



Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG)

Compendium of Success Stories

April 2015



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES



Building Pathways to a Brighter Future



April 2015

Dear Colleagues:

The Office of Family Assistance (OFA) administers federal grant programs that foster family economic security and stability. Stories about individuals who are earning more for their families through the help of our programs inspire us to continually work to improve program outcomes. This collection shares the successes of 32 participants in one of OFA's programs, the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG).

HPOG provides education and training to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and other low-income individuals for health occupations that pay well and are in high demand. HPOG programs offer job-driven training opportunities—matching people who are striving for better economic opportunities with careers in growing health care fields.

The success stories that follow describe HPOG participants' progress along career pathways. These women and men live and work in urban, rural, suburban, and tribal communities across the nation. They are a diverse group, including single parents, Native Americans, veterans, English language learners, and immigrants and refugees.

Grisheld grew up in the Queens Bridge Housing Projects in New York, and her achievements are captured in one of the success stories highlighted in this compendium. She began her HPOG journey in 2013 at Hostos Community College's Allied Health Career Pipeline Program. She described her childhood as chaotic, crowded, and sometimes violent. A high school dropout, Grisheld relied on TANF to make ends meet for herself and her children. When she started the program, she was unemployed and living—as she put it—“on a day-to-day basis.” The program reinvigorated her self-confidence and drive for success. Today, she is a Medical Data Entry Specialist earning a decent wage and hopes to buy a home for herself and children.

Grisheld's story is not unique. She, like thousands of her fellow HPOG participants, faced challenges that included unemployment, financial stress, and caring for family members. Yet, with HPOG's support, these resilient women and men have completed training and entered careers in health information, nursing, medical administration, and laboratory technology. HPOG participants have achieved success through determination and a focus on improving their lives. The stories showcase their progress and demonstrate how HPOG is making a difference—helping people build pathways to brighter futures.

Sincerely,

/s/

Nisha Patel
Director
Office of Family Assistance

Introduction

The [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program provides Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and other low-income individuals with education and training for well-paying, in-demand health care occupations. The HPOG program is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, [Office of Family Assistance](#).

OFA awarded initial grants in September 2010, and grantees are now well into their fifth and final year of the program. HPOG grantees include 32 entities in 23 states, including four state agencies, nine local Workforce Investment Boards, 12 institutions of higher education (one university, nine community colleges, and two community college districts), and two community-based organizations. There are five tribal grantees, including one tribal council and four tribal colleges.

The HPOG program serves diverse program participants from across the country. Grantees have made significant progress in serving vulnerable populations in their communities, with a focus on TANF recipients. Grantees have supported participants to overcome barriers to employment and enter long-term, meaningful career pathways.

This *Compendium of Success Stories* captures inspiring journeys of program participants and showcases the transformations they experienced through HPOG. Grantees identified stories, with full consent from each individual participant to share her or his name and story. These accounts provide a small glimpse of the effect HPOG has had on its participants and bring to life the data collected about the HPOG program.

The HPOG program is a demonstration project designed to build and share knowledge. There is much to learn from the success stories captured here, which represent just one component of a strategy to develop programs and share lessons learned. A comprehensive evaluation of HPOG is also underway and will provide more information on program implementation, systems change, outcomes, and impact. The goal of the evaluation is to expand the evidence base for improving outcomes for TANF recipients and other low-income individuals.

ICF International, a technical assistance provider for the Office of Family Assistance, collected the *Success Stories*. The compendium includes one success story for each of the 32 grantees, indexed by grantee, state, and occupation. To access this document and other supporting documents, examples, and related information electronically, please visit the HPOG Website at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/programs/hpog>.

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Success Stories

Seti at Alamo Community College District

Healthcare Professions Training Initiative

Resilient, determined, tenacious, strong, smart, and focused are a few of the adjectives that come to mind when describing Seti, a young man who pursued a career training opportunity at Alamo Community College District's Healthcare Professions Training Initiative (HPTI), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) project funded by the Office of Family Assistance. Seti is a recent graduate of the Pharmacy Technician program and distinguished himself from the moment he arrived. He was eager and ambitious--not settling for the minimum, always seeking information and what steps he could take to reach his career goals and self-sufficiency.

After years of personal struggles, far from home, at odds with his family, depressed, unemployed and homeless, the former Army reservist was determined to persevere in spite of life's obstacles. Through a homeless shelter in San Antonio, Texas, he connected with the Alamo Community College District's short-term training for Certified Nurse Aides. Three months after completing the training, he came into the HPTI program seeking to move to the next step in his health care career ladder--to become a Pharmacy Technician.

Seti came to the Pharmacy Technician program determined to graduate, but facing many barriers, including the fact that he was homeless and living near a San Antonio shelter called Haven for Hope. At the time, Seti was not actually fully registered at the shelter and was sleeping in their outside courtyard, either on a bench or on the ground. He did not have consistent or reliable access to a space for personal hygiene and had virtually no possessions. He returned to the shelter each night hoping that that would be the day that he would move off of the shelter's waiting list and into a bed, with a roof over his head.

Yet, despite his lack of housing, warmth, safe surroundings, or even a place to regularly clean himself, Seti took the bus every morning from downtown San Antonio to Alamo College's Westside Training Center (WETC) for his HPTI training classes. He was always one of the first students to arrive for class.

Concerned about his living situation, within a week of starting training, HPTI staff helped Seti come off of the shelter's waiting list--giving him shelter and a bed. The program also provided

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him other financial assistance, helping pay for his transportation to and from school and for his medical clothing.

Seti, however, faced other challenges once living in the shelter. The large dormitory environment was not conducive to studying, and there were regular safety issues with other residents fighting or stealing possessions. Seti often felt anxious, uncertain, and tired. HPOG staff connected him with counseling services and through it all, he continued to maintain a rigorous school schedule to move toward self-sufficiency. He even got a job at a downtown fast food restaurant at night, walking almost five miles each night back to the shelter because buses were not running at the late hour he got off from work.

Seti never let any of these obstacles stop him from completing his medical education. When asked what kept him going, he recalled something his father said to him when he was young: “to have a good life, you have to get an education no matter what; don’t let any situation stop you from achieving your goals.”

Seti completed the Pharmacy Technician program in January 2015. He graduated at the top of his class and was the first in his cohort to take and pass his certification exam. Today, he is a Certified Pharmacy Technician (see Figure 1).

I. Figure 1: Seti’s HPOG Journey¹



Seti shared his joy by saying, “the key to my success was being able to focus on what I needed to get done and making it happen.” Seti is truly grateful to the HPTI staff and his classmates. Without them, he said, this would not have been possible.

¹ Mean wages estimates for Pharmacy Technicians from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014). *Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2014 29-2052 Pharmacy Technicians, Texas*. Retrieved from: http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_tx.htm

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Today, Seti is looking to move to California and is in the process of getting his licensed transferred. He has started to take online classes through Morgan Community College at Fort Morgan, Colorado and hopes to get an Associate of Arts degree toward the end of 2015. He would then like to apply for a two year nursing program.

Success Stories

Ricardo at Essex County College

Northern New Jersey Health Professions Consortium (Bergen Community College)

Ricardo (Ricky) is a resident of Essex County, New Jersey and one of four children born to Haitian immigrant and Hispanic parents. Neither of his parents went to college, and both struggled daily for a better life. Ricardo saw and experienced their struggles first hand. Those childhood experiences fueled his passion to help others and his desire to be career driven.

Choosing a career direction, however, was a challenge for Ricky because he enjoyed so many things. He was drawn to the medical field, in part, because of how he envisioned medical professionals, and particularly, doctors as helping and making a difference in so many people's lives. But, he was also interested in law enforcement and the restaurant industry. Settling on the medical field, Ricky faced many challenges as a student with no financial support from his parents or other family members. Ricky graduated from high school and started a nursing program at Essex, but lost his way and did not have the support he needed to finish and dropped out. He went to work at temporary agencies and other dead-end jobs just to make ends meet, but the dream of attaining medical credentials never left him.

When Ricky decided to go back to school to pursue his passion within the medical field, he found Essex County College's [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program, funded by the Office of Family Assistance and administered by the [Northern New Jersey Health Professions Consortium](#). Through Essex County College, Training Inc. was offering entry-level certification classes in allied health that Ricky knew would be challenging, but becoming financially stable weighed heavily on his mind. Ricky learned quickly that Training Inc. was the right choice, being known for its success in job placement after training ends. He struggled through school, working as a night security guard from 12 A.M. to 8 A.M. and then rushed to be at class from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M., rarely sleeping. He persevered and made it through the course.

As shown in Figure 1, Ricky earned three certifications in 2011 that are a part of Essex's Patient Care Technician program that include Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Phlebotomy, and EKG Technician. As a result of these credentials, he received many job offers from Saint Joseph Hospital, Lincoln Park Care Center, and ultimately accepted a position in the Medical

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Department at New Jersey Transit. He started at New Jersey Transit three years ago and continues to thrive. He is part of the Human Resource Management Team, in the Medical Services Division, and performs random drug and alcohol screening for employees. He is earning \$42,600 per year plus a full benefits package and has a company car and company-paid cell phone. Ricky is a huge supporter of Training Inc. and is grateful for the opportunities he has been given through his attendance at Essex County College.

Figure 1: Ricky's HPOG Journey

	Patient Care Technician Length of Training: 6 months Employed as a Drug Screener with a wage of \$42,600		
Various Temporary Jobs Wage: \$12 an hour	Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Length of Training: 275 hours	Phlebotomy Length of Training: 177 hours	EKG Technician Length of Training: 178 hours

Ricky has offered to participate in any events where he might be able to share his story and encourage other students to stay focused and reach their goals. In addition to his career success, Ricky is excited about getting married in September 2015, buying a home, and enrolling in an undergraduate program for Information Technology to enhance his skills and move up the career ladder at New Jersey Transit.

Success Stories

Crystal at Blackfeet Community College

Issksiniip Project

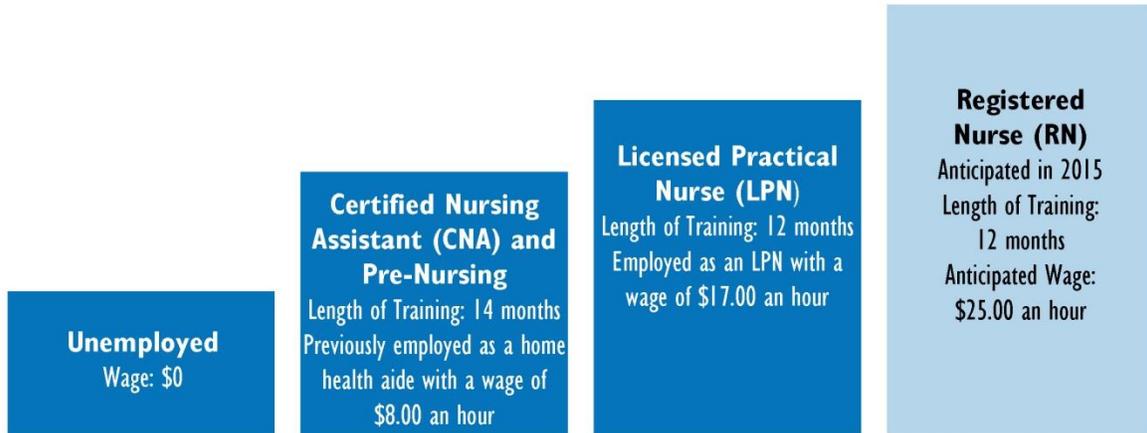
Crystal is a wife, mother of four, and enrolled member of the Blackfeet Tribe of Montana. Since January 2011, she has been a [Blackfeet Community College](#) (BCC) student enrolled in nursing classes as part of the [Issksiniip Project](#). Project Issksiniip is an Office of Family Assistance, [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) funded program that seeks to provide opportunities for low-income individuals to acquire advanced health care certifications and transition into high paying health care professions. Since enrolling in Project Issksiniip, Crystal has steadily climbed the nursing academic ladder-- first acquiring her Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) certification, followed by a Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) degree, to her current status as a Registered Nursing (RN) student. As her nursing degrees advanced so did her career outlook--first finding employment as a CNA and then promotion to a LPN position upon completion of her coursework. Crystal anticipates quickly finding a RN job after she graduates in May 2015.

Crystal will be the first to tell someone that, without the support of HPOG and Project Issksiniip, it would have been impossible for her to become employed in the nursing profession and become completely self-sufficient. Crystal was enrolled in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program prior to enrolling in Project Issksiniip. While TANF work supports and cash assistance greatly benefited Crystal and her family, she wanted to seek out other opportunities to exit public assistance and become self-sufficient.

Crystal first learned of Project Issksiniip through friends enrolled at BCC. Crystal felt the program was a strong fit after she sat through a HPOG informational session in January 2011. In the spring of 2011 she enrolled in the CNA program and received her certification two months later. After graduating from the CNA program, Crystal felt confident that she wanted to pursue a career in nursing. She enrolled in pre-nursing courses in August 2012, transitioned into BCC's LPN program in August 2013, and, after graduating from the LPN program in May 2014, elected to continue her studies as a RN. Crystal expects to graduate from the RN program in May 2015.

Success Stories

Figure 1: Crystal's HPOG Journey¹



Particularly for someone enrolled in TANF, the financial cost of attending school initially seemed daunting. In fact, the cost of tuition at BCC was one of the reasons Crystal's previous attempts at college were not successful. Through Project Issksiniip, much of that financial burden was removed from her shoulders, allowing Crystal to focus on her studies and stay connected to family while managing a demanding class schedule. The program also provided numerous job readiness trainings and supports-- such as resume development, time management instruction, and job interviewing skills--areas where Crystal previously had little exposure. Other supportive services greatly eased the associated costs of becoming a student, namely books and school supplies. The program also arranged out of town clinicals, covered testing application fees, and even paid for the room at a motel near the National Counsel Licensure Examination (NCLEX) testing site. The program also provided her with transportation subsidies to cover the long distance traveling to and from her clinicals. There were times she wanted to give up, and thought, "I could finish later," but she persevered thanks to the support and encouragement of her husband, family, Issksiniip and Blackfeet Community College staff, as well as fellow nursing students.

Another important facet to Crystal's story is how HPOG allowed her to stay within the Blackfeet Reservation and not face moving her family elsewhere for school or work opportunities. Completing her degrees and finding employment locally meant that her family could stay connected to the kinship and cultural resources located within the Reservation. Not leaving also meant that Crystal's nursing skills and experience would directly benefit her tribal people and native homeland.

¹ Grantee provided wage data and estimates.

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Crystal is currently employed as a LPN at the Blackfeet Care Center Nursing Home in Browning, Montana. She first connected with the Care Center in June 2012 as part of a job shadowing program coordinated by Project Issksiniip staff. The Care Center hired Crystal in July 2012 as a home health aide at \$8.00 an hour. After completing her coursework in May 2014, the Care Center promoted her to LPN at a starting salary of \$17.00 an hour. Crystal believes that the Care Center will hire her as a RN after completing her courses in the spring of 2015.

Success Stories

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

Health Professions Collaborative

Michelle was a stay-at-home mom to six children, ranging in age from four to 16. Her husband had lost his job, making life very stressful. Money was tight and when their daughter Bryanna was diagnosed with a mitochondrial disease, she required a lot of care and their medical expenses soared.

Michelle's husband succumbed to the pressures of their living situation and with little warning, left his family of seven with no means to support themselves and no offers of support. Michelle was devastated. She did not know how she would ever be able to care for herself and her six children alone. She had very little work history and no recent job skills outside of the home.

Michelle knew that she could not let her dire situation paralyze her or her children. Having a child with a severe disability, she had to act, be decisive, and figure out a course of action that would improve her life and her children's lives. After having her first two children, Michelle took a few nursing classes, but did not get to follow through on them. Having also spent so much time with Bryanna in and out of hospitals and doctors' offices, she knew what career she wanted to pursue and felt that her caring and empathic nature were well-suited for the health care profession.

In the fall of 2012, Michelle enrolled in the Registered Nursing (RN) program at [Trocaire College](#), a partner of the Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Development Consortium, [Health Professions Collaborative](#) (Collaborative). After she enrolled, she saw a flyer for the Collaborative, a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) program, funded by the Office of Family Assistance. During her RN training, Michelle's Collaborative Counselor, Ella Hollaway, gave Michelle pep talks, checked in with her weekly to track her progress, and was available if any issues arose.

The HPOG Buffalo program also provided Michelle several support services, including child care for her youngest children and a transportation allowance. Previously a stay-at-home

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parent, Michelle needed to find affordable day care for her children while she was in school, as well as to cover the transportation costs of commuting to and from school, which she could not cover with her existing household budget. To assist with her tuition expenses, Michelle had an Individual Training Account¹ that helped her pay for books and received a Federal Pell Grant and a New York State Tuition Assistance Program grant for additional tuition supports.

Right after graduation in May 2014, Michelle's daughter suffered a health setback. Michelle had to put off taking her nursing board exam for several months. To get through this time, Michelle and her family relied on food stamps. Providing her support, Michelle's Collaborative counselor, Ella, continued to call her with words of encouragement and positive reinforcement, insisting that when she was ready, she could take and pass the exam.

When Michelle took and passed her exam, the Collaborative connected her with its Job Counselor, Mary Conboy. Mary helped Michelle update her resume and build her interviewing skills by coaching her on a one-on-one basis. Lakeshore Hospital in Irving, NY soon hired her as a full-time Registered Nurse, earning \$22 per hour with full benefits (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Michelle's HPOG Journey



Michelle went from being a single mom of six with limited work skills to becoming a skilled nurse with a well-paying job. She has set her sights on many goals for her future, believing that the sky's the limit. Her immediate plan is to grow in her career and then later to continue her education to attain a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and then train to become a nurse practitioner. The word "impossible" is no longer in Michelle's vocabulary.

¹ Individual Training Accounts are training funds that can be used by individuals who have been determined eligible by their local Workforce Investment Board to receive Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funded training.

Success Stories

Ruby at Cankdeska Cikana Community College (Sitting Bull College)

Next Steps Project

Ruby is a single mother of three, full-time Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), and graduate from [Sitting Bull College](#) (SBC)--a partner with [Cankdeska Cikana Community College's](#) (CCCC) [Next Steps](#) project, a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) initiative funded by the Office of Family Assistance. CCCC, along with SBC and two other partners, formed the Next Steps project to create more opportunities for American Indian people to train for and enter high paying careers in health care. In the pursuit of becoming a nurse, Ruby has overcome many personal and professional challenges. In addition to her unrelenting determination, family, and community support, she also credits Next Steps for helping her achieve this dream.

Ruby first began to consider the nursing profession after graduation from high school in Arizona in 2000. Ruby's inspiration to pursue this line of work came from her maternal grandmother who became a registered nurse (RN) despite being a single mother, often unemployed and without savings, and living apart from her relations and native community. While Ruby's desire to become a nurse never faded, over the next 15 years she would face an array of personal challenges with drug and alcohol abuse, depression, and marital strife that at times threatened to derail her dream. In 2012, while at her lowest point, Ruby took her children on vacation to visit family in Fort Yates, North Dakota. During this visit, Ruby's aunt, a RN, knowing her interest in nursing, introduced her to Next Steps staff at SBC. Ruby found the vision and mission of Next Steps so compelling that she moved her family from Arizona to North Dakota to enroll in the program.

In May 2012, Next Steps accepted Ruby into the program. While her LPN courses were highly challenging, Ruby drew on support and inspiration from HPOG support staff to continue her studies. Speaking specifically about her HPOG services coordinator, Ruby stated, "during our study groups, she also listened to any problems we had outside of school, and this helped a lot. She was a huge support for me and helped me continue believing in myself. She made me feel like I could do anything. Yes, even at my age, I needed this kind of support in my life..." Ruby also cited the importance of receiving a HPOG funded laptop, gas, and food cards, which

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allowed her to continue her studies, despite her very limited funds. The gas and meal subsidies were of particular importance as her four-month clinical required Ruby to travel 140 miles roundtrip and stay Monday through Wednesday in Bismarck, North Dakota.

Figure 1: Ruby's HPOG Journey¹



In May 2014, Ruby graduated from SBC with an Associate in Science/LPN degree. On June 26, 2014, she took and passed her nursing board examination. Earlier that month, even before passing her examination, Ruby accepted a LPN position at [Sanford Health](#) with a starting salary of \$20.91/hour. In describing her path to becoming a nurse Ruby said, “all of the blood, sweat, and tears through nursing school were worth it. And even beyond that, the struggle I had in my life was worth it because it all pointed to that pivotal moment of accomplishing a dream that a little girl had....” Ruby plans on going back to school later in 2015 or early 2016 to obtain a Bachelor’s of Science in Nursing (BSN) to move one step closer to becoming a RN. She is currently considering online options through North Dakota State University so she can attend school while still working.

¹ Mean wage estimates for RNs in North Dakota from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics: *Occupational Employment Statistics: May 2014 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, North Dakota*. Retrieved from: http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nd.htm.

Success Stories

Mallory at Central Community College

Health Education Laddering Program

In September 2014, Mallory graduated from [Central Community College's](#) (Central) [Health Education Laddering Program](#) (Project HELP), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance. Project HELP seeks to provide Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and other low-income individuals with education and training support that leads to employment in high-demand health care occupations. Mallory is a wife, mother of two children with special needs, and a full-time employed Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) with plans to return to Central in 2016 to begin classes in the Associate's Degree in Nursing program.

Mallory attended state college a decade earlier but left after a year as she was uncertain what career to pursue. After marriage and the birth of her two children, her life and career goals quickly came into focus. Both of Mallory's children developed conditions causing periodic seizures and she received training to recognize and address symptoms to minimize the severity of these occurrences. These personal experiences reinforced her interest in helping people and her desire for a career in nursing. Mallory enrolled in Central's CNA program in May 2014 and during orientation heard about the support available through HPOG's Project HELP.

The support available through Project HELP proved essential to Mallory's success and continued enrollment as a CNA student. Project HELP supported Mallory with gas cards, as her commute was over 50 miles roundtrip to attend classes. Project HELP also provided Mallory with a scholarship to attend Medication Aide (MA) classes during the summer of 2014. As the wife of a farmer, the timing of this scholarship was critical. Mallory traditionally depended on farm income to pay for school but summer is a time when their farm does not sell grain or livestock. Mallory grew a strong sense of self-confidence and independence, knowing that her hard work paid for her classes. The emotional support from Project HELP was equally valuable as the career guidance and financial assistance. Many in her family criticized Mallory for pursuing a career and not staying at home full-time with her children. Project HELP staff provided moral support and helped her stay focused on the goal of bettering her children's lives through education and her health care career advancement.

Success Stories

Figure 1: Mallory's HPOG Journey



While enrolled in CNA courses, Mallory attended one of Project HELP's employer panels featuring [Brookstone Acres Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation](#) (Brookstone), a new health care facility in Columbus, Nebraska. During the panel, Mallory learned that Brookstone was hiring CNAs/MAs and after hearing about their hiring practices, application information, and what they were looking for in a candidate, she felt she had sufficient insight to submit a successful application. Project HELP staff helped Mallory with resume development and led her through a series of mock interviews. After receiving her application, Brookstone interviewed and hired Mallory for a Nursing Assistant/Medication Aide position at \$11.25/hour. The fact that she had MA training enabled her to earn \$1.25 more per hour than if she had just had the CNA training.

Mallory reported that, since becoming employed as a CNA/MA, previous family detractors have become supporters of her career aspirations. She truly enjoys her current position, which focuses on supporting the elderly, but has set her sights on advancing within the nursing field. In August 2015, she plans to enroll in Central's Associate's Degree in Nursing (ADN) program. She hopes to graduate with her ADN in May 2016, after which she will pursue employment as a nurse in a local hospital. Once Mallory completes her ADN degree, Central expects she'll be able to earn \$20 to \$30 per hour (see Figure 1). Mallory, when thinking about the support of Project HELP said that, "I never would have considered going on from Nursing Assistant class to further training without the support and information gained from HELP."

Success Stories

Sarina at Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit

Work Attributes Toward Careers in Health Project

As a result of her nearly three year participation in the [Work Attributes Toward Careers in Health](#) (WATCH Project), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance, Sarina is on her way up the nursing career ladder, working as a new Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) and finishing her first semester in a Registered Nurse (RN) Associate's Degree program.

Sarina is earning a family-sustaining wage to support herself, her ailing mother, and her children. She is able to buy the things her children need, and no longer depends on food stamps. With support from the WATCH Project, Sarina is more determined than ever and faces her new educational challenges with confidence. The future for Sarina and her family, however, was not always so secure.

Sarina was born in Vietnam and immigrated to the United States when she was 13. She became a citizen and later settled in State College, Pennsylvania with her mother and daughters. Raising two children on her own while caring for her mother was a struggle. Sarina worked as a bartender, waitress, and in retail before taking a job as a Non-Certified Nurse Aide in a long-term care facility.

Despite her hard work and determination, none of these jobs paid a family-sustaining wage. Food stamps, Women, Infant and Children (WIC), and Medicaid supplemented her income, but Sarina still struggled to pay for the basic things her growing daughters needed such as clothing and school supplies, as well as household expenses.

But Sarina's experience as a Non-Certified Nurse Aide inspired her to pursue a nursing career. She applied to the Practical Nursing Program at Central Pennsylvania Institute of Science and Technology and was accepted for the Fall 2012 semester. To accommodate classes and study time, she had to reduce her work hours and worried she would not be able to support her family. The Central Pennsylvania Institute of Science and Technology had a strong partnership

Success Stories

with WATCH, and Sarina quickly learned about the supports available to her through the WATCH program. She then made the call to WATCH's toll-free number.

WATCH offered assistance with college tuition, books, school uniforms, shoes, and equipment. Sarina needed each of these financial supports to go to school and still support her children and ailing mother. The program also paid for child care when she did not qualify for state assistance. WATCH even loaned Sarina a laptop when she did not have a computer and needed one for assignments. WATCH also helped Sarina register to take the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) certification exam, providing transportation 45 miles each way to sit for the test. Becoming certified prompted her employer to give her an immediate raise, helping Sarina manage financially while she completed her LPN training.

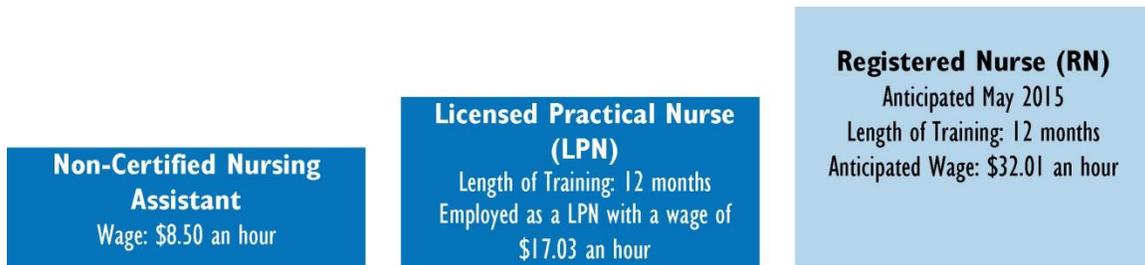
But it was the guidance and caring of Career Coordinator Lois Todd that really made the difference for Sarina. "Lois helped me keep on track and encouraged me to do my best," said Sarina. Lois helped Sarina navigate school and financial aid systems and ensured she received tutoring services when needed. Sarina graduated with high honors from the Practical Nursing program at Central Pennsylvania Institute of Science and Technology in the summer of 2013.

With her practical nursing training completed, Lois helped Sarina with her resume preparation and job search. Sarina quickly gained a full-time position as a Licensed Practical Nurse at Centre Crest Nursing Home, nearly doubling her hourly wages. "I was finally earning a good salary, and I didn't have to depend on food stamps anymore. My children were happier because I could buy things they needed and wanted. I didn't have to say 'no' all the time," she said.

Sarina's Career Coordinator continued to advise and encourage Sarina as she planned her climb up the nursing career ladder--an Associate's Degree program in Registered Nursing at nearby Lock Haven University. The WATCH Project assisted Sarina with the many expenses associated with enrollment--registration fees and tuition, liability insurance, a physical exam and clearances, scrubs, shoes, required books, and equipment for the Fall 2014 semester.

Success Stories

Figure 1: Sarina's HPOG Journey¹



While pursuing her registered nursing degree (see Figure 1), Sarina continues to receive tutoring support and a laptop on loan from WATCH. Mileage reimbursements have been essential since she travels over 65 miles each way to attend clinical sessions. Her Career Coordinator's on-going support and encouragement have also sustained Sarina, as she successfully completed her first semester.

"WATCH is helping me move up the career ladder again. As a Registered Nurse, I will be able to provide even better for my family. I am grateful to HPOG and the WATCH Project for the help this program has given me and my family," she said.

¹ Mean wage estimates for RNs in Pennsylvania from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Occupational Employment Statistics: Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2014, 29-1141 Registered Nurses*. Retrieved from: http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_pa.htm.

Success Stories

Katie at College of Menominee Nation

CNA to RN Career Ladder Program

Katie is a single mother, employed Home Health Aide and full-time student in the [College of Menominee Nation CNA to RN Career Ladder Program](#), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) project funded by the Office of Family Assistance. The Nursing Career Ladder Program (NCL) seeks to provide Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and other low-income individuals with the resources, structure, and support to enter and succeed in the nursing profession.

Katie was born and raised in northeast Wisconsin in one of the local Amish communities. Her education began in a traditional one room Amish school complete with an outdoor privy. In the spring of 1996, Katie earned her High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED) through the community technical college and in 2010, a certificate in Medical Coding and Billing. By 2012, Katie, a single mom with a five year old son, despite having these technical certificates, had been working the night shift in a local bulk restaurant food supplier. That year she enrolled in the College of Menominee Nation (CMN) Home Health Aide course to realize her dream of entering the health care field. After earning her certificate, CMN instructors and staff from her local Women, Infants and Children (WIC) office encouraged Katie to explore opportunities through the HPOG-funded NCL program. After meeting with NCL staff, Katie decided to take the first step on the nursing career ladder and enrolled in the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) course.

With the help of NCL staff, particularly Deb Trossen the CNA Project Coordinator, Katie successfully obtained her CNA certificate in January 2013. By spring 2014, Katie completed the required general education courses and nursing courses needed to earn her Practical Nurse technical diploma. In summer 2014, Katie went on to earn not only her Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) degree, but certificates in Telemetry (ECG), Advanced Pathophysiology, Advanced Concept Mapping, and EPIC (health record system software). Shortly after graduation, and following CMN's Nursing Department's pinning ceremony, Katie became licensed by the State of Wisconsin as a LPN in July 2014.

Success Stories

Figure 1: Katie's HPOG Journey¹



Along with her intrinsic abilities and suitability to the profession, Katie credits her time management skills, strong encouragement from her classroom faculty, and HPOG support staff for her rapid rise through the Nursing Career Ladder program. HPOG's support with child care has allowed Katie to juggle part-time work, full-time school, and parenting. Their help with some of her utility bills and internet expenses have lessened financial burdens and allowed her the flexibility to continue to go to school full-time and continue up her nursing career ladder.

Katie is currently working part-time for Shawano County as a Home Health Aide while also enrolled in CMN's Associate's Degree in Nursing (ADN) program. While not the final stop in her career pathway, her position at Shawano County, where she earns \$10.65/hour, has helped her continue her education and provide for her child. Katie is on track to graduate from the ADN program in spring 2015 after which she intends to take her National Council Licensure Examination for registered nurses (RN). As a RN, Katie expects to earn significantly more than her current salary (see Figure 1). After graduation, Katie plans to seek nursing positions within the pediatric field or within U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs affiliated hospitals. She hopes to one day use her nursing skills at the University of Wisconsin's Children's Hospital in Madison.

¹ Mean wage estimates for Registered Nurses in Wisconsin from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Occupational Employment Statistics May 2014 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, Wisconsin*. Retrieved from: http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_wi.htm.

Success Stories

Amber at Community Action Project of Tulsa County

CareerAdvance®

Before [CareerAdvance®](#), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) program of the Office of Family Assistance, Amber and her husband were struggling financially. They were both unemployed, their house was in foreclosure, and they had a newborn baby. In 2010 their daughter, ShiAnne, was accepted into the Community Action Project (CAP-Tulsa) Head Start Program and began attending its “Disney” location. The child care environment was nurturing and educational and gave Amber the assurance and drive she needed to focus on her own career goals. Amber entered CAP-Tulsa’s CareerAdvance® program in January 2011 and later earned her first credential in nursing as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA).

CareerAdvance® used a “Career Coach” model to help students, including Amber, achieve academic and personal goals. By combining a cohort-based approach with facilitated coaching support, the model provided Amber networking opportunities, on-campus resources to lessen the intimidation of beginning school, and support to ensure she had everything she needed to succeed. Amber’s Career Coach supported her through her career ladder from CNA through RN and into employment. Amber found that the support from her Coach and her cohort peers helped build her self-confidence, as did opportunities to share strategies to overcome common challenges. This gave her that extra push to succeed.

After getting her CNA, Amber began working as a Nurse Technician at Saint Francis Hospital, earning over \$10 an hour. But she remained engaged with CareerAdvance® and while working continued to go to school to obtain her License in Practical Nursing (LPN). In January of 2013 she passed the LPN exam and with CareerAdvance’s® support, she didn’t stop there. Amber was bolstered by her previous academic success and driven to continue up her career ladder. In December 2014, Amber completed her Registered Nursing program (see Figure 1).

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Figure 1: Amber's HPOG Journey



Amber was one of CAP-Tulsa's first two Registered Nursing (RN) graduates. They celebrated her accomplishments during a graduation ceremony in December 2014. Amber applied for several nursing positions and was quickly offered three separate jobs. Amber had the privilege of choosing the one that best fit her needs as a parent and as a first-time RN. She is beginning her new job with A Better Life Homecare and truly has turned her dreams into reality.

Success Stories

Esther at Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc.

Health Professions Opportunity Grant

Applying to the Licensed Practice Nurse (LPN) training offered by [Cook Inlet Tribal Council Healthcare Training Program](#) (CITC), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance, put Esther on a career pathway to a well-paying, high-demand job as a Nurse Supervisor that earns her a living wage allowing her to care for her family without public assistance--a point of pride for the mother of two young children. She has gone from receiving public assistance from the Tribal TANF office including subsidized housing, food stamps, and health care to earning a living wage that has made her fully self-sufficient. Though she has made incredible strides, Esther's economic future has not always been so certain.

For eight years, Esther had been employed in customer service at the local shopping mall. Esther earned \$9.00/hour in retail and knew she needed something more for herself and her children. Determined to make a change, Esther enrolled herself into the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training program offered by the Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC) in Anchorage and successfully completed the CNA program in the Summer of 2013. Esther learned about CITC HPOG's Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) career ladder program after completing her CNA training. As a matter of fact, one of Esther's former CNA instructors told her about CITC HPOG at her CNA graduation ceremony and encouraged her to further her training. A highly motivated and energetic student, Esther wasted no time and approached her TANF Case Manager with questions about the LPN program right after her CNA graduation day. When she applied to the CITC HPOG LPN program, Esther was working full-time at the Alaska Native Medical Center as a CNA.

CITC HPOG serves Tribal TANF recipients and low-income Alaska Natives and American Indians in the city of Anchorage, Alaska and throughout south central Alaska's Cook Inlet region. The program provides occupational training to equip Alaska Native/American Indian students like Esther with the health care training and professional development necessary to successfully begin a career in the nursing profession. The program offers training in the following health care occupations: Certified Nursing Assistant, Licensed Practice Nurse, Registered Nurse, or Medical Office Assistant. In addition to technical competencies, CITC

Success Stories

HPOG also recognizes the need for a robust and interconnected array of supports designed to help students build the professional and life management skills needed to transition from TANF and other forms of public assistance to self-sufficiency through employment.

Esther utilized program supports as she needed them to make ends meet while completing the LPN pre-requisites. For example, while working full-time as a CNA and single mother, Esther, no longer eligible for TANF benefits, needed the gas vouchers and food assistance offered by CITC to support herself and children while training.

After completing all pre-requisites for the LPN, Esther passed the NCLEX in June 2014. She soon found a part-time position as a Dispensary Nurse at Anchorage Treatment Services. Esther was quickly promoted after an organizational staffing review and is now the Nurse Supervisor. In her new position, Esther is responsible for 130 patients receiving methadone treatment. She is a salaried employee earning \$25.50/hour (see Figure 1). She proudly pays for her children's child care and health care while meeting the family's basic needs for food and shelter without public assistance. Esther moved out of subsidized housing and rents a duplex in Anchorage.

Figure 1: Esther's HPOG Journey



Looking ahead to the future, Esther plans to continue her education and eventually earn her RN degree. However, she loves the responsibility and pace of her supervisory position and doesn't plan on more school for at least the coming year.

Success Stories

April at Eastern Gateway Community College

Project HOPE

From a very young age, April knew that she was interested in the health care field. At 16, she started working at a local nursing home where she held several positions throughout her teenage years. She enjoyed helping seniors with activities, working in the kitchen, and working in the housekeeping department. April developed a passion for caring for others and wanted to turn her passion into a career.

In August 2013, April decided to pursue a Licensed Practical Nursing degree (LPN) at [Eastern Gateway Community College](#) in Steubenville, Ohio. She completed the first step along this career pathway, the State Tested Nursing Aide program (STNA), with no major problems.

Before beginning the LPN program at Eastern Gateway Community College--the next step in her career pathway-- April saw a television commercial about [Project HOPE](#) and was interested in finding out more. Project HOPE is a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants \(HPOG\)](#) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance and offers student coaching, tuition assistance, emergency funding, and linkages to community support services. As a mother of two small children, April was concerned that she would not be able to juggle all of her important roles: mother, bread-winner, and student. By enrolling in Project HOPE, she received ongoing support and encouragement from her Project HOPE student coach who helped her balance all of these roles as she pursued her LPN certificate. It was comforting to know that there was someone she could turn to during stressful times. Her coach offered her sound advice and guidance for academic, career, and personal issues. The financial assistance April received from Project HOPE was also key to her success. While in the LPN program, April fell behind on some of her utility bills and Project HOPE covered her bill to ensure that her electricity remained on.

When she was accepted into the Registered Nursing (RN) program at [Trinity School of Nursing](#), April felt that she had reached a turning point and major decisions needed to be made. She had to decide if she really wanted to invest the time and energy to become a RN, or if she wanted to seek employment as a LPN. She faced numerous financial challenges while pursuing her LPN certificate and working part-time, and was not sure she wanted to continue struggling.

Success Stories

After some deep soul-searching and advice from her student coach, April decided to continue on her career pathway (see Figure 1) and pursue becoming a RN because taking care of patients on a higher clinical level was her desire. The financial assistance available through Project HOPE helped April cover the additional \$250 she needed for tuition to enroll and continue on her career path. By investing an additional two years in her nursing education, April set herself up to earn an average wage of \$27.35 per hour in Southeast Ohio, \$10 more than the average wage for LPNs in the same region.

Figure 1: April's HPOG Journey¹



During her time in the LPN and RN training programs, April earned [incentive points](#) by completing activities such as attending a group session, maintaining a certain grade point average, and having perfect attendance for the week. She wisely redeemed her incentive points for food-only gift certificates, gas cards, and to pay bills. These incentive points helped offset the cost of necessities in April's life, and she said that receiving these items relieved financial burdens during training. April is still careful about how she uses her incentive points and utilizes them only for necessities.

April is thankful for the support she has received from Project HOPE and from her grandmother who supported her throughout her journey to become a RN. In January 2015, April began her last semester of RN training at the Trinity School of Nursing. She is most interested in mental health nursing and plans to pursue job opportunities in this field upon graduation in June 2015.

¹Median wage estimates for RNs in Southeast Ohio from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. *Occupational Wages and Employment from Occupational Employment Statistics*. Retrieved from: <http://ohiolmi.com/oes/oes.htm>.

Success Stories

Rindy at Edmonds Community College

Creating Access to Careers in Health Care

In September 2013, Rindy moved to Washington State with her four children while her husband stayed behind in Colorado. Her husband is a returned veteran who had suffered a severe head injury while serving in the armed forces. After a violent incident, spurred by his head injury, he lost his job and began a treatment program in Colorado. Rindy arrived in Edmonds, Washington, with few resources and faced many challenges caring for her children. She applied for and began receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits and, with her four children, moved into a small one-bedroom trailer on her father's property. Rindy began job search activities as part of her participation in the state's TANF program, [WorkFirst](#). She diligently looked for a part-time job in the health care field, having previously worked as an in-home caregiver earning minimum wage. She soon discovered that without certifications, it was difficult to find a job in health care in Washington. During a meeting with her TANF case manager, she learned about the [Creating Access to Careers in Health Care](#) (CATCH) program at Edmonds Community College, a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance. That same day, they completed and submitted Rindy's application, hopeful that she would be accepted into the program.

Rindy was accepted in January 2014 and began the Nursing Assistant-Certified (NAC) training program at Everett Community College. Although she had not completed high school, Rindy had earned a GED and while she had some postsecondary experience, she had not earned any certificates or degrees. CATCH, in partnership with [WorkFirst](#), offered Rindy numerous supportive services that helped her navigate challenges relating to academics, housing, transportation, and finances. Her father provided child care while she was in school in exchange for Rindy maintaining grades of 80% or higher in her coursework. CATCH also supported Rindy with bus passes to help with the cost of commuting back and forth to school.

During training Rindy returned to Colorado to move her husband and the rest of their belongings to Washington. She knew she could not miss any class time or assignments and worried about coordinating the effort. Thankfully, the CATCH program provides all students

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with a laptop and internet access; this allowed Rindy to stay on top of her coursework, take tests, and submit assignments while on the road.

When she returned to Washington, Rindy needed to find a better housing arrangement for her family. The CATCH team connected Rindy to community housing resources and she was accepted into a low-income housing program--moving her from a one-bedroom trailer to a subsidized three-bedroom apartment.

Despite numerous challenges, Rindy maintained a strong work ethic and persevered throughout her NAC training. She never gave up and worked diligently to provide for her kids, to give them a stable home, and to show them that if she can work to overcome obstacles, so can they. To increase her employability and potential earnings as a NAC, Rindy completed a second certificate in EKG through the CATCH program. In September 2014, Rindy passed the NAC state certification test and was hired as a Nursing Assistant the next month. As she continues along her career path, Rindy is working 25 hours per week at \$11.50 per hour. Rindy's EKG certificate helped her start well above the usual minimum wage.

Figure 1: Rindy's HPOG Journey¹



The future is full of opportunities for Rindy to advance in her health care career (see Figure 1). While in CATCH she received funds through the CATCH Scholarship program to complete two pre-requisite courses for the Medical Assisting Associate degree program offered at Everett Community College. The scholarship fund covered the cost of the two courses and required books. She has now transitioned to traditional financial aid to complete her degree. By continuing her education, Rindy is improving her future earning potential; individuals who attain

¹ Wage estimates for MAs in King and Snohomish Counties, Washington from Washington State, Employment Security Department (2014). Retrieved from: <https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/employmentdata/reports-publications/occupational-reports/occupational-employment-and-wage-estimates>.

Success Stories



an associate degree earn, on average, 7% more per week when working full-time than those with some college who are working full-time.² Rindy is excited for her future, and is thankful for the support the CATCH program and staff have provided her along the way. Rindy is on a fantastic health care career pathway that is creating a future for her and her family--she is the most financially stable she has ever been.

² Median weekly earning data from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014). *Employment Projections*. Retrieved from: http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm.

Success Stories

Cassandra at the Full Employment Council, Inc.

21st Century Healthcare Works Program

In 2014, Cassandra applied for a health care career scholarship at the [Full Employment Council \(FEC\)](#) 21st Century Healthcare Works program (21st Century), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) program (HPOG) of the Office of Family Assistance. Cassandra, a single mother, was receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance and living in Parkville, Missouri, a small city outside of Kansas City. She was struggling to provide for her eight-year-old son and had a temporary, part-time job at a fast food restaurant. The work helped her pay the bills, but she wasn't making enough to get off of public assistance. She wanted a career that would provide a good income and benefits for her family.

A co-worker suggested that she meet with her TANF counselor and discuss options. Cassandra followed her co-worker's advice and when meeting with her counselor shared her interests in working in the health professions and desire to get off of TANF. Her counselor told her about the HPOG program and suggested she attend a 21st Century workshop in late summer of 2014. She also learned that her tuition expenses could be covered by the HPOG program and about a special HPOG project called Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Special Needs Program. This class, developed by 21st Century and the University of Central Missouri, allowed students to get their CNA license, as well as a Medication Aide Level I Certification and Insulin Certification.

Cassandra was awarded a 21st Century tuition scholarship and started training in August 2014. The program gave her the tools she needed for class and clinics, including a stethoscope, blood pressure cuff, gait belt, and watch with a second hand. Unable with her limited funds to buy other supplies, the program gave her a uniform voucher to purchase scrubs and shoes for class, as well as paid for her Tuberculosis test. "The class was tough at first," Cassandra said. "My teacher kept me motivated. The days I didn't want to get up and go to class, I would think about her. She drove an hour every day to teach and still worked a full-time job. I figured if she can do that, surely I can get to class."

Despite Cassandra's initial struggles juggling school, home, day care, and late night shifts, she never missed a day or got behind in her studies. She got top scores in every test she took. Cassandra graduated in October 2014 and passed the state board exam, receiving her CNA

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license along with a Medication Aide Level I Certification and Insulin Certification (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Cassandra's HPOG Journey¹



After training, Cassandra participated in the HPOG 21st Century “Push 2 Work” seminar. The seminar provided employment and job search resources and Cassandra worked individually with a training instructor to polish her resume and improve her interviewing skills.

After the seminar, 21st Century gave Cassandra vouchers to purchase clothes she could wear to interviews since she didn't have interview attire, nor the funds to purchase it. The program's development executive then worked with Cassandra to find job leads. Cassandra interviewed with three potential employers and received three job offers. In December 2014, she accepted a full-time position as a CNA at Hillview Nursing and Rehabilitation Center earning \$9.00/hour.

Today, Cassandra is no longer on TANF. Because she successfully completed her CNA training and gained employment, 21st Century also gave her a “Transition to Placement” award to assist her in her new job. The award, which was \$100, helped Cassandra to transition to unsubsidized employment and buy a few things she needed as she started her new career. Confident in her new job and prospects, Cassandra's new goal is to become a Physical Therapy Assistant. While working full-time, she is taking college pre-requisite courses to enter a Physical Therapy Assistant Program in September 2015. “I am so glad for the opportunity to become a CNA. Having this skill and experience will allow me to get first consideration into the Physical Therapy Assistant program,” said Cassandra.

¹ Mean wage estimates for Physical Therapist Assistants in Missouri from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Occupational Employment Statistics: Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2014, 29-1123 Physical Therapists*. Retrieved from: http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_mo.htm.

Success Stories

Amber at Gateway Community and Technical College

Health Profession Opportunity Project

Amber has come a long way since she began her journey with Gateway Community and Technical College's (Gateway) [Health Profession Opportunity Project](#) (HPOP), a [Health Professions Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program of the Office of Family Assistance. As a result of her participation in Gateway's HPOG program, Amber is currently working as a Medical Records Coding Specialist with a local firm in Northern Kentucky and has been recognized as a stellar employee and contributor to the company. Amber definitely has a bright future ahead of her, but it was not always so bright.

Amber and her family enjoyed a comfortable life in Missouri. Her husband was a union carpenter and she was a hairdresser, making enough to support their family of five. Then, the recession hit. Her husband lost his job and Amber, though working steadily, was expecting another child. They could not make ends meet on her hairdresser salary alone. For the sake of their family, Amber and her husband made the difficult decision to move closer to her mother in Elsmere, Kentucky, in hopes of a fresh start.

After the move, Amber decided that a career as a hairdresser was not conducive to raising a family. She had often thought about a job in health care but was not sure where to start. A friend in Missouri really enjoyed her job as a medical coder, so Amber sought out more information.

She found out that Gateway offered a certificate for Medical Records Coding Specialists. After attending a college orientation, Amber applied, even though she was unsure how she would manage and pay for childcare while attending classes. During the orientation, she heard about Gateway's Health Profession Opportunity Project. She learned that the project could help cover childcare costs and that she would be eligible to receive other supports she needed to complete the training. Amber applied and was accepted into the HPOP program in August 2011.

"The ability to have childcare covered was huge for me," said Amber. It allowed her to start college, but other HPOP supports helped her stay in the program and on her road to success.

Success Stories

In addition to childcare, the HPOP program helped Amber with the costs of the practice and state certification tests for a Certified Professional Coder. Having to pay for these exams out of pocket would have been impossible for Amber and her family at the time.

Amber was driven and enthusiastic, but college was a whole new world for her. Until Gateway and HPOP, education had not been a priority for Amber. She was the first in her family to go to college, and she soon learned she needed extra support to meet her goals. Her case manager helped her learn new skills to navigate the challenges of college coursework, work with her instructors, and, importantly, gave her encouragement to stay the course. In addition, Amber participated in group tutoring to prepare for the state certification exam and attended student workshops to assist her with study skills, resume writing, and stress management.

As a part of her medical coding training, Amber was placed with Neltner Billing and Consulting as an intern. After she graduated in May 2012, Amber was offered a full-time position with the company. Amber's supervisor, Grant Schuchmann, Manager of Business Development, cannot speak highly enough about Amber's skills and leadership ability. She has done so well that, within a few months of joining the company, she earned a pay raise, from \$13.50 per hour to \$15.00 per hour, and she was asked to oversee the company's medical records team in India to process accounts (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Amber's HPOG Journey



From a hairdresser in Missouri to Gateway's HPOP program to managing a medical records team in India, Amber's journey has had peaks and valleys. But thanks to her education at Gateway, the supports of HPOP, and her own initiative, Amber sees a bright future ahead.

Success Stories

Brenda at Gateway Technical College

Health Professions Opportunity Program

Brenda is a woman on a mission. She realized that she wanted to be a nurse when she was serving as a Medic in the U.S. Army. When Brenda completed her six-year tour of duty and was honorably discharged, she knew she wanted to begin her studies towards a nursing degree. Brenda was especially interested in continuing to serve other veterans.

Today, Brenda is well on her way. She completed the necessary coursework and clinical requirements for the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) degree in the Fall of 2014, passed the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX), and is rapidly moving towards a Summer 2015 graduation as a Registered Nurse (RN) at the [Health Professions Opportunity Program](#) (HPOP) at Gateway Technical College (Gateway Tech), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance. Getting her LPN and narrowing in on her RN degree wouldn't have been possible without the support of HPOG. Life has thrown Brenda a few unexpected turns that nearly extinguished her dream of becoming a nurse.

Brenda was working as a Health Tech at the Union Grove Community-Based Outpatient Clinic for Veterans in Union Grove, Wisconsin when she began her nursing classes at Gateway Tech. While working and going to school, Brenda, a recently divorced mother of two children, noticed that one of her children was beginning to struggle developmentally. As time went on, her son seemed to fall further behind. Despite Brenda's growing list of questions and concerns for his teachers and doctors, answers were in short supply. She pursued the lengthy and expensive process of behavioral health assessments, which took their toll on Brenda's work schedule and she ultimately had to resign from her job to focus on her family's well-being. Brenda eventually found out that her son had autism. Throughout the process, Brenda continued inching towards her goal of becoming a nurse, taking one class at a time and just trying to stay on top of it all.

Brenda tried to balance managing her son's new autism diagnosis, while continuing to take classes. Navigating the academic schedule for required classes, however, was especially problematic for Brenda as some of the required classes were only offered once a year and at

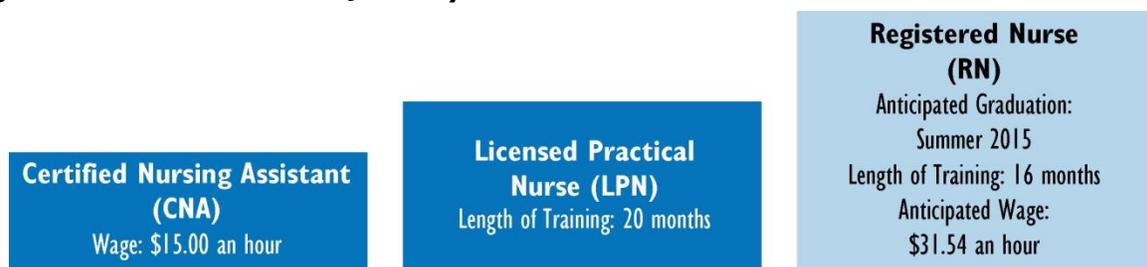
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times the schools' schedule didn't mesh with her children's schedules. In her attempts to maintain her enrolled student status, oftentimes one class at a time, Brenda exhausted her educational benefits through the GI Bill, running out of funding needed to continue her studies.

She learned about Gateway Tech's HPOP at an orientation session for new nursing students. Brenda immediately knew HPOP was her chance to move ahead. What attracted Brenda to HPOP was the financial support she could receive, particularly tuition assistance, books, and medical equipment she'd need for labs. The financial supports were essential for Brenda to progress towards her goal of being a registered nurse. She applied to Gateway HPOP and was accepted into the program in the spring of 2013.

Just as things were beginning to level out for Brenda, she discovered she was pregnant with her third child and received word that her parents' home had caught fire. Once again, her dreams of becoming a nurse slowly began to fade as Brenda became more and more overwhelmed by life. Eventually, she stopped attending classes and ignored inquiries from Shayla Thompson, her HPOP Employment Specialist. As a one last ditch effort Shayla told Brenda she would need to respond to her repeated inquiries or be placed on academic probation during the following semester. Despite being on the verge of academic probation and completely overwhelmed by life, Brenda realized Shayla was ready and willing to help her get through this and to help her not give up on her dream.

Figure 1: Brenda's HPOG Journey¹



Shayla immediately got Brenda re-engaged in the program doing a comprehensive review of her academic requirements and necessary support services needed to stabilize her family. Brenda was able to hunker down and, with the child care supports offered through HPOP, she re-focused on her studies full-time. As a result of her hard work and the care and support of her Employment Specialist, Brenda is now completing her third semester of the Registered Nursing

¹ Mean wage estimates for Registered Nurses in Wisconsin from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Occupational Employment Statistics: May 2014 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, Wisconsin*. Retrieved from: http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_wi.htm.

Success Stories



program at Gateway Tech, and is working with a Job Developer to find a nursing internship that will allow her to complete her studies while working (see Figure 1).

Success Stories

Adriana at Kansas Department of Commerce

Kansas Health Profession Opportunity Project

Adriana received Respiratory Therapist training from [Seward County Community College](#) (Seward CCC), which is affiliated with the Kansas Department of Commerce's [Kansas Health Profession Opportunity Project](#) (KHPOP), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) project funded by the Office of Family Assistance.

Before the KHPOP program, Adriana was a full-time student at Garden City Community College completing the pre-requisites for their respiratory program and also working part-time as a secretary for an automobile insurance company making \$8.75 an hour. Not receiving any financial aid at the time, during holiday breaks and school vacations Adriana would work full-time to save for tuition and personal expenses. Once Adriana completed her pre-requisite classes through Garden City Community College, she applied to the respiratory therapy program offered at Seward CCC. During the enrollment process, she was provided with information about the KHPOP program as well as a list of services available to help her. Adriana leaped at the opportunity to further her credentials, called immediately, and made an in-office visit at KHPOP to get started.

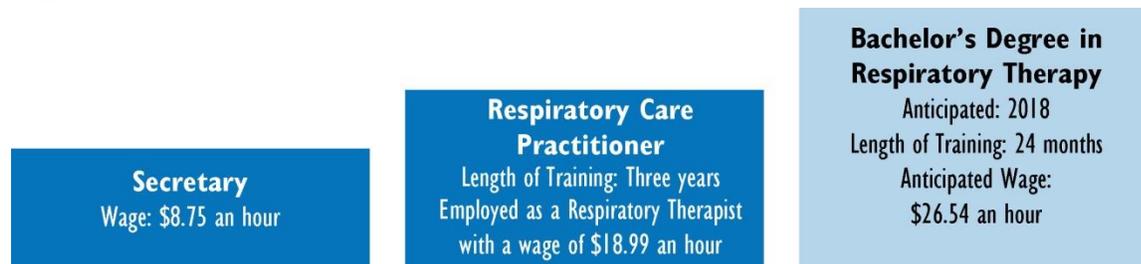
Adriana describes KHPOP as “launching” her into her new career and specifically credits Micaela Madrid, Employment Specialist, for helping her “through the whole process of school and the KHPOP program.” Micaela remained in constant contact with Adriana, discussing school and any challenges she might be having with the curriculum. Adriana describes Micaela as incredibly supportive and motivating and says she helped her keep a positive attitude. “I don’t feel like Micaela was just doing her job. She was going a step further and showed she actually cared; that gave me an extra push,” Adriana says. In addition to Micaela’s unwavering support, KHPOP provided Adriana assistance with transportation costs, allowing her to complete all required clinical rotations, which were scheduled around Southwest Kansas and as far away as Amarillo, Texas. This support allowed Adriana to focus on her studies, rather than having to pick up additional working hours to cover the costs of travel. Adriana also took advantage of tutoring services, which were available for any course in which she needed them – from basic math to the respiratory clinical practicum. Adriana describes the security of knowing those

Success Stories

tutors would be there as a “relief,” and believes that the tutoring support she received has had a positive impact on her preparation for her career.

Adriana obtained her Associate’s Degree in May 2014 and her Respiratory Care Practitioner license in September 2014. She found full-time employment with Uvalde Memorial Hospital in October 2014. Once she accepted employment with Uvalde Memorial, Adriana moved to South Texas where she began her career as a Respiratory Therapist. Today she is earning \$18.99/hour (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Adriana’s HPOG Journey¹



Adriana is grateful to the KHPOP program, saying “thanks to KHPOP, I now have a very rewarding career helping out those in need...enrolling into the KHPOP program is definitely one of the best decisions I've ever made!” In the future, Adriana plans to return to school to earn her Bachelor’s Degree in Respiratory Therapy. She credits KHPOP, Micaela, her friends, and family for her success. “I am so happy with my career choice and what feels like a new life! My life now versus my life before the KHPOP and Respiratory Program are very different... a good different,” she says.

¹ Mean wage estimates for Respiratory Therapists in Texas from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Occupational Employment Statistics: Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2014, 29-1126 Respiratory Therapists*. Retrieved from: http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_tx.htm.

Success Stories

Htay at Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board

CareerWorks Healthcare Training Institute

Htay is a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) at Aurora St. Luke's Hospital in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, an acute care hospital that partners with the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board's (MAWIB) [CareerWorks Healthcare Training Institute](#) (HTI). Each afternoon Htay arrives at work ready to do her job and is proud of the work she does helping people and making a difference in their lives. Htay is determined to advance in her career and knows that MAWIB's HTI, a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance, is there to help.

Originally from Myanmar, Htay lived in Thailand for seven years before coming to Milwaukee in December 2010. Newly married, Htay had to wait for a work permit before she could start looking for employment. While she waited, she took care of several elderly residents in her apartment building--her first steps toward a career in the health care field.

Once her work permit arrived, Htay not only found a job--she found three. But, it was shortly after starting them that her marriage started to fall apart due to her husband's drinking and gambling. In 2012, Htay and her husband divorced, but because of Wisconsin's community property rules, Htay was jointly responsible for the debts her husband amassed during their marriage. Htay worked hard at her three jobs to pay down those debts, starting her workday at 5:00 a.m. on the store floor of Home Depot before heading to the Veterans Hospital to volunteer with patients at 2:00 p.m. At 5:00 p.m., Htay headed to her job at Aurora West Allis Memorial Hospital, where she worked as an Environmental Services Assistant for \$9.47/hour, and cleaned patients' rooms until 10:00 p.m. Htay would take the bus home, say her prayers, and start over the next day at 5:00 a.m.

Hoping to have a more meaningful impact on patients' lives, Htay wanted to become a CNA. In 2012, Htay heard about a six-week CNA training class at Aurora St. Luke's Hospital and she inquired about enrollment. She was referred to an Aurora HPOG Employer Coach, who explained that HPOG could help cover the costs of the CNA training, and helped her through the HTI intake process. In October 2012, Htay enrolled in the HTI program and started her CNA training. Htay's Employer Coach worked to transfer Htay's housekeeping job from West

Success Stories

Allis Memorial to its St. Luke's campus where her classes were so that she could more easily attend work and class. At Aurora St. Luke's, Htay was classified as an "incumbent CNA" employee-in-training. When Htay completed her training in November 2012, she was hired as a CNA at Aurora St. Luke's Hospital with a starting salary of \$10.90/hour. Since then, Htay's wages have increased to \$11.73/hour, and she expects another increase in the Spring of 2015 (see Figure 1).

Htay loves her CNA job, but is also looking to continue on her career path. She enrolled at Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) in January 2013 and is taking pre-nursing classes to earn her Associates Degree in Nursing (ADN). MATC requires one and a half years of pre-nursing studies and 70 credit hours (2 years/4 semesters) of clinical studies to receive an ADN. She hopes to eventually transfer to a four year college and get her Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Figure 1: Htay's HPOG Journey¹



Htay credits much of her current success to her enrollment in the HTI program. The HTI staff at Aurora St. Luke's encouraged her all through her training. Htay's career coach explained the benefits and services of the HTI program, answered questions along the way, helped her stay focused through coaching, and communicated with the HTI management team about her progress. With the help of HTI, Htay has started her life over and continues to pursue her dream of helping people. HTI looks forward to being able to provide Htay with the support and assistance she needs to continue moving up her career ladder.

¹ Average wage estimates for RNs in Milwaukee from Wisconsin's Worknet, retrieved from: <http://worknet.wisconsin.gov/worknet/wagecomparison.aspx>.

Success Stories

Pabitra at the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health and Refugee Affairs

New Hampshire Health Profession Opportunity Project

Twenty-five-year-old Pabitra entered the [New Hampshire Health Profession Opportunity Project](#) (HPOP), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program, funded by the Office of Family Assistance, in the summer of 2011 just a few months after settling in the United States from her native Bhutan. From age 1½ until she moved to the United States at 21, Pabitra lived in a refugee camp in Nepal. Refugees in the camp lived in huts, which were jammed together, creating an unhealthy living environment. People received only basic health care, and Pabitra witnessed many inhabitants struggle with significant health issues. As she matured, she volunteered in the camp as part of a team training residents on proper sanitary procedures. The experience spurred her desire to work in the medical field. Once in the United States, Pabitra searched for opportunities to fulfill this dream.

Once Pabitra immigrated, she assumed responsibility for the well-being of her family. She applied for and began to receive public assistance; oversaw all family members' appointments; and paid all the household bills. One day, she mentioned her dream to work in health care to a caseworker at the Service for New Americans. He pointed her toward HPOP.

Pabitra enrolled in HPOP in July 2011. She and her career advisor designed a career plan to achieve her goals. It addressed both schooling and the challenges that would potentially impact her ability to attend school and work. When Pabitra expressed concern over language skills, HPOP enrolled Pabitra in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. She began a Licensed Nursing Assistant (LNA) program a little later in the summer of 2011. HPOP assisted with textbooks and other supplies, such as uniforms given the financial constraints Pabitra had living off of public assistance. Because transportation created a potential obstacle to her training, HPOP enrolled her in driver's education and assisted with mileage and vehicle registration.

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After training for two and a half months, Pabitra obtained her LNA license in October 2011. While in training, an HPOP employment specialist helped her prepare a resume, a standard employment tool unknown to Pabitra before training at HPOP. The employment specialist taught Pabitra job search skills; honed her interviewing skills; coached her on work attire; and advised her of job openings, including an LNA opening. She interviewed for the position in September 2011 and accepted it in October.

With her first goal accomplished, Pabitra worked with her career advisor on becoming a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN). The career advisor helped her complete an application to transfer her foreign credits and arranged for her to participate in a HPOP study group preparing for the Nursing Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS).

Pabitra began LPN training in March 2013. Once accepted in to the LPN program, Pabitra again worked closely with her career advisor to renegotiate a work schedule conducive to work and school. She finished LPN classes in April 2014; completed all clinical work in May 2014; and graduated in July 2014 (see Figure 1). Her career advisor assisted Pabitra with her application for the National Council Licensure Examination--Practical Nurse (NCLEX-PN) and helped with fees and preparatory study materials. She passed the examination in September 2014. Pabitra's employer offered her a full time LPN position, with benefits.

Figure 1: Pabitra's HPOG Journey



In describing all the support and encouragement she received from HPOP staff, Pabitra simply said they were “the candle that guided me.” Pabitra considers HPOP a virtual parent, one that encouraged and assisted her to reach her dream. She now finds life easier to manage and is able to continue to support her family while living in her own home. Pabitra plans to pursue her Registered Nurse (RN) license in the next five years, and ultimately become an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN).

Success Stories

Tauheedah at Pensacola State College

Health Profession Opportunity Grant Program

In 2011, Tauheedah was in [Pensacola State College](#)'s first training cohort of Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) funded through the [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program, an initiative of the Office of Family Assistance. She enrolled in the program to complete an effort she had started more than seven years before--to have a successful career in the health care field.

Tauheedah began the CNA program at Pensacola State College in early 2004 and graduated that same year. But rather than pursuing her certification, she immediately started working as a Home Health Aide for Consulate Health Care in Florida making \$10.50 an hour and working 60 to 70 hours per week. She did this for seven years and then changes in state requirements and laws meant that Tauheedah needed to become certified to continue working in her field of choice. After researching her options, she learned that she would have to redo her CNA training to sit for the state board exam. But to do redo the training, she would have to find and pay for reliable child care, books and tuition, which she feared she could not afford as she was just getting by paying rent and other household bills. The financial and child care supportive services from Pensacola's HPOG program made it possible. Tauheedah completed her CNA, became certified, and did not stop there. She went on to complete trainings in Phlebotomy in May 2012 and finished the Licensed Practical Nursing program in December 2013, graduating from the college with honors.

Tauheedah is currently employed full-time with Escambia County Board of County Commissioners-Escambia County Jail making \$18.80 an hour with full benefits and a 401K plan. She also continues to work, as needed, at Consulate Health Care as a Home Health Nurse after being promoted from the CNA position. Tauheedah says that since she has become a nurse her life has changed tremendously. With her LPN, she has had many more employment opportunities and her salary is double what she made as a CNA. She and her children are finally closer to their goal of purchasing a home and she credits the assistance she received from HPOG for getting her where she is today.

Success Stories

Figure 1: Tauheedah's HPOG Journey



Tauheedah says, “I have discovered very quickly that the world needs more nurses and becoming a nurse has given me a sense of pride.” Tauheedah is proud that she can give back to her community and support her family. Her son and daughter are both looking forward to their own journey of attending college and starting careers of their own.

Success Stories

Veronica at Pima County Community College District

Pathways to Healthcare Program

“Caring, committed, courageous, and compassionate” are words that aptly describe Veronica, Pima County Community College [Pathways to Healthcare](#) student.

Veronica grew up in Mexico and moved to the United States as a young adult. For many years she went to school to improve her English speaking skills while working various jobs including cashiering, housekeeping, and laying tile to support herself and her two sons. Veronica believes she probably would still be cashiering at the gas station and earning minimum wage if she hadn't found Pima County Community College's (PCCC) [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program, funded by the Office of Family Assistance.

Veronica's passion for helping people drew her to the medical field and in early 2013 a friend told her about HPOG.

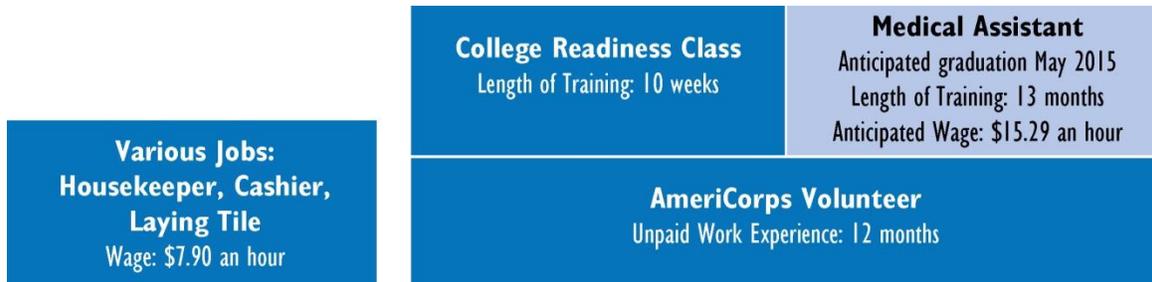
Veronica applied to PCCC's HPOG program and was randomly selected for the program in May 2013. Two weeks later, she started the 10-week HPOG College Readiness class to improve her English and her academic skills in preparation for moving into the Medical Assistant (MA) training program at the Center for Training and Development at PCCC.

Jodi Perin, HPOG Instructor, worked with Veronica to develop her medical terminology and to teach her how to manage the MA program workload. Jodi was impressed with Veronica's commitment and enthusiasm. She noted that “in all of my interactions with Veronica she has been unfailingly positive, thoughtful, hard-working, and professional. She has persisted in the face of many challenges, always with kindness and humor.”

Veronica's participation in the College Readiness class helped her meet all entrance requirements for the MA program, and in October of 2013 she began her career pathway to becoming a Medical Assistant. Today, Veronica is participating in her program externship, and will graduate in May 2015 (see Figure 1).

Success Stories

Figure I: Veronica's HPOG Journey¹



Veronica was inspired by the assistance she received through the College Readiness class and instructor, which led her to apply to AmeriCorps to assist other non-English speakers. Within hours of her initial interview, she learned that she had been selected to become an AmeriCorps volunteer.

During the day, Veronica tutored refugee students in English as a Second Language as part of her AmeriCorps commitment. She then traveled to PCCC to attend MA classes in the afternoon. Veronica studies in the evenings and six to seven hours on weekends--always keeping a dictionary near her as she reads her assignments. "It is very hard," said Veronica, "but I want to be a role model for my children."

Veronica continues to pursue her career pathway in health care while empowering others in her volunteer work. As a Medical Assistant, Veronica will earn about \$15/hour. Once Veronica completes her MA program, she knows she wants to work with a medical provider who assists refugees--where she believes she can make the most impact.

¹ Mean wage estimates for MAs in Arizona from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Occupational Employment Statistics: Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2014, 31-9092, Medical Assistants*. Retrieved from: http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_az.htm.

Success Stories

Grisheld at Research Foundation of City University of New York-- Hostos Community College

Allied Health Career Pipeline Program

Grisheld is the oldest of six children. She grew up in a one-bedroom apartment with her mother, father, and one other sibling in the Queens Bridge Housing Projects in Queens, New York. Her parents parted ways when she was 12 years old, and in her teen years, her mother had several other children, as well as boyfriends who at different times lived with them. Grisheld's childhood living conditions were often crowded, chaotic, and sometimes violent. By middle school, she had already begun to disconnect from school, spending much of her time sheltering and protecting her younger siblings from the violence between the adults in the home. Eventually, Child Protective Services removed Grisheld's siblings from the home, while she remained. Grisheld never reconnected with school, and midway through her senior year of high school dropped out.

At 19, Grisheld had her first child and began working at a medical insurance company. She kept this job for five years, during which time she had two other children. Grisheld decided to become a stay-at-home parent after the birth of her third child and shortly thereafter had twins. She tried using employment agencies to find work, getting low-paying jobs here and there, but was living largely off of public assistance to feed and house herself and five children.

Grisheld wanted to make a change and started with studying for and getting her GED. Going through the process of getting her diploma reminded Grisheld of her dreams and goals. Grisheld had been living her life "on a day-to-day basis," she said, "all I knew was what was around me." Pursuing college and a career felt off the table as she tried to make ends meet for her five children, but obtaining her GED awakened a drive and belief that had long since gone. For the first time in years, Grisheld felt like she could be anything she set her mind to.

Remembering her interest in medical technology from high school courses, Grisheld pursued her Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) license and worked as a Home Health Aide on and off between 2005 and 2010. She went through a long period of unemployment following that and in 2013, while searching online for jobs, came across the [Allied Health Career Pipeline Program](#)

Success Stories

(AHCPP) at Hostos Community College, a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance.

Grisheld enrolled into the AHCPP program in 2013 and began training in the Health Information Technology program. AHCPP helped Grisheld get an internship during training to gain current work experience in her field of choice. Initially, Grisheld did not see the value in becoming an intern, since she had many years of prior experience as a Home Health Aide, but quickly learned that updated on-the-job skills were critical to gaining employment at higher wages. AHCPP also offered her tutoring services to help her regain and build her study skills and organize her work. Her school and job counselors also provided needed encouragement, which was beyond what she expected from a training program. AHCPP offered a high level of guidance and support that gave Grisheld the confidence and tools to effectively balance caring for her children and going back to school.

After interning for three months at Help/PSI, a New York City nonprofit organization that focuses on health and wellness, Grisheld finished her training, and the organization hired Grisheld into a permanent position as a data entry clerk making \$32,000/year (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Grisheld's HPOG Journey



Today, Grisheld is grateful for the Health Information Technology certification she received from AHCPP that helped her to successfully pass the National Health Association exam to receive her Electronic Health Records Specialist license. She now has steady work and a promising career ahead of her. Her dreams have evolved, and she sees a future for her family that is bright. One day she hopes to own and operate her own medical billing company and buy a home for herself and her children.

Success Stories

Keighm at San Diego Workforce Partnership, Inc.

Bridge to Employment in the Healthcare Industry

Keighm was in a desperate situation in the winter of 2013. Her marriage had fallen apart; she was jobless, and living with her parents. Thanks to a tip from a friend who had graduated from the Certified Nursing Assistant program sponsored by the [San Diego Workforce Partnership](#) (SDWP), she applied for a SDWP medical training grant offered through the [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance.

Because of her financial need and interest in the medical field, Keighm was awarded one of these grants and started her journey to a new health care career. In December 2013, SDWP referred Keighm to its training contractor, Comprehensive Training Systems (CTS), and she enrolled into their Medical Assistant-Lab Technician program. With Keighm's prior training as a Respiratory Therapy Assistant, the program was a good choice to help her explore another area of the medical field. She relied on the tutoring support and job club to help her learn the new field, hone her interview skills, and later find a job. Keighm also relied on transportation supports from SDWP. At the time of her training gas prices were high and Keighm was out of work. Without that support she would not have been able to continue her training. As Keighm undertook this new endeavor, she knew that entering a new profession may mean that she would not be making a high wage at first, but she was excited about moving into an in-demand field with a lot of opportunity to grow. Keighm's excitement about the future motivated her to succeed and work hard throughout the training program.

Keighm completed her training in April of 2014, after which CTS's job developers and staff mentors provided her job search supports. She participated in their work readiness program, which included a job club that helped her prepare her resume and polish her application and interview skills. Keighm's job developers also arranged for area employers to visit the training site and it was at one of these events that Keighm participated in a mock interview that ultimately led to her current job. Participating in a mock interview with the Family Health Centers of San Diego, the employer partner was so impressed with Keighm's preparedness and interview skills that they later contacted her for a real interview. In April 2014, the Family

Success Stories

Health Centers hired her as a Medical Assistant, with a starting salary of \$12 an hour (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Keighm's HPOG Journey¹



Since starting her training through SDWP, Keighm's life has taken a positive turn. No longer in a desperate situation with no home or job, today Keighm holds a stable job with decent pay. She has secured affordable housing and feels financially secure. Keighm describes her future as bright and she is working hard to complete her six month probationary period at her new job, after which she will start to receive medical and other benefits. One of those benefits includes tuition assistance that she plans to use to continue on her health care career pathway and apply to nursing schools to become a Registered Nurse.

¹ Mean wages for RNs in California from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Occupational Employment Statistics: Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2014, 29-1141 Registered Nurses*. Retrieved from: http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_ca.htm.

Success Stories

Aspen at Schenectady County Community College

Health Profession Opportunity Grant

Aspen came to [Schenectady County Community College's Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program, funded by the Office of Family Assistance, with a business plan and a dream of obtaining multiple certifications in the health care field. A seasoned caregiver in eldercare with eight years of experience, Aspen fell on hard times when the facility she had worked at closed its doors. “It wasn’t a great time in my life. I went from 60-70 hours of work a week to nothing and receiving unemployment.” She used this opportunity to her advantage, however, and began to pursue her entrepreneurial aspirations. “Sometimes doors open when others seem to slam shut...I knew there was another chance out there for me to make a career for myself, and I was going to grab it by the horns.”

After her job loss, Aspen was driven to go into business for herself. “I was tired of working for other agencies and being paid \$8 or \$9 an hour,” she says. “I knew I could do the work on my own and learn all the administrative duties that go along with it; I just needed the certifications to make it happen.” That is when a friend put her in touch with the Schenectady County Action Program (SCAP). They told Aspen about the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and Personal Care Aide program through Schenectady County Community College’s (SCCC) HPOG grant. SCCC would be completely free if she qualified, and she did because of her recent job loss.

Aspen enrolled in instructor William Rowe’s Certified Nursing Assistant and Personal Care Aide class in February of 2014. She immediately took on a leadership role among her classmates, sharing her professional experiences as a longtime caretaker. Her fellow students began to quickly seek out her guidance and advice. Aspen continued to lend her support to fellow students and maintained her drive to complete her certifications. She knew that gaining these certificates were the stepping stones she needed to ultimately own her own home care business (see Figure 1). Aspen worked diligently and earned her Certified Nursing Assistant and Personal Care Aide Certifications by April of 2014. “The minute I graduated I filled out the paperwork to open my own business,” she said.

Success Stories

Figure 1: Aspen's HPOG Journey



Aspen also drew support from other aspects of her life. Aspen comes from a long line of entrepreneurs including her father who supported her while she attended the HPOG program and helped her create a plan for her new business. Aspen also credits a former manager who shared Aspen's vision and partnered with her in building her business, now aptly named *Helping Hands Companionship*.

The training Aspen received from HPOG made Aspen's aspirations of starting a health care business a reality. Not only were the certifications necessary to work in health care, but the structure and support the program provided boosted Aspen's confidence that she could start her own business. "Business is booming," Aspen shared excitedly. Remembering how difficult it was to make ends meet on \$9 an hour, Aspen currently pays her employees \$12 an hour--above industry standard. Today, Aspen is earning close to \$40,000 a year and is looking to expand her business by making connections in the community and meeting with long-term care providers interested in working with independent contractors.

Not forgetting the program that helped her realize her goals, Aspen has shared her business cards with the HPOG director at SCCC, Tiziana Rota. She proudly stated, "I am looking to hire new staff and I want to hire HPOG students!"

Success Stories

Tameika at South Carolina Department of Social Services

Project Health Occupations Preparation for Employment

Like most parents, Tameika wanted to be able to give her child the best life possible. She wanted her daughter to know that despite life's difficulties and challenges she could accomplish anything she desired if she put in the hard work and believed in herself. Despite Tameika's best efforts, however, she had not been able to figure out a way to provide a solid economic foundation for herself and her daughter. That is, until she found the [South Carolina Department of Social Services](#)' Project Health Occupations Preparation for Employment (Project HOPE) program, a [Health Professions Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance.

As a single parent, Tameika struggled to make ends meet on her minimum wage salary. She worked in daycare, fast food, and even as a dietary aide but the hours and pay simply were not enough. Tameika depended on Medicaid and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to provide food, health insurance, and other Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits to fill-in the gaps. Though grateful for the help, Tameika wanted and needed more for herself and her daughter.

Tameika learned about Project HOPE through her daughter's school teacher and called the Regional Coordinator, Suester Johnson, about the program. Ms. Johnson told Tameika about the training opportunities available through Project HOPE and how to apply. Tameika knew this could be her chance to move ahead and further her education in the medical field, specifically to be a Patient Care Technician. Tameika decided to enroll in the Project HOPE program in March of 2013 because she wanted to be able to give her daughter a better life than she or her parents had. Determined to make the most of this opportunity, she let nothing stand in her way, including not having a car. Tameika walked to the initial information interview and took public transit or got a ride to all of her classes throughout the program.

Without the financial assistance from the program to cover tuition, books, tutoring, and other equipment and supplies, Tameika would not have been able to enter the Patient Care

Success Stories

Technician training program. Additionally, tutoring supports helped Tameika pass two of her last required classes, and job development assistance got her ready to compete for jobs, improving her interviewing and resume writing skills. Project HOPE staff also helped Tameika build her self-confidence--an invisible but invaluable asset for her as an employee and role model for her daughter.

Tameika completed her training in December 2014 and is now working as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) with psychiatric long-term patients at C. M. Tucker Nursing Care Center (see Figure 1). And thanks to the multiple certifications she earned as a Patient Care Technician, which include the CNA, phlebotomy, cardiac care technician, and EKG technician certificates, she is eligible for a pay raise. Tameika now has steady employment and job security, with full insurance benefits, a 401k plan, and annual and sick leave.

Figure 1: Tameika's HPOG Journey



Tameika is currently over the income limits for public assistance and is glad to be moving out of poverty and up the nursing career ladder. Tameika is now the proud role model she always hoped to be for her daughter. With determination, hard work, and the support from a program like Project HOPE, Tameika's past circumstances have become stepping stones to successful outcomes and a better life. Tameika's long term goal is to return to school to become a Registered Nurse.

Success Stories

Angela at Southland Health Care Forum, Inc.

Pathways to Health Care Occupations

Angela came to the [Southland Health Care Forum](#) (SHCF), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance in January 2012, after experiencing a number of setbacks in her life. Angela, a hard-working and devoted mother, worked for over 19 years in the cosmetology industry, most recently as an instructor. But in 2011, she lost her full-time job and for almost two years tried to find another one, working on and off part-time, but unable to make a livable wage that would support her family. Angela and her family went from living comfortably to facing the possibility of being homeless.

Unable to find work in the cosmetology field, Angela agonized over what her next step would be. When she thought about going back to school, she wasn't afraid of being in the classroom again, but was fearful that, as she had seen with many people she knew, she'd have to take out student loans and still would land a low paying job. Seeing the struggles of others who had taken this path scared her and Angela found herself falling into a state of depression.

The need to support her family, however, pushed Angela into action and she began to research medical training opportunities in her community. She contacted nearby Prairie State College, which referred her to SHCF in Chicago Heights, Illinois.

Angela immediately called SHCF to learn about the accelerated nursing program. Worried about tuition costs, she first asked how much the program cost and learned that it was free because of HPOG funding. This helped alleviate some of Angela's greatest fears about student loan debt and paved the way for her re-entry into the workforce. It also made Angela feel like SHCF cared about her success and that she wasn't just a number.

During pre-qualification testing, Angela did poorly on the pre-requisite math test, so SHCF provided tutoring. After she successfully passed all pre-qualification tests and submitted the required documentation, Angela started training to be a Certified Medical Assistant in February 2013.

Angela has said that her experience with SHCF was "intense, fun, rewarding, and an emotional roller-coaster." She made many new friends and connected with mentors that she said would

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be with her for the rest of her life. SHCF provided Angela relevant externship opportunities and a much needed confidence boost. With SHCF's support, Angela completed her training at Prairie State College in August 2013.

Figure 1: Angela's HPOG Journey



Angela's next step, as shown in Figure 1, was to find a job. She participated in SHCF's job search workshop where she learned about job search and interview techniques. Angela also learned about conducting job searches using today's technologies. SHCF helped Angela update her resume and gave her interview clothes from the Career Closet at SHCF's Matteson, Illinois office.

SHCF's job specialists talked with Angela about her interactions with others and how to act in an interview. While she had significant experience, they helped her become more approachable. Angela hadn't realized how deeply those difficult times were affecting her interactions with others. With SHCF support and guidance, Angela participated in temporary jobs and internships to gain work experience. She then landed a job interview as a Care Coordinator with Southland Care Coordination Partners (SCCP). Angela got the job and started her new career in September 2014.

Today, Angela's life has come full circle. She is happy in her position and has increased her wages from \$8.25 per hour to \$14.00 per hour plus a full benefit package. She earns enough to support her family again and sees opportunities for advancement within her company. She enjoys the stability of the job, the health benefits, and her wonderful co-workers. In the future, she hopes to become the Lead Care Coordinator, training and monitoring other Care Coordinators.

Success Stories

Kamikedell at Suffolk County Department of Labor

Suffolk County Healthcare Occupational Opportunity for Learning

Kamikedell (who goes by Kim) had been employed for nine years, until March 2013, as a Medical Office Clerk at a health center. The job was helping her raise her two daughters (one in kindergarten and one in high school), and while she enjoyed being in the health care field, the clerical work was not her calling.

A poor judgment call at work led to Kim being dismissed from her job, and while seeking counseling to address the issue that led to her termination, her daughter became ill with pneumonia. Kim was denied unemployment benefits and came to the Suffolk County American Job Center looking for a lifeline. Upset over losing her job, Kim was lost and needed help to support her family. She also needed to resume counseling to deal with the issues that led to her dismissal from work.

The One Stop counselor who met with Kim listened to her interests and career goals, and it was clear that she wanted to remain in the medical field. Kim needed additional marketable skills and did not have formalized training or certifications, which would make her a valuable asset to a new employer. The American Job Center's education and training case manager suggested that she would be a good fit for Suffolk County Healthcare Occupational Opportunity for Learning (Project SCHOOL) a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance and administered by the Suffolk County Department of Labor. She enrolled in the program in April 2013.

Kim's Project SCHOOL case manager assisted her in completing the program's application, as well as helped identify barriers that Kim may face and would need to address to successfully enroll and complete her vocational training. First, Kim filed an appeal to get unemployment insurance. Then, the Project SCHOOL case manager referred Kim to the Department of Social Services, so she could apply for public assistance. Her Project SCHOOL case manager also helped her enroll in counseling services at the Family Service League. Three weeks later, in May of 2013, Kim won her appeal and began receiving unemployment benefits. With that income,

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she no longer needed a full complement of public assistance, but she was still eligible for other support through the HPOG program, like transportation.

Since her younger daughter was in kindergarten, Kim also needed child care to cover hours when Kim was in training and Project SCHOOL helped her secure it. Her family also helped out and Kim started to feel optimistic about the future. By June of 2013, Kim was ready to attend a vocational program that would not only build on her previous work history, but give her the formal training, skills, and certification to be successful in her career.

Kim enrolled in the Medical Office Administration program at Hunter Business School. At the school, Kim could receive a certificate of completion and go on to earn a credential in her chosen field, medical coding. Over the course of the six-month training, Kim's attendance and marks were outstanding. She also attended the peer-to-peer interactive HPOG Orientation meeting in May of 2013 and the Mid-Semester meeting at the American Job Center in September of 2013, where she enthusiastically contributed to discussions. Overcoming her self-consciousness, Kim was becoming a standout student, as well as a spokesperson for the program. When the Office of Family Assistance leadership visited the program, Kim was asked and agreed to meet with them to share her experience.

Upon graduation in January of 2014 (see Figure 1), Kim earned her diploma and by June had earned her medical coding certificate. She had no problem finding employment. As the Placement Director at Hunter Business put it, "Kim was a pleasure to work with through her career development. Because of her articulate and professional manner, along with the huge transferrable skills from her training, she would need very little help in achieving her goals." Kim began working at a notable cardiology office in her hometown, one week before her graduation ceremony.

Figure 1: Kim's HPOG Journey



Later that summer, Kim had an opportunity to move closer to family in Vernon Township, New Jersey. Before moving, she got a full-time job as the Medical Records Manager with Valley Forge

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Health Center. She got the job through a temp agency that paid Kim \$12.63 an hour, but Kim proved herself and Valley Forge put her on staff, increasing her compensation to \$14.65/hour plus benefits. Her new employer also offers tuition assistance, which will help her add to her credentials in medical coding. She expects to earn \$18 to \$19 an hour plus benefits once she earns a medical coder credential. Kim has been quite a role model in her home. Her daughter Gabrielle is now in college pursuing a nursing career.

Success Stories

Mully at Temple University

Health Information Professions

Mully's story crosses many boundaries--both emotional and physical. In January 1986, Mully's family fled Cambodia, under the harsh rule of the Khmer Rouge, which sought to stifle capitalism and forced labor upon millions, leaving Mully's family with little or no food. Mully's mother, who was seven months pregnant at the time, fled Cambodia and was given asylum in the United States.

Mully was born a few months later and became a first generation American in her family. She was the first in her family to graduate from college, receiving a Bachelor of Science in Public Health in 2012. In college, however, she struggled to balance school and work, working several jobs, earning less than \$10 an hour. As the only English speaker in her family, she also spent a significant amount of time interpreting information for her family members and found it difficult to balance her old world ties with discovering her own path in the United States.

Through an online advertisement, Mully learned about Temple University's [Health Information Profession](#) (HIP) program, a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance. She attended an orientation, was accepted into Tier I¹ of the HIP program, and then enrolled in the University's Master of Science in Health Informatics program. The HIP program became a second home for Mully, as she continued working on her second degree and worked temporary, part-time jobs. Mully's Career Coach, Katrina Pinkney, was a nurturing sounding board, which helped Mully balance her work life and move forward. Mully is grateful for the program's career coaching and counseling to give her the extra confidence boost she needed. She was also grateful for the tuition and financial assistance that helped her to purchase books, since her part-time salary was not enough to pay for her schooling costs and to help support her family. The program also helped her find a full-time day job while she attended classes at night.

Mully graduated with her Master of Science in Health Informatics in May of 2014. She started a full-time job in the health care field in July 2014, working at a large health information systems

¹ Temple University's Center for Social Policy and Community Development's Health Information Professions (HIP) program offers individuals five tiers of education and training opportunities--from entry level and advanced certification programs to Associate, Baccalaureate, and Master level degrees, which prepare students for rewarding careers in Health Information Technology.

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corporation as a systems tester and builder. In her new career path, she helps clients implement electronic medical records systems, which increase efficiencies and workflows in the health care industry. Mully is also fully self-sufficient, earning a starting salary of \$53,000 a year (see Figure 1).

The future is bright for Mully. She hopes to use her degrees to promote change in the health care industry and continue her education by getting a Ph.D. She later hopes to be a college professor and teach students about the importance of and linkages between public health and information technology issues.

Figure 1: Mully's HPOG Journey



Several years ago, Mully and her mother returned to Cambodia for the first time since they fled decades before. It was a seminal moment for Mully--one that helped her understand her parents' experience and their hope to give her a better life. It instilled in her a desire to succeed, but also an understanding of the challenges new refugees face and a deep appreciation for Southeast Asian and Western cultures. For students coming to the HIP program from different cultures and countries, she advises that they "always be open-minded and willing to learn new things." "I truly believe that no barrier is bigger than the one you create for yourself. To assimilate within two different cultures is definitely challenging," she stated. Mully continues to succeed in school and at home. She has embraced both cultures and, in turn, created something unique.

Success Stories

Maria at The WorkPlace, Inc.

The Health CareRx Academy

Maria has always had a special bond with her mother. A Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) by training, Maria's mother loved to care for others and wanted to work in the medical field for her entire career. When Maria was young, her mom got sick, and it took many years to diagnose her condition. Even as a young child, Maria went with her mother to doctor after doctor until she was finally diagnosed with Lupus. Maria was eight years old at the time. They struggled to find answers and treatment and Maria's mother began to give up hope. At eight, "I looked at her and told her not to worry...when I grew up I was going to be her nurse and I would take the best care of her," said Maria.

Maria has held on to that dream of a health care career for more than 20 years. With the help of the Health CareRx Academy (Academy) at [The WorkPlace, Inc.](#), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance, Maria is making her childhood dream a reality.

When Maria came to the Academy in October of 2013, she had been out of work for about 15 months, having last worked full-time in June of 2012. She was struggling to support herself and her two children. Unable to make rent, she had moved back into her mother's home and was constantly stressed by her financial constraints. She had held "dead-end" call center jobs and sales jobs in the past, earning just above minimum wage at \$9.00 an hour (\$12,500 annually), but they never led to anything. She had been on and off of public assistance, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Jobs First Employment Services (JFES), and food stamps.

Entering the Academy program, Maria was nervous about the process and whether she would be able to manage the academic expectations. Like her mother, she too has Lupus, as well as Reynaud's Syndrome, both of which can flare up unexpectedly and be extremely painful. Her Workforce Specialist, Cynthia, became a huge and needed support. "She's been my guiding light" through this process, said Maria, she "put me at ease," and helped build Maria's confidence, as well as accommodate for her ailments.

Maria participated in The WorkPlace's foundational skills workshop in January 2014 and later took her entrance exam. Receiving scores lower than she expected, Maria took refresher

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courses, retook the exam, and passed with flying colors. In February of that year, Maria began classes to get her CNA and elected to take contextualized learning courses in health care simultaneously. Maria did well in her training, but relied heavily on the emotional supports the WorkPlace offered and ongoing encouragement from her Workforce Specialist. After completing her CNA classes and earning her CNA license in June 2014, Maria was buoyed by the experience and continued with her training. She quickly began working towards becoming a Patient Care Technician (PCT), while also starting EKG and Phlebotomy classes. In August 2014, she additionally started a Business Access class, amassing certificates in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, ethics, and communication skills programs.

By October of 2014, Maria had completed her PCT training and taken and passed her National Health Career Association exam, earning her National PCT credential. Today, she continues her Phlebotomy course and as of January 2015, is working 32 hours a week at the home health care agency where she started as a paid intern (at the time earning \$10.00 an hour) (see Figure 1). This current administrative position, which now pays \$12.00 an hour, includes patient matching, scheduling, filing, and onboarding new hires. When she completes her training, Maria's hours will increase to full-time, and she will earn \$25,000 annually, more than double her previous earnings. After Maria earns her National Phlebotomy Credential, she plans to start looking for a direct patient care job in a hospital.

Figure 1: Maria's HPOG Journey



“I am thrilled to see what the future holds,” said Maria. With her mother’s and family’s unwavering support, they are most proud that “I never let go of what I wanted to be,” she stated. The Academy, she said, “has given me the opportunity to have a career in the health care field”--one that’s been years in the making.

Success Stories

Chelsey at Turtle Mountain Community College

Project CHOICE

From 2011 to 2014, Chelsey participated in [Turtle Mountain Community College's](#) (TMCC) Project CHOICE, a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance. Project CHOICE seeks to provide health career educational opportunities to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and other low-income students while simultaneously meeting local health care workforce needs. Following her graduation from Project CHOICE, Chelsey quickly transitioned into a pharmacy technician internship, after which she immediately found employment in the pharmaceutical field.

Chelsey graduated from high school in 2011 and immediately enrolled as a student at TMCC. After initially entering the Nursing Program, she quickly realized that nursing was not her ideal career. During this time of uncertainty, a friend at TMCC suggested Chelsey investigate other health care career options available through the Project CHOICE program. Project CHOICE staff worked diligently with Chelsey to explore her professional aspirations and determine her preferred career choice. Chelsey elected to enter the Pharmacy Technician program and worked with Project CHOICE staff to design a classwork and career success plan.

Project CHOICE provided Chelsey with the financial, technical, and motivational support she needed to begin working in the pharmaceutical field. In addition to helping make school accessible and affordable, Project CHOICE gave her the resources to manage some of the most challenging expenses associated with being a full-time student--namely, tuition, transportation and testing fees--all potentially serious barriers given her lack of savings, history of only minimum wage work, and significant distance needed to travel to school. As Chelsey stated, "they paid for everything that could have given me an excuse not to go to class." Project CHOICE staff also provided Chelsey with invaluable career guidance and emotional support. Chelsey, in describing her participation in Project CHOICE and interaction with staff, said that, "my advisor, Sherri, was one of my biggest helpers and I appreciate everything she did for me. I couldn't have done it without the help of Project CHOICE."

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Figure I: Chelsey's HPOG Journey



Chelsey graduated, with honors, in May 2014 with her Associate's Degree of Applied Science as a Pharmacy Technician. After graduation, Project CHOICE staff helped her secure internships at Belcourt Drug and the [Heart of America Hospital Pharmacy](#) (Heart of America) in Rugby, North Dakota. Chelsey was well positioned to transition into the workforce given her extensive classroom experience through HPOG and multiple pharmacy-focused internships. Due to her excellent performance, Heart of America offered her a full-time Pharmacy Technician position at a starting salary of \$15/hour (see Figure I). Prior to HPOG, Chelsey earned \$8.50/hour while employed at a convenience store. Her current salary provides far stronger financial security, an opportunity for home ownership, and a renewed sense of self-confidence. While extremely proud of her accomplishments to date, Chelsey continues to act upon plans to move up the pharmacy career ladder. She took and passed her state Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) test in October 2014, bringing her one step closer to becoming a full-fledged Pharmacist.

Success Stories

Kiauna at Will County on Behalf of the Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago

Healthcare Careers--Skilled Workers, Strong Earnings

By the summer of 2013, Kiauna had been out of work for over eight months. Living at her home in Joliet, Illinois, without an income and no one to help, she was on the verge of being evicted. While attending a community event, she met some individuals from [Joliet Junior College \(JJC\)](#), a partner agency of the [Workforce Investment Board of Will County](#). It was then that Kiauna learned about the [Health Profession Opportunity Grants \(HPOG\)](#) program, funded by the Office of Family Assistance.

Kiauna was interested in the possibility of returning to school. She had attended college, but because of personal circumstances, never finished. She faced many barriers during those years and because of her low grade point average was ineligible for financial aid. Particularly excited about studying health care, she quickly scheduled an appointment with JJC to find out how she could enroll in the program. As a part of the enrollment process, Kiauna completed an internet-based Career Matchmaker interest survey via a program JJC uses called Career Cruising. The program helps applicants identify their interests and potential future career opportunities, as well as assess whether the applicants' goals and interests align with the HPOG program. Shortly after, Kiauna was accepted into the program and began along her nursing career pathway.

As shown in Figure I, Kiauna began the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training programs in January 2014. As she began the program, however, she started to have fears about her ability to complete the training and her confidence level was low. Over time, she was able to overcome these fears, which she attributes to the strong and nurturing supports she received from program staff and regular encouragement from her student cohort peers.

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Figure 1: Kiauna's HPOG Journey



The program's supportive services were also a key factor in her successfully completing CNA training. During training, Kiauna received monthly gas cards that helped ease financial strains and allowed her to use her limited funds for other necessities, such as food. The program also connected her with community housing resources so she could stabilize her housing situation. These supports helped remove financial barriers and allowed Kiauna to focus on her studies. In May 2014, Kiauna successfully completed her training program.

Today, Kiauna works as a Caregiver at Easter Seals. She quickly received additional responsibilities and has already received a wage increase from \$9.05 to \$10.05 an hour. Using her new nursing skills every day, she has started to share best practices with her co-workers and has a new confidence in herself and her career-- which she attributes to her participation in the HPOG program. In the future, Kiauna hopes to return to school and become a pediatric nurse. Because she brought up her grade point average during the HPOG training program by .62, she is now eligible for financial aid and can continue her climb up the nursing career ladder.

Success Stories

Kate at Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County

Health Careers for All

When Ekaterina (“Kate”) came to [Health Careers for All](#) (HCA), a program supported by the [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) project funded by the Office of Family Assistance, she was a single mother receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance, and working toward her Associate’s Degree (AA). Kate came to the United States from Uzbekistan at the age of 15. After finishing high school, she began to pursue work in the health care field, exploring dental and nursing occupations, but unsure of her career pathway. Kate ran into hurdles finding work, was starting a family, and decided her best course of action was to start taking classes toward an AA degree to improve her employment prospects.

When Kate enrolled in HCA at age 24, she had one class remaining to complete her AA degree at Highline College in Des Moines, Washington. Aware of her desire to work in the health care field – Kate’s most recent previous employment had been as a part-time nursing assistant (NA-C) – Kate’s HCA Navigator advised her to complete the degree, and provided funding support for her final class. When Kate graduated, she had also satisfied pre-requisite requirements to enter Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) training. Kate was interested in continuing her training and her HCA Navigator supported her through the application process; she was accepted into the LPN program at Clover Park Technical College in Lakewood, Washington in March 2012. With the support of her Navigator, she completed training and secured employment as an LPN in July 2013.

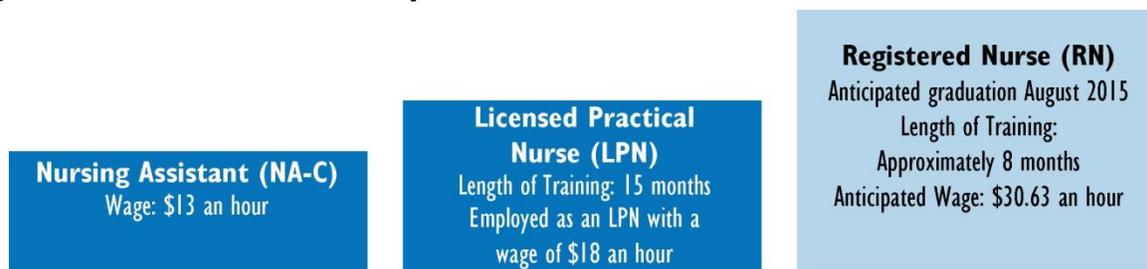
Although Kate was earning a good wage of \$18/hour, had achieved stable employment, and was able to move off of TANF assistance, she was experiencing significant challenges in her personal life. The father of Kate’s child was trying to gain custody and she was fighting the case in court. Additionally, an accident left Kate’s father – who had been a support to her in making ends meet and caring for her child – with a serious back injury and unable to work. As a result, Kate had to work extra to support herself, her child, her parents and siblings, and to ensure they did not lose their housing. Through all of this, she remained focused on her goal of becoming a Registered Nurse (RN) and was completing her applications to RN programs. HCA was able to

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help her manage these challenges and stay focused on her goals through the ongoing support of her Navigator and funding to help with emergency needs and critical household expenses.

HCA was also able to help facilitate Kate's enrollment into an RN program at North Seattle College, where HCA was supporting a group of incumbent health care workers seeking to advance their careers. With a few spots available for new LPN to RN candidates in the incumbent worker program, Kate was considered for an available spot, evaluated by North Seattle College, and accepted to begin their program in January 2015.

Figure 1: Kate's HPOG Journey¹



Today, Kate continues to work as an LPN and pursue her RN so that she can work as a full-time nurse. Due to the rigorous content and schedule of the RN program, she cannot work full-time during training and is working with her HCA Navigator to ensure she is planning for contingencies and has the resources in place to successfully support her family, meet her obligations at work, and obtain her degree. She is scheduled to finish her RN training in August 2015, upon which she can take the national RN credentialing exam and qualify for higher-paying positions and take on greater responsibility as a nurse.

¹ Average wage estimates for RNs in Washington State from Washington State Employment Security Department. 2014 Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates. Retrieved from: <https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/employmentdata/docs/occupational-reports/occupational-employment-wage-estimates-2014.pdf>.

Success Stories

Jenna at Workforce Investment Board SDA-83, Inc.

Northeast Louisiana Professional Healthcare Opportunities--Careers and Support

Jenna, a mother of two boys, never had self-confidence as a child. She lagged behind in school; her grades were poor; and she graduated at the bottom of her high school class. She was smart, but did not believe enough in herself to complete assignments. After graduation, Jenna had a child with her then-boyfriend who was abusive. Her family stepped in, and her parents, a firefighter and nurse, encouraged her to move back home. Jenna wanted the best for her baby and with her family's support, she was determined to work hard to meet his needs.

Jenna had always dreamed of becoming a nurse, but with an immediate need to support herself and her child, she pursued other jobs. She got a job at a law firm as an administrative assistant and was later promoted to a supervisory position.

Jenna met the man who is now her husband about a year later. They had a son together while her husband was working at a good job with benefits. In 2011, Jenna's youngest son contracted rotavirus and she worked closely with the nurses to care for him. The experience reminded her of her long-time desire to become a nurse and later that year, she started to pursue her goal.

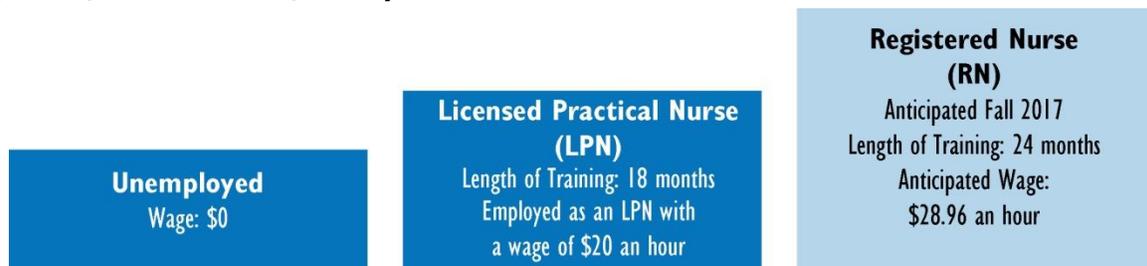
In the fall of 2011, with her husband's and family's support, Jenna was accepted into a nursing program at the Bastrop, Louisiana campus of Louisiana Delta Community College. She passed her entrance exam with flying colors. But shortly thereafter, her husband was unexpectedly laid off from work and Jenna thought she would surely have to forego her dream. Her family started to receive public assistance, including food stamps. But, it was around this time that Jenna learned about the Workforce Investment Board SDA-83, Inc.'s [Northeast Louisiana Professional Healthcare Opportunities--Careers and Support](#) (PHOCAS) program, a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) project funded by the Office of Family Assistance. PHOCAS offered a host of financially supportive services, including tuition assistance and supplies, which allowed Jenna to continue to pursue her dream with less concern over the costs of schooling when her family was without a steady income.

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At the age of 29, with a two- and a four-year-old at home, Jenna attended her first nursing class. She was ready and eager to learn. Jenna was driven and worked hard, studying into “the wee hours of the morning,” she said, as she juggled family life and school. In May 2013, she graduated with honors, a 3.8 GPA and as the salutatorian of her nursing class. At graduation, Jenna received the clinical award for most outstanding nursing student in her class. Weeks later, she passed the Louisiana State Board exam--becoming a Licensed Practical Nurse. Also in 2013, because of Jenna’s remarkable success and experience, she was invited to attend the 2013 Annual HPOG Grantee Meeting to share her story.

Jenna was offered the first job she interviewed for at Ouachita Healthcare Nursing and Rehabilitation Center and was named Employee of the Month in October of 2013 (see Figure 1). Her starting salary was \$16.50/hour plus benefits and was soon increased to \$18/hour. Recently, Jenna was promoted to Assistant Director of Nursing--receiving another increase to \$20/hour.

Figure 1: Jenna’s HPOG Journey¹



Jenna believes that without the PHOCAS program and without the help of her Student Liaison, Alice Wilkie, she would not be a nurse, and her family would still be relying on public assistance. She is convinced that “good things do still happen to good people and through hard work, determination and support, you can be anything you want to be.”

Today, Jenna is again moving along on her career pathway with PHOCAS’s support. Taking pre-requisite courses toward a Registered Nursing (RN) degree, PHOCAS is offering tuition assistance and other support, and Jenna hopes to be accepted into a RN program by the fall of 2015.

¹ Mean wage estimates for RNs in Louisiana at the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Occupational Employment Statistics, May 2014 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, Louisiana*. Retrieved from: http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_la.htm.

