



Chicago Healthcare Career Pathways for Veterans

December 2018



About the Project Team



In its 45-year history, CAEL has partnered with economic development, industry, education, training, government, non-profits, philanthropy, community and labor organizations to remove barriers to lifelong learning and enhance personal, regional and national prosperity. In the last five years alone, CAEL has supported workforce and lifelong learning initiatives for more than 150 communities in 43 states to engage a wider range of community members and non-traditional learners in learning that is aligned with current, projected and desired growth in jobs, careers and target industries, simultaneously supporting both personal growth and regional economic success.



Established in 2003, Solutions for Information Design, LLC (SOLID) helps organizations manage one of their most important assets – information. SOLID is founded on the concept that effective collection, analysis, and dissemination of relevant information are key components of organizational success. SOLID provides social science research and analysis to support public policy decision making as well as web design and development support. Their expertise is in the analysis of education, training, and employment opportunities of current and former military personnel. SOLID has done work in this area for multiple federal clients including the U.S. Departments of Defense, Labor, Transportation, Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps.

Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

Background

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), in collaboration with Solutions for Information Design (SOLID), was engaged by the Michael Reese Health Trust (Michael Reese) to conduct research to identify and map career opportunities and pathways within the healthcare sector for Chicago area veterans. This project was developed in conjunction with the Chicagoland Healthcare Workforce Collaborative (CHWC) and builds on CAEL’s prior work focused on veteran employment and on career pathway development.

This project presents a set of annotated career pathway maps and occupational profiles, and a series of “crosswalk” tables that show the linkages between skills, training, and credentials of those in healthcare-focused military occupations and in-demand civilian occupations within the healthcare industry. The documentation of industry career pathways can be utilized by job-seeking veterans, student veterans, and veterans with military healthcare experience who are interested in understanding career opportunities within the healthcare sector, healthcare employers considering employing veterans, and by education and training providers, career counselors and others who influence career and education decision making by veterans.

Career Pathways

Career Pathways are guides that workers can follow in pursuing and advancing in their careers and that businesses can use in their recruiting, advancement, and human resources efforts. Workers do not simply secure a job and remain in that job for their entire career, and businesses, industry, and educational institutions all need clear guides to the steps workers can take to build their experience and credential attainment.

Project Summary and Process

CAEL’s team developed a multi-phase project focused on three main components:

Explore

Identify and map career opportunities and pathways for Chicago veterans within the healthcare sector through labor market research, focus groups, and interviews with human resources leaders and supervisors throughout the Chicago area healthcare industry. CAEL began its work by leveraging prior healthcare sector occupational mapping to identify and organize career families and occupations for veterans within the Chicago healthcare industry. CAEL validated these through interviews and focus groups of healthcare industry leadership drawn from members of the CHWC and other institutions.

Through the focus groups and interviews, CAEL:

- Secured feedback on alignment between industry demand and labor supply.
- Validated the preliminary career pathways and occupational descriptions.
- Gained insights on additional or alternative occupations and career pathways that should be targeted for workforce preparation and recruitment efforts.
- Gathered information on current initiatives and potential efforts to recruit, train, and hire veterans into the healthcare industry.

Create

Develop a set of Civilian Healthcare Career Pathways for use by workforce professionals, educators, and returning veterans, built as career maps showcasing six high-demand healthcare occupational areas and Occupational Profiles outlining the connection between military healthcare occupations and select civilian occupations. CAEL built an inventory of healthcare military occupational specialty codes (MOSs) that relate to career movement into and between target healthcare occupations and SOLID prepared crosswalks of the civilian skills to:

- Identify military occupations that are best suited for the designated healthcare occupations.
- Provide data on service members serving in and separating from these military occupations.
- Analyze gaps between military training and experience and related academic, credentialing, and employment requirements for the targeted occupations.

Guide

Provide guidance for using and sharing these Career Pathways and Occupational Profiles as well as present findings and recommendations for the field. CAEL has identified key stakeholders and made initial recommendations for methods of disseminating and using this material to benefit both veterans and healthcare institutions by linking this highly qualified pool of workers to the institutions that need their service. The Considerations section at the end of this report includes a description of key stakeholders and potential future actions.

Key Insights from Focus Groups

In addition to input on the actual Career Pathways that follow, the healthcare industry representatives provided valuable perspectives regarding the skill, credential, and experiential needs in the healthcare industry as well as current gaps, future expectations and insights regarding how veterans can form a critical component of the healthcare workforce. Insights include:

- 1) **Critical Occupational Needs and Shortages in Chicago:** Registered Nurses, Certified Nurse Assistants (CNAs), Medical Assistants, and Radiologic Technicians and other laboratory technologists (especially the specializations noted above) are the most critical occupations that are always in demand and always experiencing shortages in the Chicago area.
- 2) **Long-Term Skill Needs:** Technology skills will be the most dramatic need in the upcoming five years. Workers will need to interface with new technologies, engage across multiple platforms, and manage interoperability across diagnostic, analytical, data and clinical equipment, hardware and software. There will be increased need for technician/technologist occupations and other laboratory skills. Longer lifespans and an aging population will make jobs and functions like Pharmacy Technologist, Occupational and Physical Therapists and Aides, and workers in a range of preventative medicine functions ever more in demand.
- 3) **Skill, Qualification, and Credential Needs and Gaps:** There is continued need for:
 - Workplace skills such as ability to work in teams, collaborate, and maintain “emotional intelligence” and “bedside manner.”
 - Critical thinking, analytical, and problem-solving skills.
 - Customer service skills, time management and project management.
 - Management skills.
 - The ability to work in an intensive environment with a heavy workload.
- 4) **Perception of Value Proposition for Hiring Veterans:** Employers observe that veterans, in general, possess a strong ability to work in teams, follow workplace rules, maintain positive energy, work with technology and are well suited to direct patient care settings and any situation that presents high pressure or a busy workplace. In some cases, this perception of value translates to a priority status for veteran candidates, but more often is subject to the individual hiring manager’s assessment.
- 5) **Observations on Veteran Recruiting Activities:** Most institutions report that they have engaged with the Veterans Administration (VA) in some way to recruit candidates and learn about the pool of candidates coming out of the military, but much more work is needed to fully tap this pool.

Report Products

The remainder of the report includes two products: Healthcare Career Pathways and Veteran Career Crosswalks. Each are produced in easy-to-use, graphic products that can be used in a variety of settings. They can be placed online as well for use by veterans, healthcare institutions, educators, and others engaged in supporting veterans' transitions into civilian employment.

Opportunities in Healthcare: Chicago Career Pathways

- 1) Introduction to the Career Family: A snapshot of the occupations and the skills, activities, and work environments associated with the career family outlined.
- 2) Potential Career Pathways: Select entry points and advancement opportunities within the pathway.
- 3) Occupation Summary: An Overview of the occupation and a description of its duties, education and credential requirements, wages estimates, and skills in demand.

Veteran Career Crosswalks

- 1) Introduction and Occupation Summary: A summary of the civilian occupation.
- 2) Potential Military Trained Job Candidates: The volume and nature of service members with healthcare experience related to that civilian occupation. These are the major military occupational areas that serve as preparation for entry into the occupational area.
- 3) Comparison of Civilian and Military Training/Education Curricula: A comparison of the typical training and education components for the civilian occupation and the military training and experience.
- 4) Comparison of Civilian and Military Job Duties: A comparison of the typical job duties performed by the civilian occupation and the military occupations.
- 5) Ability to Meet Illinois Job Requirements: A review of relevant job requirements in the state of Illinois and if/how military experience meets those requirements.

Considerations

CAEL has identified the following considerations for further supporting the work of connecting veterans and healthcare industry institutions.

Stakeholders

To capitalize on the insights presented here and the broader knowledge available based on this work, the following stakeholders should be engaged in support of veteran transitions into the healthcare industry:

- Healthcare industry employers of all sizes.
- Education and training providers.
- National Certification Entities and State Licensing Agencies.
- Policymakers and government.
- Workforce Development System entities including Workforce Investment Boards, the Veterans Administration, and non-profit and community-based organizations that serve veteran job-seekers.

High-Level Recommendations

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** The information in this study is relevant to all of the stakeholders listed above. Efforts should focus on facilitating collaboration to expand access to this and broader levels of information and build on these career pathways on behalf of veterans and other workers.
- **Credit for Prior Learning:** Work should be done to investigate and promote methods for employers, colleges, and credentialing entities to maximize credit for military training and experience. Better aligning the military and civilian skills and credentials outlined in the pathways and the crosswalk material can speed the process of veterans' successful entry into the civilian workforce, and save time and money for those veterans, their families, and the healthcare industry.
- **Support Veterans:** Veteran serving organizations including the workforce development system and other public and private support agencies must provide career awareness and advising to veterans, including content on how to consider available career opportunities and pathways, understand the connections to their prior experience, and access to training and employment opportunities.