

# Jobs to Careers

*Promoting Work-Based Learning  
for Quality Care.*

*Jobs to Careers* focuses on three key elements: implementing work-based learning; creating systems change; and promoting career advancement for frontline health care workers.

## Learning and Working: *Year One of the Jobs to Careers Initiative*

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Jobs to Careers: Promoting Work-Based Learning for Quality Care* seeks to advance and reward the skill and career development of low-wage incumbent workers providing care and services on the front lines of our health and health care systems. The project, a \$15.8 million national initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, in collaboration with the Hitachi Foundation and the U.S. Department of Labor, focuses on three key elements: implementing work-based learning; creating system change; and promoting career advancement for frontline health and health care workers.

*Jobs to Careers* supports partnerships of employers, educational institutions, and other organizations working to expand and redesign systems to create lasting improvements in the way that institutions train and advance their frontline workers and to test new models of education and training that incorporate work-based learning. During the first year of the initiative, work-based learning received the greatest emphasis. The work-based learning methods used in *Jobs to Careers* focus on pairing education with clear career pathways that offer further career development opportunities for workers.

The *Jobs to Careers* initiative has four key components:

- Work-based learning is a key component of an overall skill building strategy that may also include an array of other learning approaches, such as more traditional off-site, on-site, technology-enabled, or experience-based learning.
- Career paths are developed and are readily available to frontline workers.
- Both the employer and education partners develop and implement changes that recognize the needs of working adults and that improve access to and success in skill building efforts by frontline workers.
- Frontline workers are recognized and rewarded as they build skills and expand knowledge necessary for their current job responsibilities or for advancing to new positions.

Work-based learning in the *Jobs to Careers* model focuses on building the essential skills and knowledge to effectively conduct current job responsibilities of the frontline worker and/or to advance in job responsibilities and career steps. The model aspires to fully engage four essential elements:

- The program is learner-centered. Learning is co-created by the individual learner and the person responsible for facilitating that learning.



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Over the next three years, *Jobs to Careers* will increasingly explore system change and career advancement, as well as gain deeper experience with the implementation and practice of work-based learning for frontline health care workers.

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- Development of the curriculum is shared between the educational institution and the employer.
- The facilitation of the learning is shared between the educational institution and the employer.
- The learning process is embedded in the work process.

A variety of active learning strategies—such as journal writing, learning portfolios, coaching/mentoring, and learning teams built around critical incidents or work projects—further supports the aims of work-based learning. Educational institutions work with employers to award credits for prior learning or to bundle competencies that, when mastered, articulate for college credit or an industry-recognized credential.

In the initiative's first year, the *Jobs to Careers* grantee partnerships learned a great deal about the factors that facilitate work-based learning. First of all, a collaborative effort between education providers and employers has facilitated the development of competencies used in work-based learning. Moreover, job coaches at employer sites have been found to be critical to the successful implementation of work-based learning at most *Jobs to Careers* sites. For hybrid courses—those taught both online and through in-person instruction—it has been important to provide appropriate infrastructure for the portion of the training that takes place at the work site.

System change, among both employers and educational institutions, is another critical element of *Jobs to Careers*. Important system change elements identified in the first year of the initiative include the need for employers to establish policies for employee release time, the importance of dual appointments of supervisors

at job sites to adjunct faculty positions, and the benefits of developing and supporting the job coach role at employer sites. Experience from sites has also demonstrated that employers who pre-pay tuition and other course costs can improve the ability of frontline health and health care workers to access training. The involvement of supervisors in the process of revising human resources policies enhances the ability of frontline health care workers to participate in the program. Overall, awarding credit for education achieved through work-based learning is critical and has required significant changes at community colleges at most *Jobs to Careers* sites.

*Jobs to Careers* made substantial progress in its first year; the sites focused efforts on designing and implementing work-based learning. Yet this strategy was the greatest challenge for the grantee sites. The integration of employer and education provider systems to support true work-based learning took longer and was more challenging than anticipated by most sites or the initiative designers.

Over the next three years, grantee partnerships will increasingly explore other key elements—system change and career advancement—and gain deeper experience with the implementation and practice of work-based learning for frontline health and health care workers.

This report presents a “snapshot in time,” highlighting both the challenges *Jobs to Careers* grantee sites have faced and their accomplishments over the first year. The lessons learned are being applied to improve the effectiveness of the initiative as it moves forward, with the broader goal of affecting change across the health care workforce development field.

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To download *Learning and Working* or for more information on *Jobs to Careers*, go to: [www.jobs2careers.org](http://www.jobs2careers.org)

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