

# WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY AND MIGRANT HEALTH CENTERS

Olympia, WA



USING APPRENTICESHIP TO MEET RURAL AND URBAN HEALTH CENTER STAFFING NEEDS

The Washington Association of Community and Migrant Health Centers brings together 27 federally-qualified health centers located in urban, rural, and tribal settings across the state of Washington. This nonprofit member association provides its members with a range of services to enable effective, evidence-based healthcare. The health centers are directed by local consumers and respond to the needs of their communities, serving all without regard to economic or insurance status. In 2017, Washington community health centers provided primary, preventive, and supportive health service to over 1 million patients at more than 300 clinic sites statewide.

## Work-Based Learning as an Effective Training Model

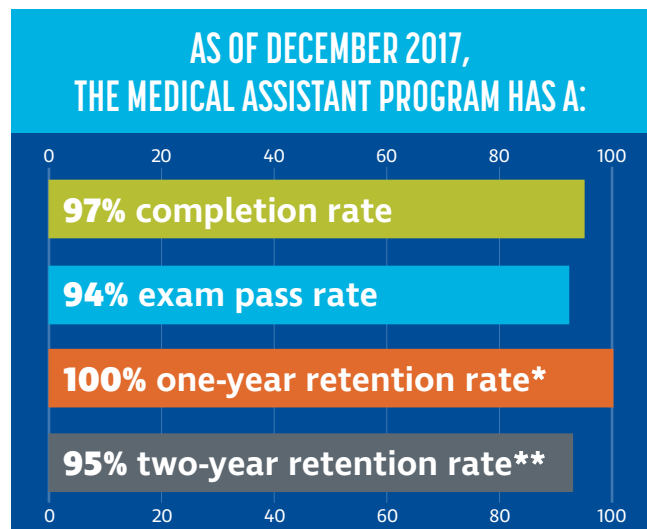
In 2014, WACMHC designed a medical assistant apprenticeship program to address the shortage of qualified assistants caused by increased state credentialing requirements and high turnover rates. The apprenticeship allows incumbent workers to obtain a medical assistant certification without leaving their jobs and provides a pipeline of new, locally-recruited workers. Over a 12-month period, apprentices receive on-the-job training while working in paid, full-time positions and are paired with an experienced medical assistant mentor. They also complete 410 unpaid hours of supplemental online coursework and attend three in-person skills days with an expert instructor. Typically, tuition is fully covered by the employer with a one- or two-year work commitment upon graduation. Since the program began, WACMHC has worked with 42 employers and supported 289 apprentices.

## Expanding Rural Access to Learning Opportunities

Rural employers face additional workforce challenges due to the lack of nearby colleges with medical assistant programs. Under WACMHC's multi-employer apprenticeship model, rural and smaller employers can enroll one or two employees in the apprenticeships program as a part of a larger cohort. WACMHC intentionally included web-based curriculum to meet the needs of rural students and employers. To address transportation barriers, the three in-person clinical lab days are hosted in central locations.

## Training to Support Intergrated Care Delivery

In 2016, WACMHC launched a dental assistant apprenticeship, responding to expressed employer need for more assistants. As medical and dental services become more integrated, many health centers find themselves needing to hire an entirely new dental workforce. In addition, among existing dental assistants in the state's community health centers, annual turnover is more than 15%. The dental assistant apprenticeship model continues to be refined, but currently the one-year program requires 2000 hours of paid on-the-job training with an experienced dental assistant coach plus 420 hours of unpaid online coursework and seven in-person clinical lab days with an expert instructor.



\*98% with original employer

\*\*79% with original employer

## BUSINESS IMPACT

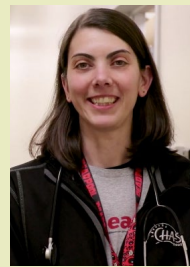
The average hourly wage increase for graduates of the medical assistant apprenticeship from start of program to 12 months after completion was \$2.76, or a 21% average increase. The wage increase for those with less clinical experience when they started the program was higher.

Employee wage increases, based on the role and years of experience at the start of the apprenticeship:

- > Administrative: **35%**
- > Certified nursing assistants: **29%**
- > Non-certified medical assistants: **14%**
- > 0-3 years of clinical experience: **37%**
- > 4-9 years of clinical experience: **23%**
- > 10+ years of clinical experience: **16%**



**WACMHC**  
Washington Association of  
Community & Migrant Health Centers



### Frontline Success Story

Kassidy Dezellem began working for CHAS Health in the referral department. She had been there for two years when CHAS announced the new medical assistant apprenticeship program. "I knew that it was going to be a great way for me to turn my job into a career," Kassidy said. It was a bit intimidating to be part of the first cohort in a new program. But within just a few months, she says, those fears subsided. "The investment that I was making in CHAS Health as a student was equally invested in me." Now six months into working as a certified medical assistant, Kassidy says, "I am so thankful that I was given the chance to take part in the apprenticeship program."

## NOTE FROM THE CEO



"The Medical and Dentist Apprenticeships are filling a need for our health centers to train people of the same community and cultural background to become credentialed healthcare providers. Our clinics experience a high turnover of medical and dental

assistants, and with on-the-job training available to frontline staff, we are beginning to see turnover decrease. We are thrilled by the success and rapid growth of the program, and are eagerly awaiting the development of apprenticeships in new professions."

- Bob Marsalli, CEO

**Number of Employees:**  
14,400 across all 27 member health centers

**Number of Frontline Workers:**  
5,871 across all 27 member health centers



### The Frontline Healthcare Worker Champion Peer Recognition Program:

CareerSTAT's Frontline Healthcare Worker Champion program recognizes healthcare organizations investing in the skills and career of their frontline workers. Organizations are designated as Champions and Emerging Champions. Champions meet all of CareerSTAT's recognition criteria, including making skill and career development accessible, offering programs at a significant scale, measuring program business impact, and building sustainable programs, while Emerging Champions are in earlier stages of investment and working with CareerSTAT leaderships to strengthen their programs. Learn more at [www.NationalFund.org/CareerSTAT](http://www.NationalFund.org/CareerSTAT).