforce Board Executive Director Eleni Papadakis. “Workplace-based learning gives workers a chance to advance their education and careers as they work, and enables employers to make smart investments in their workforce.”

By providing training through the workplace, educational opportunities are provided to working adults who otherwise would likely not have the time or resources to seek the training on their own. At the same time, the hospital is growing its own workforce, filling key positions with employees who are committed to working there.

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An added benefit will be entry-level positions that open up at the hospital as workers are trained to take on new duties.

Funding for Washington's Workplace-based Learning initiative comes from the U.S. Department of Labor and was championed by U.S. Sen. Patty Murray.

The state's Workforce Board awarded two other Workplace-based Learning grants to programs that help northwest Washington child care workers advance into lead teacher positions and machinist apprentices across the state to earn a college degree. The lessons learned through the initiative should lead to the expansion of workplace-based learning opportunities to other low-wage, lower-skilled workers statewide as additional colleges adopt the model.

"Ultimately, we would like to see many more workplace-based learning opportunities in Washington," Papadakis said.

Learn more about the Workforce Board's Workplace-based Learning Initiative at <http://www.wtb.wa.gov/LearningLaboratoryPartnerships.asp>

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The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board is a partnership of labor, business and government, dedicated to helping Washington residents obtain and succeed in family-wage jobs, while meeting employers' needs for skilled workers.