

Promising Practice: Registered Apprenticeship
Kansas Health Profession Opportunity Project
Kansas Department of Commerce

Registered Apprenticeship (RA) is a combination of on-the-job training and related technical instruction that prepares workers with the practical and theoretical aspects of a high-skilled occupation. RA programs can be formed by employers, employer associations, and labor organizations. These stakeholders design and manage programs under a set of standards, which include an on-the-job training outline, related technical instruction curriculum, and the program's operating procedures. As a training strategy, RA has the potential to help address some of the critical workforce issues in healthcare, including recruitment and retention, cost-effective training, wage increases, and improved patient care.

The Kansas Department of Commerce KHPOP program uses the RA model to prepare HPOG participants as Health Support Specialists (HSS). Apprentices can enter the employer's HSS program from a variety of positions and work under the direction of the facility's Mentor and Licensed Nurse (an employee identified as skilled by the participating facility and approved to instruct) to increase skills and knowledge through additional on-the-job training. HSS apprentices are trained as a Universal Worker who uses a person-centered approach to work together as a team with the residents. The training program includes 386 hours of required related technical instruction through the long-term care facility, community college, or technical college. Technical instruction covers medical terminology, dietary/food services, environmental services, Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), CPR and first aid, advanced dementia care, person-centered care, Rehabilitative Assistant, and Certified Medication Assistant (CMA). Apprentices benefit from earning advanced skills, stackable credentials, the Completion of Apprenticeship Certificate, the Health Support Specialist pin, and a progressively increasing wage.

The HSS RA was established and implemented in response to a local workforce challenge. Employers were trying to address a high level of employee turnover. The culture of long-term care delivery was changing, and employers wanted to develop customized training for a new kind of healthcare worker. RA is a solution because it increases job satisfaction and retention among the workforce; provides a career ladder for frontline workers with standardization and recognition that still allows for customization; and applies the expertise of experienced employees, through facility-identified mentors, to pass on their knowledge to apprentices.

For the KHPOP program, strong established partnerships with employers made the development of this opportunity possible for HPOG participants. The KHPOP program had identified the value of RA training early on and the training structure was already in place. The program found that the employer's entry-level staff were often eligible to fit the HPOG income parameters, and they had already demonstrated an interest in healthcare. They therefore represented the best fit for this type of training program. As in this case, the RA model may be best suited for healthcare occupations that do not have entrenched, traditional education and

training models. Many RA programs have been emerging in the long-term care sector of the healthcare industry.

RA program sponsors (employers, employer associations, and labor organizations) vary from small, privately owned businesses to national employer and industry associations. To begin developing a healthcare apprenticeship program, start by finding out if any programs are active in your area. If not, you may still have national employers in your area that have RA programs in operation in other parts of the country. It may be easiest to work with existing programs or employers that already understand the benefits of RA.

When planning the development of RA programs, employer engagement is critical. Local employers may have workforce problems that can be solved with RA programs, but they may not know how this training model can help them. HPOG programs can include discussion of RA with their regular employer engagement strategies. Employers must see how RA programs will address their human resources challenges and support their short- and long-term goals. Programs can survey employers about their workforce needs to determine if their needs are suited to the benefits of apprenticeship.

These questions can be used to help evaluate the appropriateness of RA for addressing a workforce need:

- Are local employers having difficulty finding skilled staff to meet their workforce needs?
- Do employers have a need to up-skill current staff? For which occupations?
- Are the occupations appropriate for an on-the-job training based model?
- Are RA programs for this occupation currently operating?
- Will RA address the particular workforce challenges of these employers?

There are other important partners that can be involved early in the process. RA includes two components: Employment and Related Technical Instruction (RTI). RTI may be provided in community colleges, through correspondence, on-line, and distance learning, and by contract vendors. Programs can begin identifying which educational institutions can provide the classroom training (RTI) and involving these partners in the planning process.

There are published standards of apprenticeship for many healthcare occupations, and these can be invaluable when developing a new program. Apprenticeship and Training Representatives (ATRs) from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship or from State Apprenticeship Agencies are ready to assist in the development of programs, can help you find information about RA in your area, and share valuable resources.