

# Health Center Spotlight

Health Center Innovation: Building Workforce Pipelines with Youth Engagement

## NEW Health University by NEW Health



**Website:**

<https://newhealth.org/>



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Since 2012, NEW Health's CEO, Desiree Sweeney, understood the need to develop a program that could train future workers for the health center. Yet, the rural areas of Washington State where NEW Health clinics operate had no pipeline for future staff. To mitigate the issue, she started by developing medical assistant apprenticeships at their health centers which formalized into a 12-month hands-on apprenticeship program; but the need to develop a broadly trained health care workforce was still apparent.

In 2021, Desiree hired Lindsey Ruivivar to launch NEW Health University. To embark on this large initiative, Lindsey first focused on developing strategic relationships with the local high schools, universities, and school board. With their partnership, NEW Health designed a multi-faceted program that not only provides high school students with hands-on experience with health careers, certifications, and job training, but also offers career ladder opportunities for existing health center staff.

NEW Health University has since engaged 75 high school seniors in interactive workshops exploring the wide range of careers available at the health center. Students play-act the health center job they are assigned, ranging from janitorial, to maintenance, HR, Dental Director, CFO, CEO, etc. They learn about the career pathways and certification needed for each job, then the "Payroll staff" pay each participant (with a 100 Grand chocolate bar). "The workshop is very eye-opening for seniors. They love it." Lindsey says, "They see career paths can begin at the health center."

With the expense of college, this type of job training has become a lifeline for some of the low income, rural students. So far, NEW Health University has helped high school seniors earn IT and EMT certificates, scholarships for medical school, internships and medical assistant pre-apprenticeships, and very important health center jobs. Additionally, NEW Health University is coordinating six apprentice programs with high school graduates through 35 student rotations and is actively working to establish pre-apprenticeship programs. These programs are expected to grow exponentially.

After learning about the program's success, the local School Board now plans to dedicate a new school building just for NEW Health University's administration, medical, dental, and behavioral health training programs.

Lindsey also works with two trainers within the health center to conduct skills assessments for each staff member at each clinic, based on job descriptions. With assessments, current staff are offered tailored training every Wednesday (with staff time blocked to complete training modules).

NEW Health fully embodies the philosophy of strength, pride and happiness through growth and learning. Lindsey says, "we now have a marketing force of 140 staff members because everyone who works at NEW Health is inspired by their jobs and their potential here."

