

The Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board's Healthcare Initiative focuses on providing training in the area of Medical Coding and Billing. The training uses a FastTRAC model that includes contextualized basic skill development integrated with curriculum instruction. Participation of employers has been present from program planning through implementation with the initiative including collaboration between public and community partners.

The Ramsey County WIB's Healthcare Initiative is a response to data predicting a shortage in healthcare workers. Meeting with local healthcare system employers, an environmental scan and needs analysis was conducted by the RCWIB, Workforce Solutions, and the Greater Metropolitan Workforce Council. That analysis identified a need for certified Medical Billers and Coders. Medical Billing and Coding positions can serve as a significant entry point into the healthcare field, growing the pool of workers who may be trained to fill other in-demand healthcare careers and increasing the individual's earning potential.

With this information, the WIB found a synergy with Saint Paul College and Saint Paul Public Schools' Adult Basic Education, creating a training that blends technical education with adult basic education, supporting low- and limited-skill students as they gained the knowledge and skills needed to secure an in-demand healthcare position. The class was co-taught with a Medical Billing and Coding instructor and an ABE instructor.

The involvement of local business went beyond the environmental scan phase with healthcare employers providing input to the curriculum and on-the-job training aspects of the program. Employers have been included in all steps of the process in order to ensure that the solution created matches the challenge identified.

Nineteen students enrolled and classes began in November 2009. The initiative partners met throughout the program with discussions including the availability of supportive services, integration of soft skills in to the Medical Billing and Coding Curriculum, and structure and support for the work experience provided to all students. This contact allowed for quick action when needed and leveraged partner resources to support students and partners when challenges arose. Partners were able to discuss the progress of the program and note areas for improvement for the next round of classes.

The Healthcare Initiative was selected by the Governor's Workforce Development Council to examine how organizations functioning in workforce development can most effectively collaborate. Additionally, the Friends of the WIB received a grant on behalf of the WIB for the initiative from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). With partner contributions toward tuition, the initiative was fully funded.

Fifteen students successfully completed the course in June 2010 and continue to work with the instructors to prepare for their certification test in August. The partners are planning to apply for a FastTRAC grant to support further development of the model and another round of classes.

The RCWIB's Healthcare Initiative is a partnership with HealthPartners, Presbyterian Homes, Saint Paul College, Saint Paul Public Schools Adult Basic Education, Saint Paul Community Literacy Consortium, Ramsey County Workforce Solutions, the Greater Metropolitan Workforce Council, Saint Paul Public Schools K-12, Saint Paul Public Housing Agency, and Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington Counties, DEED, Quality Careers Services, Goodwill/Easter Seals and Lifetrack Resources.