
Promising Practice Fact Sheet – Workforce Development PUGET SOUND WELCOME BACK CENTER at Highline Community College - Des Moines, Washington

Program

Description: Ongoing international healthcare workers assistance program that helps professionals from other countries learn English and gain skills to gain certification or licenses in their professions in the U.S. Program is based on Welcome Back Center program in California, and was started in Washington about two years ago.

Target Population: Health professionals from all over the world who have come to Washington and have not been able to re-enter their professions because of difficulties in navigating the credentialing process

Goal: Assist each participant in developing a career path plan that builds on each participant's skills, experience, and education.

Cost: Not available at present per client.

Evidence: Descriptive and outcome data

Caseload Data: There have been 370 participants since the beginning of the program.

Assessment: Screening and assessment by educational case managers; English level is checked using CASAS; curriculum assessment checks for communication for workplace ESL.

Services Overview:

- An international healthcare workers assistance center which serves as an information and resource center for people who have received their formal education and training in a health field outside the US, and who would like to enter the healthcare sector in the US.
- Welcome Back Center assists participants in developing a career pathway plan that builds on their education, experience, and skills.
- In addition to receiving support in obtaining appropriate professional credentials and licenses for their profession, participants are also assisted in exploring relevant educational programs, job and volunteer opportunities, and alternative career options.
- All clients receive intensive case management, individualized orientation, counseling, and support.
- Curricula is based on California program, englishhealthtrain.org – includes pre-and post-assessments.
- Free classes and workshops, such as Communication in Health Care, Interviewing for Healthcare Jobs, Nurses' Support Groups, Pronunciation Labs
- In addition to orientation and support in obtaining the appropriate professional credentials and licenses for their profession, participants will be presented with other options or alternatives to consider. These options may include choosing a different health occupation offered through a community college or university or focusing their skills and experience in the areas of health care management, research, advocacy, or policy.
- Career-guidance courses and, where appropriate, technical courses to address skills gaps. Contextualized ESL courses to help participants to improve their English proficiency, as needed.
- Services provide for all eligible health professionals - nurses, pharmacists, doctors, speech therapists, occupational therapists, laboratory and other technicians, psychologists, dentists, social workers, health educators, and many others.

- Based on and planned in partnership with California Welcome Back initiative, founded in 2001.
- Assistance with planning a career and educational path that builds on participants' skills, experience and previous education
- Information about job opportunities and resume assistance
- Orientation to licensing procedures and assistance in obtaining the appropriate professional credentials and licenses.
- Workshops and classes to specifically meet the professional development needs of our participants.
- Information on alternative healthcare career options and the types of jobs for which participants may be eligible.
- Referrals to appropriated educational and professional resources.
- Lending library with testing and licensing resources
- Courses include: NCLEX prep for nurses, English for Medical Communication for all participants, MD USMLE study groups, workshops on applying for jobs online, TOEFL study groups and partnerships with Renton Tech and Tacoma CC to offer nurses refresher courses. Some participants are in home care giver training for SEIU

Eligibility: Internationally-trained health workers currently residing in Washington are eligible for the program. Must be a WA state level 3 ESL to be able to take advantage of classes and curriculum.

Findings: 1718 encounters, 370 participants in two years of operation (as of June 2010)

- 7 obtained licenses in their profession
- 22 obtained employment in the health profession sector
- 25 obtained alternative career programs or alternative licenses
- 29 passed licensed prep courses
- 13 passed licensing exams

Implications for Policymakers and Program Developers to Consider:

- For non-native English speakers, the licensing process is very complex.
- Can take up to a year to study for and be prepared to take test.
- Few participants have the time to go to classes or study for tests because they are working multiple jobs to pay living expenses. Even if they do have time to study, the fees for taking tests, applying for licenses, getting transcripts validated are really expensive and financial aid doesn't cover those...there is no funding for these fees.
- The licensing boards have policies that are non-negotiable.

Resources:

www.welcomebackinitiative.org ; Kristina Mason, Director, Welcome Back Center