

# Jobs to Careers

*Transforming the Front Lines  
of Health Care*

## Jobs to Careers National Program Office

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*Jobs to Careers* explores new ways to help frontline health care workers get the skills they need to do their current jobs better and to advance to higher-skilled, higher-paid positions. *Jobs to Careers* not only benefits workers and their families but also helps employers retain talented and committed workforces and ensure that patients receive the highest-quality care.

This \$15.8 million initiative supports 17 partnerships of employers, educational institutions, and other organizations to create lasting improvements in the way frontline workers are trained, rewarded, and advanced. *Jobs to Careers* is sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, in collaboration with The Hitachi Foundation and the U.S. Department of Labor. Jobs for the Future manages the initiative.

### THE NEED

As the nation's population ages and grows more diverse, and as demand for health care increases, the United States needs strong systems for developing both its human resources and innovative approaches to learning. A capable and diverse health care workforce is essential to providing for the health needs of all Americans.

Yet one group that is critical to patient care and satisfaction is often underrepresented in research about and outreach within the health care system: frontline workers. Comprising about half of the nation's 12 million health care workers, they include medical assistants, health educators, laboratory technicians, substance counselors, and home health aides—all of whom provide direct patient care and client services.

Frontline workers typically:

- Earn less than \$40,000 a year;
- Have less than a Bachelor's-level education;
- Lack credentials for independent practice;
- Receive little training for their work beyond brief in-services and on-the-job guidance in day-to-day tasks; and
- Often hold jobs that lack clear standards and competencies, with a limited focus by supervisors on employee skill development and advancement.

These factors, combined with workers' perceptions that their contributions to the workplace go unrecognized, are associated with high turnover and increased costs. They also may compromise the delivery of service and care.



**HITACHI**  
THE FOUNDATION



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## KEY COMPONENTS OF *JOBS TO CAREERS*

A hallmark of *Jobs to Careers* is work-based learning: frontline employees master occupational and academic skills in the course of completing their jobs tasks and fulfilling their day-to-day responsibilities. While working full time, frontline employees enter college and earn academic credit for workplace training. Other learning approaches include technology-enabled, experience-based, and traditional worksite and off-site learning. Career paths are developed and made readily available to frontline workers.

The employer and education partners in *Jobs to Careers* projects develop and implement systems changes that recognize the needs of working adults and improve access to and success in skill-building efforts. The changes include:

- *At the workplace:* Developing new job positions and responsibilities; deeply

involving supervisors in employee training and career development; and offering paid release time, prepaid tuition assistance, job coaching, and mentoring.

- *At the educational institution:* Providing college credit for work-based learning, prior learning, and entry-level health care credentials; offering accelerated and part-time degree and certificate programs; contextualizing college preparatory math and English courses to health care concepts and job tasks; and appointing professional staff from health care employers to be adjunct college faculty.

Through *Jobs to Careers*, frontline workers are recognized and rewarded as they build skills and expand the knowledge they need to perform their current responsibilities well or for advancing to new positions. The initiative bolsters a workplace culture that supports professional development, mentorship, and collaboration across the entire health care team.

