

between the job coach and participant; now is when true coaching begins. The job coach works with the participant by offering support and encouragement that translate into genuine interest in the future of each frontline worker. As in athletic competitions, a job coach cannot do the participant's work but can assist with training and helping participants work toward their future by providing both encouragement and guidance.

How does the supervisor/job coach affect employee retention? In Austin, we are just beginning to answer that question. As in all work settings, there is natural attrition due to uncontrollable factors, such as family relocations, illnesses, and outside commitments. As the *Jobs to Careers* project takes shape, it is already clear that providing a supervisor/job coach will go a long way in helping us retain frontline workers and improve patient care. Frontline workers gain

valuable information about resources via the job coaches, the use of a Web-based communication site, referrals to the college's student support services, and access to resources found in each health care system.

In the future, the Austin partners hope that frontline workers who complete the project will be interested in becoming job coaches and assisting the next round of participants as they prepare to advance in their health care careers. This "grow your own" job coach approach is important to the sustainability of the project.

Pam Stone, RN, BSN, is the Jobs to Careers project coordinator at Austin Community College's Continuing Education Department. Kirk White, RN, MSN, is interim executive dean of continuing education at the college and the Jobs to Careers project director.

The Coach Training Experience at Virginia Mason Medical Center

By Erin Reid

At Virginia Mason Medical Center in Seattle, Washington, we are training medical assistants along a career path. Our coach training is designed to serve two purposes for our *Jobs to Careers* project. First, it creates "faculty extenders"—hospital staff who are credentialed to serve as college faculty—who can train medical assistants to be clinic coaches. Perhaps even more important, the coach role serves as a professional development opportunity for medical assistants, and the adoption of clinic coaches has begun throughout the organization.

Training Structure

Virginia Mason Medical Center adapted the coach curriculum from our existing nurse preceptor class. It includes topics in generational and cultural diversity, feedback and evaluation, assessing and accommodating learning styles, critical thinking for medical assistants, communication, and conflict resolution.

The training begins with about eight hours of coursework, with sessions four times a year.

It is open to medical assistants, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses who work in ambulatory settings (clinics), and clinic service representatives who supervise. To encourage group learning, the classes are small.

While the original training was specific to *Jobs to Careers* and included information on assessing academic progress, the hospital has separated that portion of the training into a different class. Thus, the first coach training class is widely relevant, whether or not the students are involved in *Jobs to Careers*. This also creates a "stable" of employees who, with four additional hours of training that can be delivered "just in time," are prepared to train participants in future career ladder programs.

In addition to the initial eight-hour training, monthly Coach Collaboratives (roundtable

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Rewarding Supervisors

It's a lot to ask supervisors to go above and beyond their current duties. Many *Jobs to Careers* projects provide incentives to reward participation. For example, the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center in New York City, and other projects have granted one-time bonuses to supervisors and instituted an award program.

discussions) focus on topics of interest to coaches. In the first year, roundtable discussions focused on working with employee learners in *Jobs to Careers*. The roundtables will continue; Virginia Mason has added several specific topics, such as “Five Microskills for One on One Teaching” and “Feedback: Purposes, Goals, Methods, and Types.”

After completing a certain number of Coach Collaboratives, coaches become certified, which makes them eligible for additional recognition. The overall goal is to encourage continuing education among frontline staff, including those at the supervisory level, with a focus on teamwork and feedback.

For *Jobs to Careers* coaches, the hospital offers additional incentives that recognize their long-term commitment to employee learners. The incentives, which also encourage continuing education, include an annual education benefit that is not offered to other employees.

Feedback and the Future

Virginia Mason has trained 10 coaches thus far. Initially, employees were apprehensive about participating, seeing the coach role as just

one more thing to do. But after attending the training, the response has been overwhelming, from both the coaches and their supervisors. Coaches are excited about mentoring staff, being identified as knowledge experts, and learning new skills outside their current position. Managers who were originally reluctant to send their staff to the training now ask for additional sessions and inquire about clinic-specific sessions. We are excited about the early success and look forward to refining our curriculum as each class occurs.

As part of our dedication to creating career ladders for frontline staff, and in response to feedback received from medical assistants regarding career development opportunities, Virginia Mason is developing a second-tier medical assistant role. Among the requirements being explored for achieving the second-tier position will be obtaining a certified coach designation. In addition, the hospital has created an adaptable curriculum for other departments, such as Central Sterile Pharmacy, that want to create career ladders or clinical ladders.

Erin Reid is project manager, clinical education, at Virginia Mason Medical Center.

Jobs to Careers Out and About

National Association of Workforce Boards

March 7-10, 2009, Washington, DC

Topic: Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining a Work-Based Learning Initiative in Healthcare

Presenter: Maria Flynn (director, *Jobs to Careers* National Program Office), Sally Foster (human resources director, Seton Family of Hospitals), and Ana Mejia-Dietche (director, Health Industry Steering Committee at Workforce Solutions)

League of Innovations 2009

March 15-18, 2009, Reno, NV

Topic: Advancing Frontline Workers Through Community College and Employer Partnerships

Presenters: Maria Flynn (director, *Jobs to Careers* National Program Office) and Fred Rocco (dean, Behavioral and Social Sciences, Bristol Community College)

District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund

May 11, 2009, Philadelphia, PA

Topic: Bridging *Jobs to Careers*—A Work-based Learning Curriculum

Presenters: Cheryl Feldman (director, District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund), Randall Wilson (senior project manager, *Jobs to Careers* National Program Office), and Kenneth Gill (founding chair and professor in the Department of Psychiatric Rehabilitation and Behavioral Health Care at UMDNJ, School of Health Related Professions)