

1199SEIU Training and Employment Funds join with public and private partners to launch nationally recognized New York health care apprenticeship

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Nation's largest labor-management training fund kicks off National Apprenticeship Week with groundbreaking new program

NEW YORK — The [1199SEIU Training and Employment Funds](#) launched a Community Health Worker Apprenticeship program, which is a partnership between 1199SEIU UHWE, NYC Department of Small Business Services through the New York Alliance for Careers in Healthcare, Bronx Lebanon Hospital Center, LaGuardia Community College and the Training Fund. The new program kicked off on the first day of [National Apprenticeship Week](#).

“The Community Health Worker Apprenticeship program is a groundbreaking initiative that addresses the growing need for community health workers (CHWs),” said 1199SEIU Training and Employment Funds Executive Director Sandi Vito. “This isn’t your traditional apprenticeship; rather, it’s a new program to fill a growing demand created by community health care models.”

Unlike apprenticeships of the past, which typically were in trade industries, the CHW Apprenticeship program focuses on training frontline healthcare workers. CHWs have emerged as one of the most vital actors in the modern healthcare marketplace, which is increasingly focusing on ambulatory and preventative care. According to Department of Labor, in 2015, there were 48,000 CHWs working in the U.S., up from 38,000 three years earlier, a 27 percent increase.

Despite the growing importance of CHWs to advance quality preventative care, there is currently no standardized certification or training for CHWs. In fact, CHWs often work under different job titles despite requiring similar skills and competencies. To meet the growing demands of this emergent occupation and to develop a universal, portable training model, the 1199SEIU Training and Employment Funds brought partners

together, over the last 18 months, to identify the core competencies of CHWs and launch the new apprenticeship program.

“Connecting New Yorkers to high-quality, living wage jobs starts with offering training and apprenticeship programs that develop in-demand skills,” said Gregg Bishop, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Small Business Services. “With growing demand for community health workers, new training initiatives like this will empower workers and ensure high-quality patient care.”

As part of the program, Bronx Lebanon Hospital has hired and will thus pay the salaries of fifteen CHW apprentices. The six-month apprenticeship includes 168 hours of on-site classroom instruction (on both personal and release time), which will be provided by LaGuardia Community College and funded by NYC Department of Small Business Services through the New York Alliance for Careers in Healthcare. In addition, there is an intense on-the-job learning component, in which apprentices will be paired with incumbent peer mentors throughout their training. The program stresses the importance of both clinical and cultural competency. CHWs must possess a unique blend of cultural awareness, community knowledge, clinical, nutritional and preventative health expertise. They serve as the eyes, ears and sometimes hands and feet of the community, as they venture into the homes of local residents to ensure they embrace healthy lifestyles and follow doctor’s clinical orders.

“Bronx-Lebanon’s community health workers will be taking on a most important role in our continuing efforts to Promote and Achieve Health Care Excellence for the patients and communities we serve,” stated Dr. Doug Reich, Chairman, Family Medicine, Bronx-Lebanon Hospital Center.

CHWs also help community members access vital social services, make referrals to various benefits programs, provide basic medical care and informal counseling. CHWs’ social and cultural capital affords them the ability to serve as trustworthy intermediaries between health and social services and the community. Their health and social interventions nurture a sense of belonging and empower local residents to self-advocate for the benefit of the health and wellness of their communities.

Once apprentices successfully complete the program, they will be promoted to CHW and raised to the appropriate salary for that position. Upon completion, apprentices also will receive a national credential from the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeships.

The 1199SEIU Training and Employment Funds are in the process of registering the CHW apprenticeship with the New York State Department of Labor which would provide a second (state) credential and open up new partnerships.

“The Community Health Worker Apprenticeship program provides 1199SEIU members with an opportunity to enhance their skills and move up the career ladder, while also providing vital health care services in their communities,” said 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East President George Gresham. “This is an effective model to give health care workers the training they need to improve access to health care.”

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