



REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT BOARD  
OF HAMPDEN COUNTY, INC.

# **Bank of America Foundation**

**Bank of America**



**Transitions to Practice Program (T2P)**

**Final Report**

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

For information on the **Bank of America Foundation Report** or the **Healthcare Careers Transitions to Practice Program (T<sub>2</sub>P)**, please contact Melissa Scibelli at 413-755-1360 or [mscibelli@rebhc.org](mailto:mscibelli@rebhc.org).

For information on the Healthcare Workforce Partnership of Western Mass, please visit their web site at <http://westernmasshealthcareers.org/>

For information on the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Inc. please visit <http://www.rebhc.org/>



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*Your Connection to Workforce Development*

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**Final Report**

**September 2014**





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*Your Connection to Workforce Development*

## **Bank of America Foundation**

### **Final Report**

#### **Overview**

The Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Inc. (REB), located in Springfield, Massachusetts, plans, coordinates and oversees the growth and effective use of public and private investment in workforce development initiatives for quality jobs. The Board provides leadership in creating strategic alliances with business, government, education and community organizations to provide access to education, training, and employment opportunities for all workers, especially for low income adults and youth, disadvantaged minorities and newcomers, dislocated workers, incumbent workers, and their families.

The Affordable Care Act is changing the way the healthcare industry does business; better care, lower costs, improved health and occupations are evolving and will continue to do so. Customer service, math, science, reading and technology skills are critical and employers need reliable team players who demonstrate commitment to people and health.

The healthcare industry in Western Massachusetts offers residents an opportunity to pursue a family-sustaining career in areas such as medical coding, nursing and surgical technology. However, for many in our community, these jobs remain out of reach because of the difficulty they have transitioning from skills development to technical training/education to employment. While the region offers numerous health-related education and training programs, employers maintain that many new graduates lack the necessary clinical skills and understanding of the job environment. Consequently, recruitment and retention is both costly and time consuming for employers. Furthermore, job seekers are disappointed, burdened with debt from the cost of their education and remain unable to adequately support their families. Both employers and educators agree that the rapidly changing healthcare industry demands new on-the-job training strategies to successfully transition graduates into the workplace.

In response to this workforce challenge, the Healthcare Workforce Partnership of Western Mass, an initiative of The Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Inc. developed ***The Transitions to Practice Program (T<sub>2</sub>P)***. The partnership's mission is to ensure the region has a diverse, skilled workforce to deliver quality patient care. The T<sub>2</sub>P advanced this mission by developing and implementing a formal on-the-job training (OJT) program with healthcare employers with job opportunities for recent graduates of local training programs. The program developed OJTs in the areas of nursing, medical assisting, pharmacy technician, certified nursing assistants, medical office and administration, community health workers, health information technology and medical billing/coding.

**On-The-Job Training (OJT) is an Effective Job Creation Strategy.**

The on-the-job training model is an “earn while you learn” strategy that provides training by an employer to a paid trainee/employee who is engaged in productive work that provides knowledge or skills essential to the full and adequate performance of the job.

OJT is a time-tested strategy for bridging the skill gap between classroom learning and work-based learning. The T<sub>2</sub>P is modeled after the US Department of Labor’s Workforce Investment Act OJT program. The training provides:

- Knowledge or skills essential to the full and adequate performance of the job.
- A training plan with a duration that is appropriate to the occupation for which the participant is being trained, taking into account the content of the training and the prior work experience of the participant.
- Reimbursement to the employer of up to 50% of the wage rate of the participant for the costs of providing the training and related supervision.

**Measuring the Benefits and Return on Investment is an Essential Factor for Employer Buy-in.**

**Benefits of On-the-Job Training**

- Increased return on investment
- Increased retention rates
- Increased employee morale
- Better quality applicants
- Increased productivity



**Return on Investment**

- ✓ Total investment = \$284,765 (Bank of America \$150,000 + REBHC \$134,765)
- ✓ Job creation = \$890,189 in annual salary
- ✓ Average hourly wage = \$15.54/hour
- ✓ 100% employer satisfaction with the program
- ✓ 95% retention rate

**T<sub>2</sub>P Outcomes**

- 27 full time employment positions
- All positions provided full benefits
- All participants either unemployed or underemployed prior to OJT program entry

<b>Year</b>	<b>OJT Goal</b>	<b>OJT Outcomes</b>
Year 1 (March 2012-Feb 2013)	8	7
Year 2 (March 2013 – Feb 2014)	9	11
Year 3 (March 20 14 – Feb 2015)	9	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>

**Partnerships are an essential component of On-the-Job Training (OJT) Programs. By drawing on the perspectives and resources of multiple employers, educational institutions, and economic development entities, a project can more effectively meet the needs of the industry sector, enhancing opportunities for current and future workers.**

**Occupations Supported and Employer Partners**

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Employer</i>
Registered Nurse	Holyoke Health Center Charlene Manor Jewish Geriatric Services
Medical Assistant	Baystate Medical Practices
Pharmacy Technician	Baystate Medical Center
Certified Nursing Asst.	Jewish Geriatric Services Charlene Manor
Medical Office Administration/Records	Caring Health Center Riverbend Medical Practice Jewish Geriatric Services
Community Health Worker	Commonwealth Care Alliance
Health Information Technology Analyst	Accountable Care Associates
Medical Billing/Coding	Caring Health Center

**T<sub>2</sub>P Highlights -Successful Partnerships**

The following selected On-the -Job Training (OJT) project deliverables highlight successful approaches and processes that were followed in implementing the project plan. Successful partnership models with 4 educators, 9 employers and 27 participants.

Baystate Medical Practices in Greenfield, MA hired Four (4) Medical Assistant graduates from Springfield Technical Community College’s Medical Assistant Certification program through its collaboration with Greenfield Community College Practices. Baystate Medical Practices trained the graduates in women’s health, family medicine, and adult medicine and provided on-site mentoring to the new employees that accelerated their successful assimilation into the workplace.

Springfield Technical Community College developed a new Community Health Worker certificate program working in conjunction with FutureWorks Career Center and Commonwealth Care Alliance. Students enrolled in the program completed their placement at Commonwealth Care Alliance to gain some exposure to the field. Commonwealth Care Alliance hired eight (8) of the graduates of the program for a three (3) month OJT. The partnership and collaboration allowed for these eight (8) unemployed individuals to complete this certification program and gain full-time benefited employment as Community Health Workers. It also provided Commonwealth care Alliance an opportunity to hire and train new workers in a new occupation.

## Marketing and Communication

**The Healthcare Workforce Partnership of Western Massachusetts focuses on strengthening industry-education partnerships, enhancing awareness and increasing student enrollment in healthcare occupations.**

The Healthcare Workforce Partnership of Western Massachusetts developed a website to provide healthcare specific information and to enhance communication about opportunities and healthcare careers [WesterMassHealthCareers.org](http://WesterMassHealthCareers.org). Bank of America Foundation program and event highlights can be found under the News & Events section.

On March 26, 2012 the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Inc. held a kick-off event to announce a \$150,000 grant from Bank of America Foundation that would be directed towards the Healthcare Workforce Partnership of Western Ma. The event took place at the Holyoke Health Center.



From left to right: Jay Breines, Executive Director, Holyoke Health Center, Bob Gallery, Bank of America Massachusetts Market President, US Congressman Richard E. Neal, Kelly Aiken, Director, Healthcare Workforce Partnership of Western Mass, Bill Ward, President & CEO, Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, State Senator Michael Knapik State Representative, Michael F. Kane, Holyoke.

## Leveraging Resources

The Bank of America Foundation funding provided the REB the opportunity to utilize the On-the-Job Training (OJT) program to work with new employers to build and sustain new partnerships. This opportunity has been so successful in Hampden County and created a strong foundation that allowed the partnership to leverage additional resources to support this work. In collaboration with the Connecticut Workforce Partners, we secured a USDOL/ETA H-1B Technical Skills Training Grant to support healthcare career jobs across borders. The REB is widely recognized throughout Massachusetts for our work in this field. The success of this initiative has demonstrated to

employers and educators that the on-the-job training job creation model is a cost effective and business friendly approach to successfully transitioning graduates into the rapidly changing healthcare industry workplace.

## Final Thoughts

1. The healthcare industry is changing rapidly and the new jobs that are being created make the OJT model an especially valuable hiring resource for employers. Employer interest in the T<sub>2</sub>P program continues to grow as the Western Massachusetts economy rebounds and local hiring increases.
2. Partnership development and employer engagement are critical to ensuring OJT training opportunities are identified and appropriate applicants are matched with required job requirements.
3. Small to medium size employers have limited resources to devote to the orientation and training required to successfully transition new employees to practice. As a result of the successful implementation of the OJT training program, some employers are revisiting their approach to new employee training and orientation.
4. 95 % of the participants succeeded in their OJT training experience and transitioned to permanent full time employment positions in the healthcare industry. Employers and participants expressed satisfaction with the program, particularly with the creation of the OJT training plan that set forth clear expectations for both the new employee and employer.
5. Employers are utilizing the program to hire new talent as well as address issues of turnover due to lack of comprehensive training. Investing resources in a new graduate without the proper training, results in high turnover rates and associated costs.
6. The successful implementation of an On-the-Job Training (OJT) program that is aligned with rapid industry change and results in sustainable outcomes involves the following:
  - Coordination and commitment
  - Attention to detail
  - Willingness to take strategic risks
  - Aggressive decision making
  - On-going and open communication
  - Developing a shared belief among the partners that the work will add value to each entity
  - Analyzing progress and making adjustments when necessary

**Building a trust relationship between the employer partners, training institutions, economic development entities, operational partners and other interested stakeholders is critical to implementing a sustainable model that can drive innovation and create growth and prosperity.**

## Testimonials

### What Employer's Are Saying ...

“The Hamden County Regional Employment Board’s On-the-Job-Training Program has given Baystate Health an effective tool to strategically link job seekers with critical skills gaps. This “win – win” program has allowed job seekers to gain needed career experience and Baystate Health to develop a competent workforce where traditional training programs would not have worked. Retention and performance of the individuals completing the training program is extremely high. We could not be more pleased with the outcomes for these individuals.”

Jason Pacheco, Sr. Workforce Planning Consultant, Baystate Health

As the Human Resource Manager at Charlene Manor ECF, I have been grateful for the opportunity that OJT has provided us. Under ordinary circumstances we are able to train new C.N.A.’s for two to three weeks, and new Nurses for six to eight weeks. With OJT we have been able to extend orientation up to six months. This has really allowed staff to grow in their new field and become confident in their abilities prior to completing an assignment on their own. OJT has provided us with the ability to extend our training time for new staff and assure that they are prepared to step out on their own.

Christie Freyenhagen HR Manager, Charlene Manor

## Participant Profile

<b>Name:</b> Inna Kazalis	
<b>Occupation:</b> Community Health Worker	
<b>Employer:</b> Commonwealth Care Alliance, Springfield	
<b>Hire Date:</b> August 19, 2013	
<b>Salary:</b> \$31,200 full time, benefited position	
<b>Education:</b> Springfield Technical Community College Community Health Worker Certificate Program (2013), Associates Degree (1998)	
<b>Background:</b> Russian-speaking resident of Springfield who was considered long-term unemployed (>27 weeks) prior to gaining employment. Customer of FutureWorks Career Center.	
<b>On-the-Job Training Program Overview:</b> The OJT program enabled Inna to transition from STCC's 10 week certificate program to employment at Commonwealth Care Alliance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Length of OJT: 3 months/480 hours</li> <li>• Wage investment: \$3,600 (50% of salary)</li> <li>• Support services: Payment of some school costs</li> <li>• Work Structure: Member of interdisciplinary team</li> <li>• Skills and competencies: Community building, outreach methods and strategies, cultural competency, advocacy, health education, health education for behavioral change and individual assessment and independent work</li> </ul>	
<b>Participant Value:</b> In Inna's words, the OJT program stands for: O--outstanding J---joyful T---terrific  She describes it as helping her gain access to a once in a life time experience, "when you have a chance to learn and practice at the same time – 'hands on'. You have great support and amazing mentors who stay with you to the end of your journey. OJT opens doors for you to explore and absorb the knowledge for the job."	
<b>Employer Value:</b> Inna's supervisor describes her as "a wonderful addition to CCA along with our interdisciplinary team. As a community health worker she conducts important outreach for our medical personnel and helps high risk populations meet optimal health and social stability. She has been a great addition to our team and has fostered relationships with some of our Russian speaking members."	



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**1441 Main Street, Springfield, MA • (P) 413-787-1547 • (F) 413-755-1364**

**[www.rebhc.org](http://www.rebhc.org)**