Competency Models In Action:

Health e-Workforce Consortium Leads the Way in Health Information Technology Training Initiatives

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➢ Tech-savvy veterans prepared for employment in the Health Information Technology field
➢ New entry-level credential in Health Information Technology created
➢ New federal apprenticeship program in Health Information Technology developed

Introduction

Nine colleges were awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (ETA) to elevate national Health Information Technology (health IT) workforce development efforts and train more than 2,000 veterans, trade-impacted workers and others for promising careers in healthcare and health IT. Led by Bellevue College in Washington State, the Health e-Workforce Consortium's nine college members are developing healthcare and health IT training programs that will be disseminated to colleges throughout the U.S.

The Workforce Need

Health IT is a critical foundation for making high-quality, safe and affordable healthcare available to all Americans. Health IT can, among other things, help healthcare providers detect health concerns earlier, avoid medical errors, lower the cost of care, and reach patients in very remote areas of the country using telemedicine. Today's economic realities make this cooperation vital to providing improved health services to communities and to supporting a new and emerging health IT marketplace.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects that employment in health information technology occupations will increase by 21 percent through 2020. Although BLS has documented that the July 2013 unemployment rate of 7.7% for Gulf War-era II veterans of all ages (those who have served in the Armed Forces since September 2001) was only slightly higher than the national average of 7.4%, many of these returning veterans face additional barriers, such as service-related disabilities, that may constrain their job search. In addition, as U.S. troops return home, the potential for a successful match between growing numbers of tech-savvy returning veterans and the burgeoning health IT industry sector is compelling.
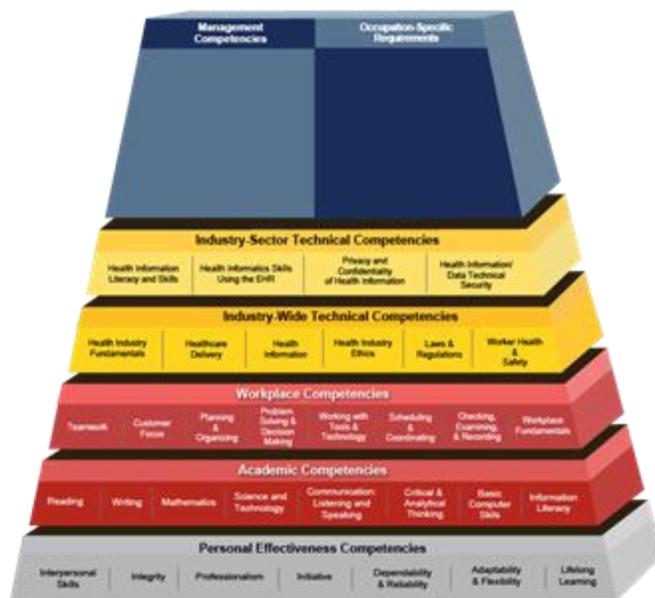
Focus on Returning Military Veterans

The Consortium members share a commitment to welcoming returning military veterans into the health IT field—a promising area for technologically-adept veterans. Veterans will access health IT career services customized for their needs, provided by the Consortium industry partners and the Healthcare Information Management and Systems Society ([HIMSS](#)). The

Consortium will also pilot a new federally registered apprenticeship in HIT for returning veterans and others.[1]

"The overarching focus of our grant is veterans," says Patricia Dombrowski, Executive Director, Health e-Workforce Consortium, Bellevue College, Life Science Informatics Center. Veterans have skills that they can bring to civilian life. In partnership with HIMSS, we've invested a considerable amount of effort in curriculum development, setting standards for all nine college consortium members."

Curriculum Development: Creation of Entry Level Credential

Electronic Health Records Competency Model

The Consortium drew on a number of resources in developing their health IT curriculum. "We leveraged the national health IT curriculum developed by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the National Coordinator for HIT," says Ms. Dombrowski. "We sought industry input and closely monitored health IT job postings. We also utilized ETA's Electronic Health Records (EHR) Competency Model, focusing on the Industry-Wide and Industry Sector Technical Competencies tiers. Although we used the EHR model as our frame of reference, we developed our curriculum in a broader sense than just electronic records. Our curriculum focuses on using electronic information systems in a wide range of healthcare processes, including program administration."

Supported by funding from a National Science Foundation Advanced Technical Education (NSF ATE) grant, Bellevue College and HIMSS have partnered to develop a new entry-level technician certification, known as Certified Associate in Healthcare Information and Management Systems (CAHIMS) to expand access to the field of health information technology. The new HIMSS health IT certification is designed for emerging professionals, career changers or early careerists, within the industry (five or fewer years of experience). This certification demonstrates knowledge of health IT and management systems, facilitating entry-level careers in health IT. It is designed to be a career pathway to the long established Certified Professional in Healthcare Information and Management Systems credential which requires extensive experiential and educational requirements. CAHIMS offers an introductory review of the many facets of health IT and information management systems. Those who sit for the competency-based exam and pass it will become armed with a valuable credential, qualifying them to

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[1] For more information about the Consortium, see http://hiteducation.org/dol-taa-ccct-health-e-workforce-consortium/.

facilitate and improve the quality of health IT and business management systems across the range of healthcare settings. The preparatory curriculum will be freely available to educators in fall 2013 at www.nterlearning.org [2]

"This credential serves as the first step in a pathway leading to entry level certification," says JoAnn Klinedinst, Vice President, Professional Development, HIMSS. "It is the foundation for what we're doing with Bellevue College. We are concentrating on promoting this credential in our HIMSS Veterans Career Service Initiative, building on our strong relationships with the Department of Defense and the Military Health System. Our role in the grant is professional development and career services—making education and training resources available to returning veterans. We utilize EMR-STAR, a collection of health IT applications that students in an academic setting can use to get hands-on experience."

Other new certificate programs under development among the member colleges include the following: Healthcare Data Analytics; Healthcare Database Management and Design; Health Information Technology; Computer Networking; Health IT Security; Mobile Health Information Technology; and Mobile Health Software Development.

Infusing Current Curricula with Health IT Content

"In addition to developing new health IT certificates, another key focus of the Health e-Workforce Consortium is to work with our colleges to infuse technology in nursing and allied health programs," says Ms. Dombrowski. "Hospitals are finding it too expensive to train new nurses on electronic systems. Many of our member colleges have developed a self-assessment process to determine what health IT information is needed in their existing courses. For example, the health IT course content at Bellingham Technical College has been infused into the new Nursing Associates Degree to better prepare learners for clinical operations."

Infusion of health IT into healthcare programs is already active in the following courses among the Consortium member colleges: Hemodialysis Technician; Medical Assistant; Medical Office Assistant; Nursing; Pharmacy Technician; Physical Therapy Technician; and Radiology Technician.

Federal Registered Health IT Apprenticeship

ETA's Office of Apprenticeship worked in tandem with a consortium of experts in developing the Health IT apprenticeship. In addition to Ms. Dombrowski, team members included representatives from:
- Office of Provider Adoption Support at the Department of Health and Human Services
- Midwest Community College Health IT Consortium
- Cuyahoga Community College, Ohio
- Agil IT, an industry partner.

Agil IT's mission is "to enable operational and clinical excellence through thoughtful and efficient application of technology in ambulatory healthcare settings."

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[2] For more information about the CAHIMS program, see http://www.himss.org/health-it-certification/cahims?navItemNumber=13646.

The respective parties went through a four step process in developing the Health IT apprenticeship specifications: 1) defining the occupational sector; 2) identifying the related instruction that is needed; 3) determining the time period for training; and 4) starting the formal apprenticeship approval process to verify the occupation, customize national guidelines, and obtain a Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code. The outcome was a competency-based 2,000 hour (one year) program that includes six months of online related instruction integrated with on-the-job training. The new Health IT apprenticeship is now awaiting formal approval by ETA.

"Health IT is a non-traditional occupation for apprenticeship," says Joseph Jenkins, Team Leader, ETA's Office of Apprenticeship. "It's the wave of the future, creating technology-based apprenticeships for emerging occupations where robust future job growth is projected."

Related Links

Bellevue College, Health e-Workforce Consortium
http://hiteducation.org/dol-taa-ccct-health-e-workforce-consortium/

Healthcare Information Management & Systems Society
http://www.himss.org/about

Training Employment Notice: TEN 14-11
http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?docn=3094

      Attachment: *A Resource Guide for Health Information Technology*
      http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/ten/ten2011/ten14_11a2.pdf

Using Registered Apprenticeship to Fill Career Paths in Health Information Technology
http://www.doleta.gov/oa/pdf/HIT_HealthCare_Report.pdf

Webinar Recording: *Resources to Create an HIT Workforce*
https://www.workforce3one.org/view/5001301539426512143/info

Health IT Academic Start Up Kit:
https://www.workforce3one.org/view/4001305837268388178/info