



**Build Your Workforce
While Facing Critical Shortages**

OVERVIEW

Adventist Health (AH) is a faith-based, non-profit health system with over 20 hospitals, 250 clinics and 4,500 providers that serves over 80 communities in California, Hawaii and Oregon, as well as across the United States. AH and COPE Health Solutions (CHS) have a long partnership launching innovative workforce solutions and strategic value-based care solutions. In 2020, CHS and AH renewed their partnership with the goal of CHS becoming a strategic partner to help AH increase their workforce over the next ten years to fill critical roles across their markets. This partnership led to the development of turn-key, scalable workforce solutions across the states that would still allow for customization to ensure programs would meet the unique challenges and opportunities within each of their markets. Through this partnership with CHS, AH has been able to implement unique solutions targeted at providing opportunities to individuals within the communities they serve to gain experience and education for roles in the health care industry.

This approach has led to numerous new workforce programs that have aided in filling critical vacancies throughout their network, while also creating long-term solutions that will pipeline individuals into their system and ensure they are trained to meet the specific needs of their growing populations.

CHALLENGE

A significant component of AH's strategic plan was to address the current and future needs in growing and retaining a professional workforce to best serve its patients. Like most health care systems in the United States, AH was facing critical shortages across multiple licensed and unlicensed roles. As AH evaluated its trends and financial impact caused by turnover and current vacancies, there was a clear and definite need for new and innovative solutions. In addition, communities were growing which increased the need for more expansive health care skills within the workforce. Workforce shortages were then exacerbated due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As of August 2020, AH was projecting significant workforce shortages across their markets on the West Coast. Projections included 12-month forecasted

vacancies of over 600 medical assistants (MA), 2,100 registered nurses and over 5,000 other non-licensed positions. In addition to addressing the projected shortages, it was critical to engage and retain the current workforce within AH. When reviewing challenges related to MA staff recruitment and retention, costs can be upwards of \$40,000 per position and upwards of \$15,000 per position for many other non-licensed, entry level roles.

In many regions, there were not enough students produced from academic programs to fill the increasing demand for MAs. There were many barriers to individuals in the community including significant time commitment requirements or high cost of tuition. This can be a continuous challenge when trying to create additional career opportunities for future MAs, as well as many other entry level clinical roles requiring further education. Similarly, many other roles in the hospital (registered nurses, lab scientists, nursing aides) experienced the same challenge of not having enough students produced from academic programs. A shortage of experienced individuals to help train new graduates to meet the growing challenges of patient care was also lacking.

As of August 2020, Adventist Health projected significant workforce shortages across their markets with forecasted vacancies of over:

600 medical assistants

2,100 registered nurses

5,000 non-licensed positions

APPROACH

Health Scholar Program

CHS has been creating and implementing workforce programs across the country since 2000. Many of our first clients are still utilizing our programs in their systems and have expanded within their networks. CHS worked with AH to map out which hospitals had the most vacancies across markets in frontline clinical areas (e.g., nurses, nursing aides, lab scientists, etc.)

Over the next year, CHS partnered with AH to bring Health Scholar programs to seven of their hospital systems in central and northern California where there were significant staff shortages in areas that can be more difficult to recruit geographically. Health Scholar programs were already in existence at four AH hospitals in southern California and one hospital in Hawaii.

CHS partners with Keck Graduate Institute to ensure academic rigor with each program and provide an academic certificate of completion upon program graduation. CHS team members help Scholars with resume preparation, mock interviews and application support to apply directly to open positions at AH or continue to professional programs like medical or nursing school. CHS works closely with AH's talent acquisition team to pipeline best-fit Health Scholars and alumni directly into high priority, open positions. These programs have shown success in bringing frontline clinical support with additional full-time equivalents (FTE), as well as the ability to pipeline badged and vetted individuals into open positions.

With the Health Scholar program, CHS recruits individuals directly from the community who are interested in health care to participate in this educational program across the AH sites. Individuals go through an application process to ensure they are interested and committed to the program. Then, they complete a 30-hour training over several weeks to learn basic patient skills (e.g., feeding patients, answer calling lights, ambulating patients, taking vitals, discharge process, etc.), along with other essential health care system protocols and policies to ensure safety in their care.

Following training, CHS tests the individuals to ensure competency and then deploys them into clinical rotations throughout the health care system. For example, a Health Scholar may spend three months in a medical-surgical unit, then move to a telemetry unit. During this time, they are adding critical support to the frontline staff, allowing staff to work at the top of their license, as well as learning about the cross-functional health care roles involved in patient care. CHS also provides professional development courses, test prep courses for professional school entrance exams, interviewing and resume workshops and general health care knowledge training to develop well-rounded health care professionals.

“Adventist Health is launching this workforce development program with COPE Health Solutions to support our strategic vision of well-being, which means helping our community members live their best lives.”

John Beaman,
Adventist Health
Chief People & Business Officer

Medical Assistant Training Program

To begin addressing MA shortages, CHS partnered with AH to launch its own MA Training Program to provide education and access to health care jobs. By having its own program, AH was able to increase the candidate pool to fill staff shortages and ensure these individuals were trained to care for their patients and sustained within the workforce. CHS and AH created a mainly asynchronous program, allowing students to continue to work full-time or care for family members while still completing the program to become a MA. For many students, this was their first opportunity at being able to obtain a clinical certification for a role within the health care system. Furthermore, when looking at the high tuition cost, this program is much more affordable which allows for a greater number of applicants. When it comes to rural communities, it is more difficult to recruit and retain medical professionals, including MA. John Beaman, AH Chief People & Business Officer, describes the program's impact and alignment with their health care system's mission: “Adventist Health is launching this workforce development program with COPE Health

Solutions to support our strategic vision of well-being, which means helping our community members live their best lives.”

The MA program’s initial approach was to provide opportunities to college and high school students, recent graduates and any community member seeking career advancement or changes in their career to health care. The program encompasses seven months and combines virtual courses with clinic-based learning, as well as training with patients and clinician mentors. After completing the program, students receive a certificate of completion from Keck Graduate Institute and are eligible to sit for the Certified Clinical Medical Assistant exam. Students also meet with AH Practice Administrators and Talent Acquisition throughout the program to discuss job placement. Since the initial program, additional programs have been developed including a four-month program that allows student to be hired initially and become a part of the productivity, while continuing their full training program

OUTCOMES

Each fully implemented Health Scholar program offers 15 to 30 FTEs (i.e., 150 to 350 Health Scholars) of support to frontline clinical staff and administrative support in the hospital, ambulatory clinics and administration departments. Health Scholars support with basic patient comfort care tasks such as ambulating non-fall risk patients, supporting with meal tray delivery and feeding patients, bathing patients and more tasks to allow staff to work at the top of their license. CHS also worked with AH market leadership to review HCAHP scores and found opportunities for Health Scholars to support with responsiveness initiatives. Health Scholars are trained on call lights, escalation and service recovery on high priority units and found correlation to increased HCAHPs in the responsiveness domain with Health Scholar support. Health Scholars also support with audits including CAUTI and Hand Hygiene which led to hospital wide increased CAUTI preventative education and meeting LeapFrog infection prevention standards. Most significantly, each of hospital locations has been able to fill 20% of their entry level vacancies with the badged and vetted pipeline of Health Scholars and alumni and there are plans to continue to increase this number.

“The COPE Health Scholars program continues to be a tremendous opportunity for students and other community members to expand their education and support with career advancements. Health Scholars provide valuable support to vital hospital initiatives including patient experience, Covid-19 response and much more. COPE Health Scholars helps us meet the needs of our patients and community.”

Patricia Vasquez
Adventist Health White Memorial
Patient Care Executive

Since the launch of the MA Training Program in June 2021, it has since expanded into three additional markets within AH, with plans for further expansion over the next year. Two cohorts of students have graduated from the program for a total of 28 students. Of the graduating cohorts, 75% of the students were retained or gained employment with AH. There are two more cohorts currently completing the program and an additional two cohorts beginning in early 2023. Students have had a 100% pass rate for their certification exams on their first attempt.

“This program has allowed us to make a record number of job offers in our more rural markets and fill very critical roles that allow us to maintain operations and provide the utmost quality of care to the patients we serve.”

Jennifer Diehl
Adventist Health
Human Resources Executive

To learn more about the COPE Health Scholars program, the MA program or any other workforce solutions programs, contact info@copehealthsolutions.com or call 213-259-0245.