



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
Community Health Centers®



# **Community Health Center Topic Briefs: Information & Guidance**

# PIPELINE & PARTNERSHIPS



**Are you taking full advantage of pipelines and partnerships to locate and hire your newest employees?**

Pipeline and partnership programs with local community colleges, technical schools, and hospitals can be a crucial method of drawing in new employees to your Community Health Center, while also building the next generation of health center leaders. These programs are also used to retain existing employees by providing training and growth opportunities. While some health centers already partner with schools and hospitals to help create a pipeline of candidates, many are interested in developing one—or creating their own programs.

## Where to start?

### Know your why

What problem are you trying to solve? These programs can benefit your health center's recruiting and retention. Does your health center have a shortage of clinicians? Are you trying to relieve first year burnout? Or are you developing the next generation of leaders? Know your why to hone your program from its outset.

### Get support

You need others on board. Your Board of Directors should understand the program's goal and its value to ensure its longevity. Coordinate with HR and IT groups, too, as your trainees will need to be able to access day to day resources. Engage your clinical staff and identify who is excited to teach and mentor.

### Assess resources

Know what you have on hand. Do you have physical space and equipment for trainees? Does your clinical staff have availability and interest to train them? What will it cost to bring trainees on board (including direct and in direct costs)? What about accreditation? Identify your resources and make a plan to fill in any gaps.

## Next steps



### Step 1: Know your needs.

Understand what your health center needs to get out of the program. Who are you targeting and why?



### Step 2: Identify organizations to work with.

Understand their curriculum and consider how your program may fit into it. Consider how well aligned your culture is with theirs. Know your value—have a clear understanding of what you bring to a partnership.



### Step 3: Reach agreement on key terms.

Consider governance, regulations, finances, learner acceptance and dismissal, liability, and termination agreements.



### Step 4: Create the framework for your program.

How long will trainees work with your health center? Will they be full or part time? Fully or partially integrated into your site? How and when will they be evaluated? Also consider the rhythm of clinical practice, education sessions, and professional development.

## Health Center Highlights

### “Finding doctors is tricky so we started our own family medicine program.”

#### ***Roanoke Chowan Community Health Center***


Roanoke Chowan Community Health Center in North Carolina was struggling to find doctors. Their solution: Build their own safety net by starting an apprentice program in conjunction with their local college. Because they are connected with the local college, they can offer licensure. The students are paid to participate in the program in exchange for a commitment of two years. The process is rigorous, but connects students with the community and with other professionals. They just celebrated their third graduation.

### “We’re known locally as a great place to start career.”

#### ***Greater Lawrence Family Health Center***

Greater Lawrence Family Health Center in Massachusetts coordinated with local educational institutions and technical schools to develop externships for entry level clinical support. Their health center’s partnerships with these schools have created a strong pipeline. The health center recruits directly from their residency program, retaining graduates who want to stay in health care. In addition, their program attracts clinicians who want to teach. The program is a draw for clinicians who are interested in teaching and research, thus serving both recruitment and retention needs.

# FREQUENT STAFF TOUCHPOINTS



**When was the last time you took the pulse of your staff, from their state of mind to general wellbeing? It's crucial for retention!**

If staff touchpoints are not on your radar, you are missing a key opportunity to boost retention and understand what is keeping your employees on board. Frequent touchpoints not only keep individuals involved in the organization, but they also give you important insight to retain staff and course correct when necessary. Actively engaging with employees and displaying authentic, strong caring for the individual encourages retention. People who feel cared for are motivated to stay.

## How frequent staff touchpoints help retention?

### Communication

Keep your staff engaged and up to date on what's happening at your Community Health Center with frequent communication across multiple channels. Health centers that communicate often about their mission, vision, and values report fewer retention issues. Their employees understand what they are working toward and how they are expected to get there.

### Connection

Help your staff build connections by giving them opportunities to engage with each other in and out of the health center. Connection building can include employee appreciation events within the health center, as well as community events outside of work. All these events offer opportunities for employees to connect to each other and to the health center's mission.

### Insight

Gain insight into your employees' state of mind with onboarding check-ins, stay interviews, and occasional engagement surveys. These techniques offer the opportunity to understand what is keeping staff at your health center and what could be driving them away, giving you the chance to start, stop, and change where needed.

## Health Center Highlights

**“When you run an HR department in which the #1 priority is to have empathy for everyone irrespective of needs—it says it all. Employees are always looking for empathetic relationships. It makes a difference.”**

### *Rosa Agosto, Urban Health Plan*

People come first at Urban Health Plan in New York, where HR works with staff to make them feel like family. “We, like every center, put patients first,” says Rosa Agosto, Chief Learning Officer. “But not everyone puts staff first and we do that”. Urban Health Plan hires from the community, so employees are the community. In many ways, they require the same comprehensive view. They do not need services specifically but having that view of their lives makes a difference.

Marta Reyes, HR Director, makes a point to get to know staff and spend time with them, finding solutions when needed in both work and personal areas. For example, if an employee is out often, she focuses on the reason for their absence before jumping to disciplinary action. “It’s about seeing the reasons and how do you help the person so they can be successful. There’s a limit to what we can do, but there is a lot we can do.”

## Examples of Touchpoints in Health Centers Today

Fellow health centers report using these touchpoints to engage with staff:


- Regular onboarding check-ins
- River boat outing
- Annual summer picnic
- Chili cookoff
- Pumpkin carving
- Clinic trick or treat
- Leaf peeping
- End of year celebration
- Food trucks
- Talk about available benefits
- Regular all hands
- Celebrate successes
- Training/development
- Community involvement
- Weekly email about the Health Center Movement, what we do, why we do it

**“My mission to find the best benefits and make sure employees know what they are and know where to get questions answered. We pick a benefit to talk about at each all hands [staff meeting]. We make sure employees know the benefits are there.”**

**Mary Kay Kirgis, Crescent Community Health Center**



# YOUR HEALTH CENTER'S MISSION & CULTURE AS A DIFFERENTIATOR



Is your mission and culture in action or just a poster on the wall? Set your Community Health Center apart with active engagement in mission and culture.

“Individuals who choose healthcare as a profession must have a passion to serve others, must show compassion and empathy for the people they serve,” says Rosa Agosto, Urban Health Plan, New York. This is especially true for health care professionals who work in health centers. This passion to serve, encapsulated in health center missions and the Health Center Movement, sets health centers apart from competition as an employer of choice in a competitive market. Emphasizing the health center’s mission and culture is an important recruitment technique for these candidates.

## How are health centers doing this?

### Making it visible

Health centers that rely on their mission and culture make it prominent. They put their mission, vision, and values on their websites. They post them prominently in their health centers and make sure staff have access to written versions.

### Talking about it

Health centers that successfully use their mission and culture to set themselves apart talk about their mission often with staff. They acknowledge members who model their culture. They talk about their mission and culture often in meetings and trainings.

### Recruiting for it

Health centers that hire for alignment with mission and culture find they are better able to retain passionate, committed staff. They have embedded their mission, vision, and values into their recruiting processes to ensure candidates are aligned from the beginning.

## Get Started

### Mission & Culture

**“We needed something to explain who we are a little more. We were leaving mission-focused candidates on the table. We added the mission-focused language [to recruiting materials] and have been impressed with response.”**

***Mary Kay Kirgis, Crescent Community Health Center, Iowa***

For many, being part of something bigger than the self is an important factor - there is value to knowing we are not on our own. For staff on the front lines, it is validating and uplifting to know they are part of something larger.

#### **Step 1: If you have not already, define your health center's mission and vision. Also identify the values, behaviors, and rituals that put your mission and vision into action.**

When you define your organization's mission, you define what you will do. When you define the vision, you define why you do it. Your values are the shared ideals that set your health center apart. Behaviors identify how your organization puts those values into action and rituals are your organization's operating norms.

#### **Step 2: Incorporate your health center's mission, vision, and values into your recruiting and retention materials and practices.**

Hire for cultural enhancement. Train to orient staff to your culture. Communicate to educate and reinforce. Coach to improve and develop leaders.

#### **Step 3: Track progress and adjust where you need to.**

Talk to your new hires. What convinced them to join your health center over others? Conduct stay interviews with your existing staff. Ask them why they have stayed. Are your mission, vision, and values reflected in their responses? Do adjustments or changes to materials and practices need to be made?

## Pause to Check In:

### **Are You Living Your Mission, Vision, and Values?**

***Take this opportunity to pause, reflect, and adjust.***

Organizations that do not actively define and pursue a values-based culture can fall prey to hypocrisy, which destroys engagement and ultimately organizational wellness. Organizational hypocrisy is a state where the professed values differ from demonstrated behaviors. Often, hypocrisy is not intentional or malicious. Rather, it occurs because we fail to define the standards by which the organization can assess and measure the application of its values. As a result, employees hold their leaders and each other accountable to a diverse and sometimes conflicting set of behavioral standards.

Have you noticed any behaviors that are inconsistent with intended or expressed values? For example, do you value collaboration and innovation, yet dictate process? Do you encourage open communications, yet work behind a closed door? Do you embrace accountability as a leader, yet blame others when things go wrong?

Employees and candidates can and do spot the gap between expressed values and demonstrated behaviors. Close the gap to ensure your mission, vision, and values are true differentiators.

# CONNECTING MISSION & MOVEMENT



Do your potential new hires know they are part of something big? Does your staff? Connect your local mission to the Community Health Center Movement to boost engagement.

Most health centers lean on their missions for recruiting and retaining passionate, committed individuals. Few, however, include language about the Health Center Movement in their recruiting and retention materials. Connecting the local mission to the larger Health Center Movement can expand your health center's opportunities to reach qualified, mission driven candidates and encourage mission-aligned staff to stay.

## How does connecting to the Health Center Movement help?

### Expand reach

Broadening recruitment language to include the Health Center Movement expands the available candidate pool nationwide. Incorporating this language allows you to reach groups across the country who are looking for work that allows them to join something larger than themselves.

### Service as incentive

The ability to serve others, as well as the connection to a purpose larger than the self, is often cited as an incentive that draws committed individuals to health centers and keeps them on staff longer. Connecting to the Health Center Movement further incentivizes candidates to join and staff to stay.

### Highlight alignment

Highlighting your local mission gives candidates an opportunity to understand what they are taking on by joining your health center. Further connecting to the Health Center Movement, however, offers the opportunity to reach outside your community to draw qualified, mission driven candidates.



## Local Mission

### Health Center Movement

**“We make it a routine to do mission focused work and connect it to the movement. Serving that capacity of connecting local missions to the movement gives great perspective and builds the muscle of empathy.”**

***Kim Schwartz, Roanoke Chowan Community Health Center***



#### **Step 1: Crosswalk your health center’s mission, vision, and values with those of the Health Center Movement.**

Take this opportunity to review your health center’s mission, vision, and values against the Health Center Movement, as well as against the behaviors you see in play at your health center. Do you want to make any adjustments?



#### **Step 2: Identify similarities and differences between your MVV, the Health Center Movement, and your target audiences.**

Can you lean into the similarities and leverage the differences? Consider who you want to draw into your health center.



#### **Step 3: Incorporate additions into existing recruiting and retention materials.**

Highlight connections and fill in gaps to make sure you are reaching targeted audiences. Make sure all your staff have access to your mission, vision, and values statements, as well as any updated talking points, as they recruit others.

## Pause to Check In:

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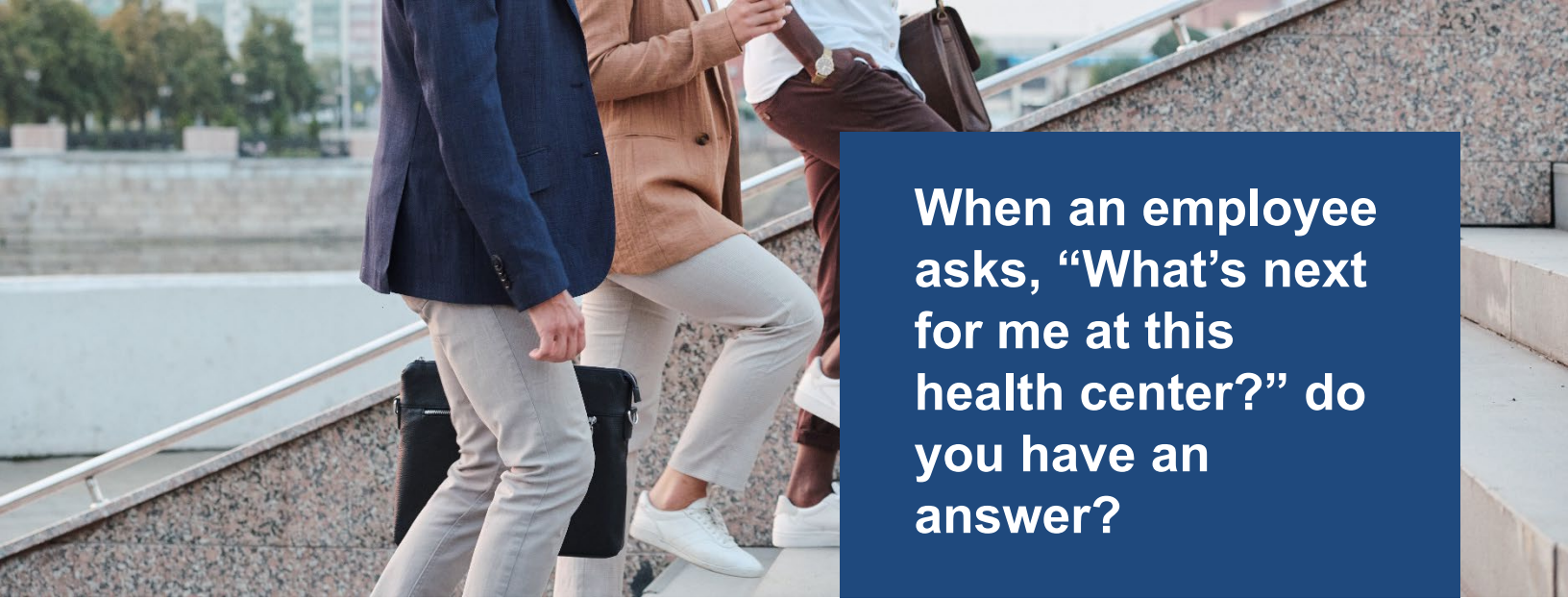
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# CAREER PATHWAYS IN HEALTH CENTERS



When an employee asks, “What’s next for me at this health center?” do you have an answer?

Employees are more likely to stay when they can see how their careers will progress in your Community Health Center. Health center employees at all levels do difficult, complicated work. Helping staff see how they can grow from one role into another at your health center keeps your organization’s most vital asset—its people—on board. It also allows you to keep critical institutional knowledge and training investments in house at your health center by reducing turnover.

## What does a pathway look like?

### Informal pathways

If your health center is new to career pathways, you can begin informally with coaching, mentorship, and individualized training plans. These one-off methods are great ways to establish connections with individual employees, show your commitment to their development, and help them grow within your organization.

### Formal pathways

Career pathways can be developed for use organization-wide, showing employees how they can grow within your health center by advancing from one role to another. For example, you may hire a front desk employee who trains to become a certified nursing assistant, then a certified medical assistant with your health center’s support, training, and partnerships. They get to stay at the health center while increasing their salary and you get to keep a dedicated, growing employee.

### Pathways as a recruiting tool

Double dip on this retention tool by marketing it in your recruiting materials. Your recruitment becomes more flexible when you show you can grow employees at all levels. Health centers can also establish an employee pipeline early by reaching out to middle and high schools, modeling what a career path in health care looks like for [students in your community](#).

## Health Center Needs

### Employee Development

**“We want to help the people who work here see the possibilities for developing their careers.”**

***Dr. Linda Thomas Hemak, The Wright Center for Community Health***

#### Step 1: Identify what roles you need and what resources you have.

Take a deep look at what roles you need to fill now and anticipate needing to fill in the future. What training, certifications, or licenses would an entry level employee need to fulfill that role? Look at what training, programs, and school and hospital partnerships are available in your area. Also identify sources of funding. Are reimbursement programs available? Can your health center cover the cost in exchange for a commitment of years of service? Finally, consider time commitments. How much time and at what frequency can you afford for an entry level staff to focus on training?

#### Step 2: Map it out for employees.

Remove the guess work for you and for employees by mapping out milestones from entry level through to the roles you need to have staffed. What skills does an entry level employee need to learn before applying to a program? How will their training be supported (financially and time)? What will their schedule at your health center look like once they start a program? Once they earn their certificate, how can they be promoted within your organization?

#### Step 3: Market it. Discuss pathways with staff as part of the employee review cycle.

Tell your staff about it first so they know the benefit is available to them. This could take the form of a training module, all hands session, or brown bag. Continue engaging with staff in regular conversations and during reviews to get them involved in the program and using the pathways.

Don't forget to update your recruiting materials to highlight your new career paths. Be sure to bring your updated materials to community events. Consider targeting materials to younger audiences to establish pipelines in schools as well.

Further reading: [Looking For a Career Pathing Template? The Search Ends Here](#)

## Health Center Highlights

**“We hire patients – that’s our greatest success.”**

***Dr. Linda Thomas Hemak, The Wright Center for Community Health***

Dr. Linda Thomas Hemak notes that the Wright Center for Community Health's greatest success is hiring patients. She also comments that because they hire from the community, they cannot assume that individuals will be able to jump right away into the highly specialized daily tasks undertaken at the health center. They currently use informal career progression to give new hires and existing employees organizational, on the job, and leadership training. They seek to nurture their employees' career evolution. Under the guidance of Dr. Jignesh Sheth, the Wright Center for Community Health is developing their career pathway into a program to help employees at the health center see the possibilities for developing their careers.

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH & INVOLVEMENT FOR RECRUITING & RETENTION



Are you reaping the full benefit of community outreach and involvement to better staff your health center and retain talent?

If not, you may be missing out on a vital recruiting pool. Many Community Health Centers hire from within their communities. When health centers are visible in the community, potential new hires see the difference the health center makes and want to be involved. The majority of those interviewed also noted that being involved in the community improves retention. Once onboard, staff can see the health center's mission and vision in action in the community. They can see the difference they are making, keeping them engaged and motivated to stay.

## How are health centers doing this?

### Recruiting

Health centers find they can attract new employees by being visible in the community. Community engagement gives health centers an opportunity to show community members the breadth of services they offer and the variety of open positions needed to make the health center work for the specific community.

- Put your health center's mission and vision front and center.
- Take business cards and applications with you. Make it easy for the community to find you - for care and for employment!

### Retention

Including staff in these activities fosters a critical sense of engagement with each other and the community. These activities motivate staff around the local mission and Health Center Movement, providing them with tangible connections that keep them onboard longer.

- Offer paid volunteer time to your staff as a benefit.
- Connect work in the community with your health center's mission to keep people engaged.

## Outreach

### Recruiting & Retention

**“Our staff are our patients, and our patients are our staff. [Our] recruitment is founded in patient service. We try to provide the best service we can, so people want to come work here. We’re ingrained in the community and rely heavily on referrals for hire. We try to stay current and present in the community.”**

***Ann Marie Borgesi, Greater Lawrence Family Health Center***



#### **Step 1: Identify outreach opportunities that align with your health center’s mission, needs, and appeal to your staff.**

Understand your health center’s needs. With a clear goal and audience in mind, check local school, government, and community calendars for events you can join. Ask your staff what they would be interested in supporting.



#### **Step 2: Assign leads and make plans.**

Who is going to own community efforts at your health center? Assign leads and create a plan to get involved.



#### **Step 3: Track progress to understand which events and techniques generate the most candidates.**

Did you notice an uptick in website traffic, social media engagement, or submitted applications after an event? If so, plan to be involved again! Ask your staff what they thought about the event. And make sure your applications include a question about where candidates heard about the job posting.

## Examples from Health Centers

### **Mission is in the Action**

#### ***Crescent Community Health Center, Iowa***

At Crescent Community Health Center, engagement is not strictly focused on the mission, but the mission is in the action. The health center is highly involved in the community. They can be seen at the Back to School Bash, the County Fair, Days of Caring Cleanup, and other events. They make a point to hire from their community’s medically underserved populations, bringing diversity of thought into the health center to the benefit of all.

### **Recruitment Never Stops**

#### ***Community Health of South Florida***

There is no separation between recruiting and community outreach for Community Health of South Florida. Because they are so involved in the community, recruitment never stops. When they attend a community fair, they advise attendees that the health center has positions open. Staff come to events ready to hand out applications and business cards. This strategy has worked well—community members and patients become employees, often front desk staff and patient financial services staff.

