

Health Center Spotlight

Health Center Innovation: Building Workforce Pipelines with Youth Engagement

Grow Our Own Program by Colorado Community Health Network



Website:

<https://cchn.org/>



Contact Information:

info@cchn.org

As with everywhere in the country, the Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN) has been struggling to find talented staff, from the entry level administrative staff to medical professionals. They know the potential for career development and growth within the local communities they serve is huge, and training organized through the health centers themselves is ideal.

In seeking solutions for staff shortages, leaders at CCHN learned about a few synergistic opportunities and pitched an idea to local funder, ZomaLab, that invests in a broad range of market-based solutions including workforce development. Their proposal focused on introducing local high school students and under-resourced young adults to medical assistant training programs at several health centers, and for presentations about health center careers to be provided at local high schools.

With this funding, CCHN developed a strong partnership with the National Institute for Medical Assistant Advancement (NIMAA). Both organizations benefit by an expanded version of NIMAA's existing eight-month certification program that offers students a more personalized and hands-on training experience at health centers, plus complete clinic tours and other ways for students to learn about health center careers.

To attract participants, NIMAA helps promote the program. For a broader reach, CCHN contacted the marketing arm of the local Area Health Education Center (AHEC) to share information about NIMAA certification and the health center training program. AHEC gladly draws students from all over Colorado to find job training opportunities at CCHN. The CCHN staff developing this program have also found warm hand-offs through other relationships that help expand marketing for their programs, such as through Generation Schools and others.

With their fundraising and marketing, CCHN has created a “packaged presentation” that teaches high school students and community members about health center careers and training programs. This presentation can be “branded” by their member health centers for their own use. By operationalizing NIMAA for their health center network members, CCHN has given students a richer experience, students are inspired through presentations to gain further health care training, and tuition for NIMAA certification can be supported for students through local grants.

In the past several months CCHN and its partners have educated 197 students, with hopes to reach 600 high school students by the end of the funding year. With longitudinal monitoring, they will evaluate whether the continuum works to develop the workforce for their member health centers.