

“What Opportunities?": Understanding Committed Frontline Healthcare Workers' Perceptions of Career Advancement Opportunities



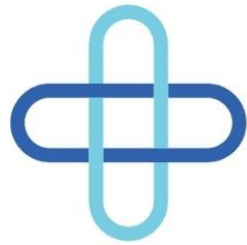
Report of Research Findings

Prepared by the Workforce & Organizational Research Center

October 2023

Agenda

- Introduction & context
- Research design
- Aggregated survey results
- Possible strategies to address findings
- Employer reflection: UI Health



CHICAGOLAND HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE COLLABORATIVE

MISSION

The Chicagoland Healthcare Workforce Collaborative unites employers and industry partners to support an inclusive healthcare workforce, provide accessibility for unemployed and underemployed populations, and develop innovative responses to the evolving needs of the healthcare industry.

STRATEGIC PILLARS

- 1** Local & Targeted Hiring
Focusing recruitment efforts in areas with higher concentrations of unemployment
- 2** Education & Training
Bridging the gap by uniting a variety of partners across the healthcare industry
- 3** Retention & Career Pathways
Offering education & training opportunities to new career pathways for employees

Context

- Early 2021 CHWC reflection & visioning process
- Desire to improve career pathways for existing workforce and increase intentional employer-led support for career mobility.
- How?

Future goal: employee- and job seeker- facing career pathway “maps”

An introduction by the numbers

15 = years in HR consulting

15 = years in academia

- ✓ PhD at UChicago
- ✓ Senior Scientist at Washington University in St. Louis

2021 = founded WORC



Ellen G. Frank-Miller, PhD
Founder & CEO
WORC

Research Design

- **Mixed-methods** – qualitative investigation to inform employee survey design
- **Data sources** – administrative data, leadership interviews, frontline supervisor interviews, employee survey
- **Participating healthcare systems** – Advocate Aurora, Northwestern Medicine, Rush University Medical Center, UChicago Medicine, UI Health
- **Study conducted January 2022 – September 2023**

Data Sources

Employer Perspectives

- ✓ Administrative data
(5 healthcare systems)
- ✓ Leadership interviews
(9 interviews, 5 healthcare systems)
- ✓ Frontline supervisor interviews
(12 interviews, 3 healthcare systems)

Informs survey
development

Employee Perspectives

- ✓ Employee survey
(4 healthcare systems)
- ✓ Aggregated analysis
across systems
(4 healthcare systems)
- ✓ Distributed to
 - Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs)
 - Medical Assistants (MAs)
 - Patient Service Representatives (PSRs)

Employee Survey Responses

- Survey distributed to frontline employees at **4 healthcare systems** (Advocate Aurora, Rush University Medical Center, UChicago Medicine, UI Health) between February and June 2023
- Total of **7,577 employees** received survey invitation; response rate 7.6%
- Responses received from **578 employees**:
 - **155 CNAs** (response rate 4.3%)
 - **270 MAs** (response rate 10.0%)
 - **153 PSRs** (response rate 11.9%)

***Note:** Due to low response rates, it is important to confine conclusions to the respondent group – stakeholders who are likely the most-invested in career pathways at their healthcare systems*

Summary of Aggregated Survey Results

Four major themes emerged – survey participants indicated that they:

- Are generally happy at their healthcare systems
- Feel they have opportunities to gain skills, but cost is a barrier
- Are interested in advancing their careers, but are unsure about the likelihood of success
- Desire more career guidance

Aggregated Survey Results: Job Satisfaction

- Relatively high job satisfaction
- Low turnover risk
- Low intention to leave the healthcare field
- Appear committed to career advancement
- Relatively high satisfaction with work-life balance, coworker support, supervisor support
- Receive adequate recognition for the work they do

Aggregated Survey Results: **Skill Building Opportunities and Barriers**

- Agree they have opportunities to **build skills on-the-job** through day-to-day responsibilities
- Agree they have **opportunities for education or training outside of their healthcare systems**
- **Aware of education benefits**, less sure about internal training opportunities
- **Concern about cost – believe they cannot afford education and training needed to advance**

Aggregated Survey Results: Overall Advancement Opportunities

- Have career **aspirations beyond current roles**, frequently view current job as a **stepping stone**
- **Doubts about ability to advance** without leaving their current department, practice, or location
- **Know of “people like me” who have advanced**; uncertain if opportunities are the same for anyone who works hard
- **Education and training are a barrier to advancement due to concerns about cost**

Aggregated Survey Results: Career Guidance and Organizational Trust

- Career guidance somewhat lacking
- Generally agree that their healthcare systems “keep the promise that this is a great place to work”
- Fewer believe their healthcare systems will act on the results of this survey

Aggregated Survey Results: Variation by Job Type

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree 5 4 3 2 1	All CNAs Averages	All MAs Averages	All PSRs Averages
I have real opportunities to advance at my healthcare system.	3.5	3.0 p<0.01	3.3
I know what I would need to do to advance at my healthcare system.	3.8 p<0.01	3.3	3.4
I can advance at my healthcare system without earning a new certification or degree.	2.4	2.4	2.9 p<0.01
My supervisor would give me the flexibility if I needed it to get the training I would need to advance.	3.7	3.2 p<0.01	3.6
I see my current job as a stepping stone to the job I really want.	3.9 p<0.01	3.5	3.5
I feel like I'm on the road to reaching my career goals.	3.7 p<0.01	3.2	3.2
There is someone at my healthcare system who can guide me toward reaching my career goals.	3.5 p<0.01	2.9	3.2
I can't afford the education/training I would need to reach my career goals.	3.5	3.5	3.2 p<0.01
My supervisor talks to me about my career goals and how I can reach them.	2.8	2.5 p<0.05	2.9

Key:

Red = Lower than other job types

Green = Higher than other job types

Possible Career Advancement Strategies

Barrier	Opportunity	Explanation
<p>Cost of training or education needed to advance</p>	<p>Redesign employer-sponsored education benefit programs</p>	<p>Many education benefits are structured as reimbursements where employees must pay the full cost upfront. Lower-level workers may struggle to afford these upfront costs. Replacing reimbursement models with upfront-payment models may increase benefit uptake rates and make obtaining certifications and degrees more accessible to frontline workers.</p>
	<p>Develop paid apprenticeship programs or other “earn and learn” opportunities</p>	<p>Earn and learn programs enable workers to obtain certifications without creating financial strain.</p>

Possible Career Advancement Strategies

Barrier	Opportunity	Explanation
Lack of awareness of internal training opportunities	Improve communication and expand eligibility/program capacity	Making frontline workers aware of internal training and development programs directly or via their supervisors may improve their perceptions of opportunity at their healthcare systems. Expanding eligibility/program capacity may enable more workers to improve their career prospects within their healthcare systems.

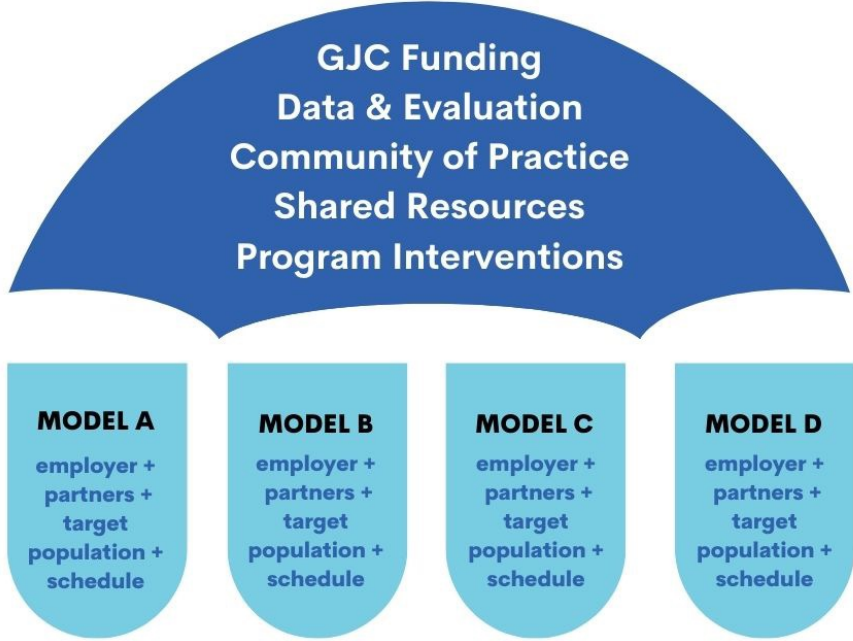
Possible Career Advancement Strategies

Barrier	Opportunity	Explanation
Lack of career guidance	Strengthen frontline supervisors' career guidance skills	Providing training for supervisors can help improve their ability to provide career guidance for frontline healthcare workers. In addition, managerial skill-building opportunities can enable frontline supervisors to advance their own careers within their healthcare systems.
	Post promotion opportunities internally before seeking external candidates and engage frontline supervisors in recruiting	Communicating promotion opportunities to frontline employees and supervisors before seeking external candidates can encourage a "grow your own" mentality. A culture of internal promotion can create career pathways that may improve retention of committed frontline employees.

Nursing Assistant Pipeline & Pathway Program



- ➔ **Strengthens & expands** existing programs
- ➔ Allows employers to maintain **customized models** & work with preferred partners
- +
- Convenes **community of practice** to facilitate best practice sharing and collaborative problem-solving
- +
- Introduces **program interventions** or supplements to strengthen job quality and career pathways



strengthening job quality and career pathways for CNAs



Funding Opportunities

- Support the growth & sustainability of the Certified Nursing Assistant Pipeline & Pathway Program, including:
 - Development of a shared career navigation tool
 - Design & implementation of program interventions (ex: supervisor training?)
 - Additional programs, participants, and tracks for upskilling
- Support earn & learn programs that upskill frontline workers at CHWC health systems: they have program ideas that need funding!

Employer Highlight: UI Health

- More employees are coming to our Volunteer Services & Workforce Development team for career exposure and training
- We offer tuition waiver to state universities
- We plan to sit down with CNA, MA, and PSR managers to discuss this research and their plans for employee growth
- We're partnering with Malcolm X City College and other institutions to build free upskilling programs; we need training partners who can accommodate working students

Discussion

- What's resonating with you?
- What policy or practice changes do you hope to see as a result of this research?
- What do we still need to understand better?

THANK YOU

Reach out to learn more:

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- ✓ www.WORCimpact.com



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