

# working for health

The Newsletter for *Jobs to Careers: Promoting Work-Based Learning for Quality Care*

Fall 2009

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## Welcome from the National Program Office

**H**ello to all of our *Jobs to Careers* colleagues.

We continue to hear exciting updates from the 17 *Jobs to Careers* projects across the nation. It is always invigorating to hear about their progress, how they are embedding the elements of work-based learning into new curricula, and most important, the impact the initiative is having on the lives of frontline workers. As expected, those workers tell us they feel more valued, competent, and comfortable with their health care teams because of their newfound knowledge and skills. What is surprising is the wealth of positive changes in the attitudes and actions of their supervisors. Some supervisors report that their teams now function better, which has improved both productivity and the quality of care. As Sally Gillam, Chief Nursing Officer at South Austin Hospital in Texas, says, "When they succeed, we succeed."

Many *Jobs to Careers* partners indicate that participating frontline workers are more motivated and more passionate about their work. Just as inspiring is that these outcomes for frontline workers have stimulated supervisors to further their own learning by going back to school.

This unanticipated result testifies to the essential involvement of supervisors in the workplace. This issue of *Working for Health* highlights several strategies for engaging and equipping supervisors as partners. We believe that all employers can take away ideas to implement in their organizations so that their supervisors will be engaged and motivated to invest in frontline workers.



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# Identifying the Role of Supervisors Is Critical

By Monique Sheen

**E**mployer partners in the *Jobs to Careers* initiative learned early on that they must engage supervisors in planning and implementing a work-based learning approach to professional development for frontline workers. Supervisors are expected to foster learning among frontline workers. They also make it possible for those workers to devote the time necessary during work hours to meet their learning objectives. Clearly, supervisor “buy-in” and involvement are critical to the success of work-based learning.

As we all know, patient care comes first, and there may be occasions when the demands for service on the floor take priority over any professional development activities. And most often, as *Jobs to Careers* participants testify, it is the responsibility of supervisors to make decisions about those priorities. They must manage unexpected challenges that arise throughout the workday, while finding the time to collaborate with employees, educational partners, mentors, and coaches to minimize disruption in work-based learning activities.

In *Jobs to Careers*, supervisors are not only responsible for the traditional oversight of the work and performance of employees; they also play an integral role in helping employees gain new skills. *Jobs to Careers* projects are committed to maximizing human capital within their employee ranks, and they understand that “growing your own” skilled workforce requires changing many established systems. In the case of supervisors, this may require blending or expanding the supervisory role to include job coaching, mentoring, teaching, and advising.

By nature, supervisors’ jobs are complicated, demanding, and require a range of skills. To ensure that supervisors are fully prepared to assume new roles in *Jobs to Careers*, many sites have worked directly with educational partners to provide training based on the needs of their projects.

In some instances, the educational partners have developed or modified a curriculum to teach supervisors how to be preceptors and job coaches. For example, the Workforce Solutions project in Austin, Texas, requires supervisors and coaches to complete a formal, hospital-based preceptor training course. In addition, to participate in *Jobs to Careers*, supervisors must also undertake coach training and have experience functioning as a preceptor for new employees and students.

Based upon data collected by the *Jobs to Careers* evaluators at the University of North Carolina, Institute on Aging, principal roles played by supervisors in the initiative fall into three main categories:

- A role that is largely instrumental: For success, supervisors provide logistical support, such as scheduling, to enable participants to engage in project activities.
- A preceptor role: Supervisors instruct participants, in a classroom or work setting, in the practical knowledge and skills they need

## Diverse Roles

Supervisors in any organization typically balance a number of roles. They are responsible for the work of employees reporting to them, and for ensuring that the work is accomplished in a way that meets the organization’s goals. As a link between frontline workers and management, they communicate with both. Supervisors may also orient newly hired workers as well as train them, formally or informally. They may determine employee rewards and incentives, such as raises or bonuses, and enforce discipline.

For many *Jobs to Careers* sites, supervisors add project responsibilities, such as instructing, mentoring, or coaching, to these existing duties. This is not always the case, however; other employees often support work-based learning—whether in addition to supervisors or instead of them. They may be experienced or “lead workers” who are peers of frontline workers, especially in small organizations where direct care workers have no formal supervision. In other cases, staff with specific expertise, such as unit clerks or medical assistants, help workers who are training to move into these or other occupations.

to perform successfully in their jobs and assess participant competencies.

- A mentor/coach role: Supervisors provide guidance and support as participants apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired in everyday work situations.

There is much overlap among these roles; it is important that supervisors understand the differences in the roles they play, and how those differences can affect the way frontline workers provide care to patients.

*Monique Sheen is a project manager at Jobs for the Future.*

## Assessing Challenges to Expanding the Roles of Supervisors

Inevitably, challenges arise when blending or expanding the role of supervisors in a work-based learning project. To identify these challenges, *Jobs to Careers* sites often work closely with supervisors during the planning stages of projects. This close relationship helps ensure that the learning will be based on a clear representation of what actually happens on the floor and also identifies opportunities for supervisors to structure work-based learning activities into the workday. With the help of our sites and the National Program Office, the *Jobs to Careers* evaluation team has developed an assessment tool to help guide thinking when defining the role of supervisors in a work-based learning project.

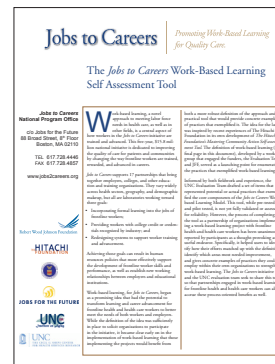
Based on the supervisors' roles identified in a *Jobs to Careers* project, this assessment tool (which is part of a comprehensive tool developed by the *Jobs to Careers* evaluators) helps employers identify the roles of supervisors. Among other things, the tool makes it possible to determine in advance whether or not supervisors' current responsibilities will allow them to assume additional roles to participate in and support work-based learning activities. For instance, supervisors who are responsible for a large number of employees may not be able to take on intensive roles in work-based learning, such as mentoring or coaching frontline workers. They may be better suited to an "instrumental" role,

providing logistical support such as scheduling trainings or releasing workers for an educational activity.

Depending on the answers to the questions in this tool, project staff can determine the best match between supervisors and the roles required for their work-based learning project. The tool helps clarify the kinds of supports workers need to learn on the job, as well as supports, such as training in coaching, that make it feasible for supervisors to facilitate workers' learning.

*For more detailed information, see The Work-Based Learning Self Assessment Tool, by Jennifer Craft-Morgan and Robert Konrad. Available at [www.jobs2careers.org/publications.php](http://www.jobs2careers.org/publications.php).*

Professional Developers can use a *Jobs to Careers* assessment tool when defining the role of supervisors in a work-based learning project.



# Views from the Field

## Partnering with a Community College to Customize Supervisory and Job Coach Training

By Pam Stone and Kirk White

In partnership with Workforce Solutions (the Austin, Texas, Workforce Investment Board) and two major health care systems (St. David's Healthcare and Seton Family of Hospitals), Austin Community College is training hospital clinical managers, clinical educators, and nursing staff to be job coaches for the *Jobs to Careers* project. These coaches work directly with project participants at their work sites. The participants, entry-level patient care aides, function in similar roles as defined by the clinical technician program offered by Austin Community College's Continuing Education Department.

The project gets high marks from not only frontline workers but also supervisors, who evaluate and manage the workers, and job coaches, who, like supervisors, provide them with guidance and support. "We have a culture that recognizes our aides," says Sally Gillam, Chief Nursing Officer at St. David's South Austin Hospital. And, says Kacey Harris, a program participant at the hospital, "I can contribute more."

The clinical manager has supervisory responsibility for the members of patient care teams. As supervisors, they oversee staffing, scheduling, and the evaluation of team members, among many other duties. Clinical educators arrange clinical orientations and preceptorships, provide ongoing educational training, and keep track of employee orientation, annual education, and skills competencies. In addition, a project coordinator at each hospital system works with the clinical managers, clinical educators, and project participants.

At the beginning of *Jobs to Careers*, the clinical managers and nursing staff collaborated with the coordinator to identify project participants. Since then, they have participated in developing an application process to use as an ongoing tool.

In some instances, the clinical manager, the clinical educator, or both have also participated directly as job coaches.

Austin Community College provides a six-hour job coach training for supervisors. "The Role of the Clinical Coach" covers adult learning theory, situational leadership, learning styles inventories, critical thinking, and mentoring techniques. For *Jobs to Careers*, the college has adapted the course to include an overview of the grant-supported project and the challenges of being a job coach while in a supervisory position. The course includes time, generally over lunch, for supervisors from each hospital to meet as a group to discuss topics specific to their workplaces, such as application processes, scheduling plans, and job coach/frontline participant pairings.

The coach training complements prior preceptor training provided by the two hospital systems. However, some individuals come to the coaching role without any previous preceptor training. In such cases, the job coach training course can be adapted to include the critical content a coach needs.

When training for the supervisor is complete and participants have been identified and paired with coaches, all parties meet to create Individual Development Plans. An IDP is a dynamic, iterative document that assists a frontline worker and her or his coach in moving forward. The plan addresses each participant's long-term career and educational goals, identifies the steps to achieving those goals, and notes barriers that may prevent progress. The value of the coaching role becomes clear as the job coach meets with the participant to discuss the IDP. The supervisor/job coach better understands the participant and vice versa. The challenges faced when working full time, attending school, managing a family, and tending to other outside commitments can be overwhelming for anyone but especially so for frontline workers.

In addition to identifying barriers to advancement, the job coach and participant work together to explore solutions. As this exploration begins, increasingly personal relationships form

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The *Jobs to Careers* project in Austin, Texas, gets high marks from frontline workers, job coaches, and supervisors.

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between the job coach and participant; now is when true coaching begins. The job coach works with the participant by offering support and encouragement that translate into genuine interest in the future of each frontline worker. As in athletic competitions, a job coach cannot do the participant's work but can assist with training and helping participants work toward their future by providing both encouragement and guidance.

How does the supervisor/job coach affect employee retention? In Austin, we are just beginning to answer that question. As in all work settings, there is natural attrition due to uncontrollable factors, such as family relocations, illnesses, and outside commitments. As the *Jobs to Careers* project takes shape, it is already clear that providing a supervisor/job coach will go a long way in helping us retain frontline workers and improve patient care. Frontline workers gain

valuable information about resources via the job coaches, the use of a Web-based communication site, referrals to the college's student support services, and access to resources found in each health care system.

In the future, the Austin partners hope that frontline workers who complete the project will be interested in becoming job coaches and assisting the next round of participants as they prepare to advance in their health care careers. This "grow your own" job coach approach is important to the sustainability of the project.

*Pam Stone, RN, BSN, is the Jobs to Careers project coordinator at Austin Community College's Continuing Education Department. Kirk White, RN, MSN, is interim executive dean of continuing education at the college and the Jobs to Careers project director.*

## The Coach Training Experience at Virginia Mason Medical Center

By Erin Reid

**A**t Virginia Mason Medical Center in Seattle, Washington, we are training medical assistants along a career path. Our coach training is designed to serve two purposes for our *Jobs to Careers* project. First, it creates "faculty extenders"—hospital staff who are credentialed to serve as college faculty—who can train medical assistants to be clinic coaches. Perhaps even more important, the coach role serves as a professional development opportunity for medical assistants, and the adoption of clinic coaches has begun throughout the organization.

### Training Structure

Virginia Mason Medical Center adapted the coach curriculum from our existing nurse preceptor class. It includes topics in generational and cultural diversity, feedback and evaluation, assessing and accommodating learning styles, critical thinking for medical assistants, communication, and conflict resolution.

The training begins with about eight hours of coursework, with sessions four times a year.

It is open to medical assistants, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses who work in ambulatory settings (clinics), and clinic service representatives who supervise. To encourage group learning, the classes are small.

While the original training was specific to *Jobs to Careers* and included information on assessing academic progress, the hospital has separated that portion of the training into a different class. Thus, the first coach training class is widely relevant, whether or not the students are involved in *Jobs to Careers*. This also creates a "stable" of employees who, with four additional hours of training that can be delivered "just in time," are prepared to train participants in future career ladder programs.

In addition to the initial eight-hour training, monthly Coach Collaboratives (roundtable

A job coach cannot do the participant work but can and help them by providing both encouragement and guidance.

### Rewarding Supervisors

It's a lot to ask supervisors to go above and beyond their current duties. Many *Jobs to Careers* projects provide incentives to reward participation. For example, the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center in New York City, and other projects have granted one-time bonuses to supervisors and instituted an award program.

discussions) focus on topics of interest to coaches. In the first year, roundtable discussions focused on working with employee learners in *Jobs to Careers*. The roundtables will continue; Virginia Mason has added several specific topics, such as “Five Microskills for One on One Teaching” and “Feedback: Purposes, Goals, Methods, and Types.”

After completing a certain number of Coach Collaboratives, coaches become certified, which makes them eligible for additional recognition. The overall goal is to encourage continuing education among frontline staff, including those at the supervisory level, with a focus on teamwork and feedback.

For *Jobs to Careers* coaches, the hospital offers additional incentives that recognize their long-term commitment to employee learners. The incentives, which also encourage continuing education, include an annual education benefit that is not offered to other employees.

### Feedback and the Future

Virginia Mason has trained 10 coaches thus far. Initially, employees were apprehensive about participating, seeing the coach role as just

one more thing to do. But after attending the training, the response has been overwhelming, from both the coaches and their supervisors. Coaches are excited about mentoring staff, being identified as knowledge experts, and learning new skills outside their current position. Managers who were originally reluctant to send their staff to the training now ask for additional sessions and inquire about clinic-specific sessions. We are excited about the early success and look forward to refining our curriculum as each class occurs.

As part of our dedication to creating career ladders for frontline staff, and in response to feedback received from medical assistants regarding career development opportunities, Virginia Mason is developing a second-tier medical assistant role. Among the requirements being explored for achieving the second-tier position will be obtaining a certified coach designation. In addition, the hospital has created an adaptable curriculum for other departments, such as Central Sterile Pharmacy, that want to create career ladders or clinical ladders.

*Erin Reid is project manager, clinical education, at Virginia Mason Medical Center.*

## Jobs to Careers Out and About

### National Association of Workforce Boards

March 7-10, 2009, Washington, DC

**Topic:** Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining a Work-Based Learning Initiative in Healthcare

**Presenter:** Maria Flynn (director, *Jobs to Careers* National Program Office), Sally Foster (human resources director, Seton Family of Hospitals), and Ana Mejia-Dietche (director, Health Industry Steering Committee at Workforce Solutions)

### League of Innovations 2009

March 15-18, 2009, Reno, NV

**Topic:** Advancing Frontline Workers Through Community College and Employer Partnerships

**Presenters:** Maria Flynn (director, *Jobs to Careers* National Program Office) and Fred Rocco (dean, Behavioral and Social Sciences, Bristol Community College)

### District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund

May 11, 2009, Philadelphia, PA

**Topic:** Bridging *Jobs to Careers*—A Work-based Learning Curriculum

**Presenters:** Cheryl Feldman (director, District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund), Randall Wilson (senior project manager, *Jobs to Careers* National Program Office), and Kenneth Gill (founding chair and professor in the Department of Psychiatric Rehabilitation and Behavioral Health Care at UMDNJ, School of Health Related Professions)

# On the *Jobs to Careers* Web Site

## Resources on the Supervisor Role in *Jobs to Careers* Projects

### Webinar Materials

[http://www.jobs2careers.org/roundtables\\_webinars.php](http://www.jobs2careers.org/roundtables_webinars.php)

Resources on the *Jobs to Careers* Web site include: “Training Supervisors: The Coach as Key to Success,” a presentation by Kirk White and Pam Stone; “Coaching/ Mentoring: A Partnership to Improve Retention,” a presentation by Barbara Levy, Joy Burke, and Johanna Romero de Slavy; and “Training Supervisors as Preceptors: The Supervisor+ Model,” a presentation by Neil Silverston and Mary Culhane.

### *Jobs to Careers* Bulletin Board (access limited to *Jobs to Careers* partners)

<http://forum.jobs2careers.org/>

Resources provided by *Jobs to Careers* sites include “Mentor Preceptor Training Used in Mississippi site.”

## New Tools from *Jobs to Careers*

[http://www.jobs2careers.org/wb\\_learning\\_resources\\_tools.php](http://www.jobs2careers.org/wb_learning_resources_tools.php)

### *The Work-Based Learning Worksheet*

*The Work-Based Learning Worksheet* identifies the job competencies and tasks that are necessary for frontline workers to master in order for educators and employers to implement work-based learning.

### *The Work-Based Learning Self Assessment Tool*

This tool is designed to help education and employer partners determine how well they have implemented work-based learning. The tool also suggests steps for strengthening current practices.

### *The Sustainability Tool*

This set of worksheets provides educators and employers with sound methods and practices that they can use to sustain their commitment to career advancement for frontline workers. The tool also challenges administrators to think long term about the organizational and budgetary implications of continued workforce development for frontline workers.

### *The Milestone Tool: Planning a Work-Based Learning Project*

Careful planning is critical to the success of any project; partners can use this tool to guide their efforts to develop effective work-based learning methodologies. By mapping out key elements and activities, partners create a shared vision for work-based learning and acknowledge the supports needed for successful implementation.

## *Jobs to Careers* Peer Learning Meeting

The next *Jobs to Careers* Peer Learning Convening will take place in Washington, DC, on March 3-4, 2010. Watch for details.

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To subscribe to *Working for Health*, email Monique Sheen, editor, at [msheen@jff.org](mailto:msheen@jff.org).

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