



## PROMISING PRACTICE

### Workforce Skills

HPOG Buffalo at Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Development Consortium, Inc.

# Career pathways are critical for helping HPOG participants find financial independence.



Yet, the potential for career growth and sustainability is often overlooked. The Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Development Consortium Inc.'s **HPOG Buffalo program** offers training for high-demand healthcare occupations to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and low-income adults.

The program recently evaluated local wage data for entry-level (tier one) healthcare careers. Their study showed that starting wages for Certified Nursing Assistants (around \$12/hour) and Home Health Aides (around \$11/hour) in New York are much lower than the public assistance benefits, such as TANF, participants were previously receiving, making it difficult for families to reach self-sufficiency.

Many program participants are single mothers with several children. If they were on TANF, their benefits would equate to around \$16 an hour. The difference in income makes it difficult for participants to see the merit in trading TANF for HPOG Buffalo's assistance. HPOG Buffalo saw this as an opportunity to enhance participants' ability to climb the career ladder by offering more certifications for occupations with historically higher wages.

The programs with the greatest opportunity for career advancement are: Physical Therapy Assistant, Registered Medical Assistant, and Pharmacy Technician. Program length ranges from eight short weeks to two years.

HPOG Buffalo partnered with local training providers like Villa Maria College, State University of NY at Buffalo Equal Opportunity Center, and D'Youville College to offer additional tiers of educational programs. With the help of these partners, HPOG Buffalo supports participants during training through travel allowances, childcare assistance, and other types of aid depending on the individual situation.

D'Youville College's Pharmacy Technician program is the perfect start for those who believe they do not have the time or money to start a new career. The program is only eight weeks long. Upon completion, graduates earn on average \$13.50 to \$14.00 an hour and are on the path to higher wages. Similarly, for entry level positions both Physical Therapy Assistant and Registered Medical Assistant roles start at \$16 an hour. HPOG Buffalo continues to support graduates long after TANF benefits would have run out, maintaining financial and emotional support on top of starting wages as participants grow both their career and income.

**With the right partners in place, HPOG Buffalo strives to help participants earn higher wages to become self-sufficient.**

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