

Addressing Our Health Care Shortages

A Workforce Strategy for Southwest Washington



July 2003

BACKGROUND

This project was funded by the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council (SWWDC) through a grant from the Washington State Workforce Training Education Coordinating Board. The SWWDC is one of 12 Workforce Development Councils in Washington State. Representing Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania and Wahkiakum counties, the SWWDC oversees nearly \$9 million in federal, state and local employment and training resources. The SWWDC mission is to prepare and promote a highly skilled and adaptive workforce for a healthy, sustainable economy in Southwest Washington.

The SWWDC is led by local business leaders who are joined by labor, education, community based and public sector members to form a single point of contact for all local workforce development initiatives. The SWWDC is dedicated to providing quality services to all individuals seeking employment and helping employers find the qualified workers they need. By coordinating local workforce and economic development activities, the SWWDC provides the leadership to help Southwest Washington meet the challenges of the 21st Century economy.

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Introduction

The region, the state and the nation face severe shortages of a variety of health care workers. The factors contributing to these shortages are varied and complex, and have the potential to seriously undermine the provision of safe, high quality health care in our communities:

- In 2001, 55 percent of emergency departments turned away patients because they did not have enough nurses.
- In 2001, Washington's acute care hospitals reported a shortage of approximately 2,000 staff registered nurses (RNs).
- Washington nursing homes reported a vacancy rate of nearly 20% for staff RNs.
- 56 Washington State programs offering nursing and allied training reported waiting lists in 2001. During the same time, Washington State University's school of nursing turned away two-thirds of its undergraduate applicants.

Worker and faculty shortages are accompanied by changes in American demographics. As the population continues to age, so does our need for health care. In 2000, Washington's population over 65 was 662,000. By 2020, there will be more than 1.22 million Washingtonians over 65. A higher percent of people over 65 years of age means an increase of services needed per person and an increased burden on the health care workforce.

In addition to the number of people requiring health care, changes in health care delivery have altered traditional practices. Hospital stays have decreased, while outpatient stays have increased. Extended and home health care needs are growing rapidly. Yet despite decreases in hospital stays, patient acuity is increasing, thus shifting the burden of patient care to out-patient settings.

While the health care industry struggles to find qualified workers, Washington State is experiencing its highest unemployment rate in nearly a decade. Despite generally tough economic times, health care remains one of the largest and fastest growing industries in Washington. The health care industry provides over \$6.2 billion in wages each year – almost twice as much as the agriculture, forestry and fishing industries combined. According to State labor market projections, between 2000 and 2008, Washington State will see over 6,000 job openings in health care each year. Health care related employment growth in Southwest Washington is predicted to be even greater. From 1996 to 2001, total health care employment in Clark and Cowlitz counties grew from 11,000 to 13,100 – a 19% increase. Statewide health care employment expanded by 13.6% over the same period.

The issues driving health care personnel shortages are complex, and demand the collaboration of a wide range of stakeholders if meaningful change is to be achieved. In response, the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council established a Skills Panel of health care professionals, organized labor, education and training providers,

From 1996 to 2001, health care employment in Southwest Washington grew by 19% compared to just over 13% for the State of Washington.



Introduction

and workforce/economic development policymakers to affirm regional workforce challenges, identify solutions, and develop implementation plans to address current and emerging industry needs. The Skills Panel, with input from work groups and an advisory committee was tasked to:

- Prioritize the health care gaps and challenges facing the Southwest Washington region and high demand occupational clusters of nursing, imaging and laboratory technicians and medical office occupations.
- Develop a set of focused strategies (within the control of the region) that will address:
- Short-term strategies to fill critical occupations and to resolve immediate needs in the region, and
- Long-term actions that can build a sustained capacity for critical occupations and issues.
- Identify key policy issues at the state and local level.

This report summarizes the initial work of the Southwest Washington Health Care Skills Panel, presenting the findings and recommendations that will be reviewed and implemented over the next several months. Industry representatives, educators, labor leaders and policy makers will help validate and recommend additional actions to ensure continued progress in addressing the region's health care workforce needs.

The objective of the Health Care Skills Panel is to identify critical and high demand occupations, and develop specific recommendations to raise awareness about health care careers, enhance regional educational capacity and worksite training.



Key Trends in Health Care

Recruitment

There is a worker shortage in key, high growth occupations including nursing, medical records, and highly skilled technical positions in ultrasound, radiology and laboratory areas. The shortage is present despite aggressive industry recruitment efforts and close industry ties to training programs.

There are many reasons why too few people are choosing to enter health care. Some jobs, like radiology technologist, need better marketing to help young people learn about the opportunities that exist in the field.

Negative media coverage about working conditions is an issue that affects nursing. Less demanding and higher wage jobs are attracting skilled workers away from health care professions where 24/7 shifts, physical demands, and emotional stress often factor in.

The demographics of the health care workforce have not kept pace with the changing demographics of society. This lack of diversity makes health care jobs less appealing to large segments of the population.

Changes in Health Care Delivery

A continued increase in the intensity of care is requiring health care workers with more advanced skill levels. There is a trend toward increasing specialization, especially in diagnostic and interventional personnel and a decrease in jobs at the lower-skilled and physician level.

The move toward population-based care and other changes in delivery require care givers to increasingly function in teams, making team work and communication skills a daily part of any health care job.

Technology is affecting both administrative and direct care giving functions. New technologies are decreasing the time per test, yet is often accompanied by an increase in the number of less invasive testing and diagnostics.

Automation of routine administrative functions will push facilities to have fewer “front-desk” workers and require a higher level of computer and information literacy for remaining positions. While technology can make some duties easier, it will create the need to continually update skills.

Educational Capacity

For many positions, and for many populations, a lack of training capacity is at the heart of the problem. Expansion of local educational opportunities is hampered by a lack of funding, faculty, classroom, laboratory and clinical space. The challenge of capacity is particularly acute in health care because accreditation, licensing, and certification rules require clinical as well as classroom experience.

The continual battle to control health care costs combined with the increase in consumer expectations have resulted in new pressures for health care workers from both their employers and their patients.



Key Trends in Health Care

There are also critical shortages of trained faculty—occurring now and in the not too distant future—due to an aging workforce and salaries that are lower than their peers working in nonacademic settings.

Some healthcare training programs are academically intensive and students experience difficulty completing coursework, with dropout rates approaching 30 percent for some programs.

Student success is also impacted by financial burdens and the lack of articulation among educational programs.

Worker Retention

Keeping people on the job is another important issue facing the healthcare industry. The most obvious problem is demographics—many healthcare workers are retiring or will soon retire, including faculty needed to train new practitioners.

Another critical piece is the lack of clear pathways to move workers into different disciplines. Entry-level workers have difficulty combining training with work, and certification issues make mobility difficult.

The wage gap between health care and other occupations continues to widen: in comparison to other industries, wages in health care are growing at a slower rate.¹ A stressful and demanding work environment with a heavy workload adds to worker retention issues.

There is often little time for orientation and mentoring of new workers.

Turnover varies among health care occupations with Washington hospitals experiencing a 17% turnover rate for staff registered nurses². In the Health Care Personnel Shortage Task Force report it is noted that nationally, one-third of nurses under 30 plan to leave the profession within a year.

Regulatory Environment

Federal and state regulations are changing the practice of healthcare. From 1997- 2001, more than 100 federal regulations affecting health care had been adopted. During this same time, Washington State passed additional regulations, some of which conflicted with the federal regulations. Many of these regulations bring more paperwork and divert resources from patient care to administration.

The changes in the privacy of information and other legal issues require workers at all levels to be current on new regulations. These changing and complex regulations are also creating an entire new level of specialization in back office functions.

¹ Healthcare Personnel Shortage: Crisis or Opportunity?, A Report of the Health Care Personnel Shortage Task Force, December 2002

² Healthcare Personnel Shortage: Crisis or Opportunity?



Reversing the Trends: What Will It Take?

BROAD OVERVIEW

Given the charge of the Skills Panel, and the context of national, state, and local healthcare trends, the group's assessment and recommendations were framed around the following questions:

Supply and Recruitment

- How do we assess and evaluate critical needs in developing a sustainable pipeline of qualified workers? What are the causes versus the effects of an inadequate pipeline?
- How do we reach and interest a more ethnically and gender diverse population to enter health care fields? This includes K-12 students as well as adults.
- How do we market health care occupations, recognizing we are competing with other industries, not just ourselves?

Educational and Training Capacity

- How do we effectively train incumbent workers? How do we effectively train our emerging workers in a timely and cost-effective manner to increase capacity of graduates?
- How can we increase the qualifications and access to training for those entering programs? (Articulation between programs, high schools and post secondary programs having appropriate prerequisites, availability of scholarships will need to be addressed.)
- How can waiting lists be effectively reduced?
- How can our education partners effectively and creatively recruit and retain faculty, including industry contributions and partnerships?
- What types of non-traditional delivery of training might be offered that matches the needs of incumbent workers and others, especially considering student work, financial, and/or family obligations?

Retention

- How does the industry best retain the existing workforce?
- How does the growing trend of part-time, contract, per-diem and leased employees affect workforce capacity?

Other

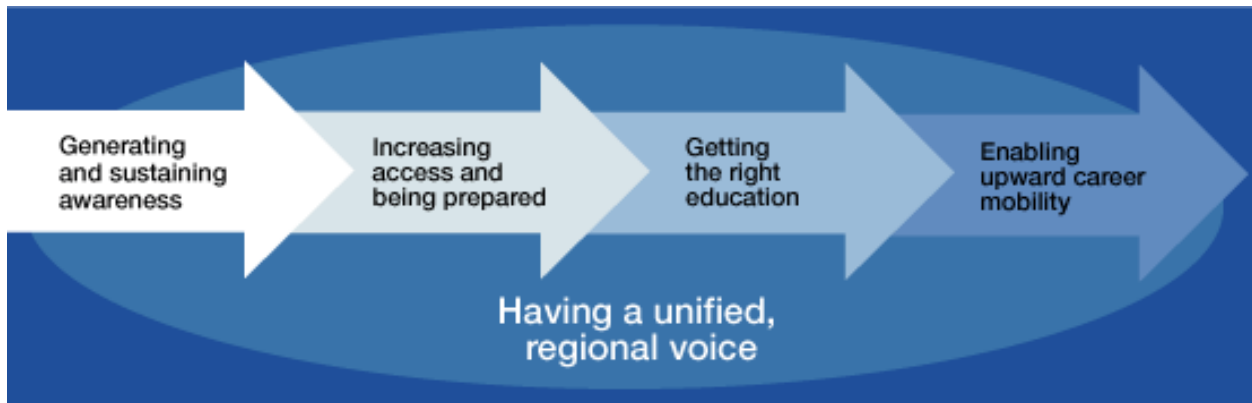
- What role does technology and the management of information play in the current and future needs of our workforce?
- How do we most effectively participate in state and national policy initiatives that affect health care in our region?
- How do we educate the public about the issues, opportunities and strategies that we will articulate?



Reversing the Trends: What Will It Take?

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON HEALTH CARE CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing health care issues in Southwest Washington requires an integrated approach that can leverage limited resources and build effective partnerships. The Skills Panel recognized that many issues related to our health care workforce shortage are interrelated. Therefore, the challenges and recommendations set forth in this report are connected to five closely related issues.



- CHALLENGE 1** **Increasing Access & Preparedness** through preparatory and articulated coursework that provides the necessary prerequisites, and by increasing affordability of and financial assistance for education programs.
- CHALLENGE 2** **Generating & Sustaining Awareness** among K-12 and adults through outreach activities to ensure the healthcare pipeline remains filled.
- CHALLENGE 3** **Expanding Quality Education** by increasing the capacity of educational programs and clinicals, ensuring adequate numbers of faculty and deploying more flexible methods of training delivery.
- CHALLENGE 4** **Enabling Upward Career Mobility** by offering clear career paths and enabling workers to access and complete training in a manner that is consistent with health care work schedules, resulting in continued learning and growth.
- CHALLENGE 5** **Having a Unified Regional Voice for Health Care** to raise awareness about critical health care issues in Southwest Washington and work to affect state and local change.



Reversing the Trends: What Will It Take?

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON HEALTH CARE CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

CHALLENGE 1 INCREASING ACCESS AND PREPAREDNESS

- A lack of awareness about health care careers also means there is a lack of awareness about the preparatory coursework (K-12) needed to pursue an education in health care occupations.
- There is no shared, advanced health care curriculum for high school: Many advanced health sciences courses differ among schools and do not articulate to community college programs.
- Financial assistance can run out before training is completed: Funding is not always flexible enough for people needing additional prerequisites or completing programs on a part-time basis.

TRENDS

New technologies and procedures require IT as well as science skills.

Reduction in the number of entry-level workers per patient: entry-level workers are requiring higher degree of training.

New patient care delivery requires the ability to work in teams.

CRITICAL BARRIER

Financial assistance lacks flexibility, making health care education economically inaccessible to many people seeking health careers.

RECOMMENDATION

Make education economically accessible for adults changing careers and those in entry-level health positions looking to advance their careers.

- Increase flexibility of tuition assistance to cover part-time students and those needing additional prerequisites.
- Develop a workforce and employer supported revolving tuition fund that pays for new and existing workers to receive education and training in high demand health care occupations.
- Ensure funding for dislocated and adult workforce programs covers the costs of health care programs that are in high demand and provide a high degree of upward mobility (funding for LPNs rather than Medical Assistants).

YEAR 1 ACTION PLAN

This action plan addresses critical aspects of Challenges 1 & 4 and are listed under both.

Funds to Increase Access: Revolving Training Fund

A revolving training fund will be established to assist incumbent health care workers to obtain the skills necessary to function effectively in rapidly changing health care settings. The fund will assist coalitions of two or more health care employers to purchase customized training from the region's community colleges, based on needs identified by a subcommittee of the health panel. The participating employers will work out a formula to replenish the fund so that joint training projects can be continued indefinitely.



Reversing the Trends: What Will It Take?

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON HEALTH CARE CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

CHALLENGE 1
INCREASING
ACCESS
AND
PREPAREDNESS

CRITICAL BARRIER

Southwest Washington lacks a shared K-12 framework for health care curriculum that ensures students are prepared for and can more easily enter state and local post-secondary education programs.

RECOMMENDATION

Develop a region-wide framework for allied health curriculum in high schools that is aligned with post-secondary programs and industry needs. (Build on Evergreen School District Model)

- High schools to work with industry to create a set of regional career paths that use existing and new career information and that clearly articulate skills, education and preparatory coursework.
- Enable high schools to offer CNAs (in addition to Skills Center programs) as a stepping-stone to post-secondary health care education.
- Convene high school, community colleges and universities to develop a shared curriculum that directly prepares high school students for post-secondary education and to the extent possible, ensure advanced high school coursework can be articulated into community colleges.
- Focus preparatory programs on the full spectrum of health care occupations ranging from programs requiring certificates to those requiring four-year and advanced college degrees.

YEAR 1 ACTION PLAN

This action plan addresses critical aspects of Challenges 1 & 2 and are listed under both.

Support K-12 Classroom Training for Allied Health Care Curriculum

Prepare students to enter post-secondary education by offering advanced coursework in health care. Work with community colleges and universities to ensure specific advanced math and science courses articulate in to, or help students gain admission to, post-secondary education. The curriculum would focus on a student's education/career plan—directing what courses students will need to take and when to take them. Teachers and counselors will be trained about curriculum so that they are equipped to accurately advise students. Framework would also include outreach to parents so they are informed about their child's options and necessary requirements for a health care career and education path. Examine the ability to combine coursework with internships. Ensure all outreach and awareness efforts target minority and male students.

Reversing the Trends: What Will It Take?

CHALLENGE 2 GENERATING AND SUSTAINING AWARENESS

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON HEALTH CARE CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is a lack of awareness in K-12 about the broad array of health care careers especially in areas beyond physician and nursing, such as medical office, imaging and laboratory occupations.
- There is a lack of awareness about health careers among adults changing or seeking employment, especially livable wage jobs that require less than a four-year college degree.
- Minority and male populations continue to be underrepresented in most health care occupations.

TRENDS

Seven out of ten high-demand health care jobs in Southwest Washington are growing at a rate 50% greater than the state of Washington.

The average age of a nurse is 47. This is also typical of other health fields.

CRITICAL BARRIER

There is a lack of exposure to health care careers, especially those less visible to the public.

RECOMMENDATION

Establish a “Community Health Care Education Coordinator” that exposes students to health care careers and the classes they need to take to effectively prepare.

- Develop clear career pathways, especially for less well-known health care jobs.
- Enhance the engagement of industry in schools.
- Enhance outreach to minorities and males.
- Work with One-Stops to update them on skills and competencies needed for each type of high demand health care occupation so referrals from dislocated and adult training services are matched to the appropriate health care program.
- Train counselors and One-Stop staff about “job fit”: the reality of the health care working environment. Entry jobs are often night shifts, long shifts, physical demands, etc.

Enhance the image and marketing of medical office occupations: Align medical office occupations with information technology as well as health care to attract students or adults with technological interests.

- Package RHIT/RHIA as the integration of IT, business, and health.
- Be a part of technology career fairs as well as health care career fairs.

YEAR 1 ACTION PLAN

This action plan addresses critical aspects of Challenges 1 & 2 and are listed under both.

Support K-12 Classroom Training for Allied Health Care Curriculum

Teachers and counselors will be trained about curriculum so that they are equipped to accurately advise students. Framework would also include outreach to parents so they are informed about their child’s options and necessary requirements for a health care career and education path. Examine the ability to combine coursework with internships. Ensure all outreach and awareness efforts target minority students.

Reversing the Trends: What Will It Take?

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON HEALTH CARE CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

CHALLENGE 3 EXPANDING QUALITY EDUCATION

- **Capacity:** Most regional health care programs are at capacity with significant waiting lists. In addition, the capacity of prerequisites at the community college level is also limited. On-line or self-paced programs, especially for advanced training, tend to be underutilized. Furthermore, articulation and reciprocal tuition between Southwest Washington and the Portland schools is limited.
- **Clinicals:** Timing of clinical rotations and lack of available supervisors for clinicals puts a strain on employers and clinical sites—many students enter rotations at the same time and are not spread evenly throughout the year.
- **Faculty:** There is lack of master's degree faculty in the region and wages for faculty are not competitive with industry.
- **Funding:** Cost to run health care programs is higher due to required low student to teacher ratios, as well as ongoing lab and equipment costs. This is compounded by pressure on community colleges to reduce higher cost programs.

TRENDS

There will be an estimated 6,000 new health care jobs in Washington between 2000 and 2008.

In Southwest Washington, between 2005 and 2010, there are expected to be 115 annual openings in Registered Nursing, 28 in Licensed Practical Nursing, 14 in Medical Records & Health Information Technology, 12 in Medical & Clinical Laboratory Technology and 10 in Radiological Technology.

CRITICAL BARRIER

Health care programs are at capacity, and in some cases are not available in Southwest Washington, limiting the number of students able to enter and complete a program.

RECOMMENDATION

Support efforts and facilitate industry's involvement in the expansion and creation of health care programs:

- Support the regional expansion plan of nursing programs at Clark Community College, Lower Columbia College and Washington State University. Work with employers to help resolve faculty shortages, clinical space, and equipment use.
- Examine the feasibility of a joint RHIT program between Clark and Lower Columbia Colleges. Ensure existing medical office programs articulate to advanced programs and areas of specialization.
- Increase the capacity of advanced lab science training at OHSU (add another cohort to existing capacity) including funding for additional faculty and the coordination of lab and clinical space.
- Work at the regional and state level to address reciprocal tuition with Portland area educational institutions, especially those programs that are not offered in Southwest Washington.
- Work with community colleges to reduce dropout rates due to financial burdens.
- Work with educators and industry to enhance on-line and on-site training to increase capacity and flexibility and to reduce the total time it takes to complete training.
- Explore ways to increase faculty salary to be comparable to industry wages.
- Make it easier for the industry to teach by providing mentoring to adjunct faculty.

Reversing the Trends: What Will It Take?

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON HEALTH CARE CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

CHALLENGE 3 EXPANDING QUALITY EDUCATION

YEAR 1 ACTION PLAN

Establish Appropriate Funding and Eligibility Criteria

Assess the regional costs of providing education and training for high demand or priority occupations as identified by the Health Care Skills Panel, and adjust the funding limits of appropriate workforce programs to ensure adequate coverage.

- Develop an inventory of regional health care training programs for priority occupations that include their costs, time to complete, and prerequisite requirements.
- Revise eligibility criteria and funding limits for workforce development programs that provide assistance for those seeking high demand health care occupations.

YEAR 1 ACTION PLAN

Funds to Increase Access: Individual Training Account (ITA) Commitment

A specific amount of ITA resources will be earmarked to provide training in high demand health care occupations in Southwest Washington. ITAs are the primary means by which individuals in the WorkSource system obtain training. WorkSource staff would purchase training from eligible providers on behalf of individual program participants. ITAs may be available to employed and unemployed adults who:

- Demonstrate a need for training to obtain or retain employment
- Require additional skills to achieve economic self-sufficiency
- Are unable to obtain adequate assistance from other sources to cover training costs

Resources/Restrictions: While ITAs are generally limited to \$5000, in Southwest Washington, the WDC board will commit to considerably higher investments for health care workers in priority occupations as named by the health care panel.

Reversing the Trends: What Will It Take?

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON HEALTH CARE CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

CHALLENGE 4 ENABLING UPWARD CAREER MOBILITY

Retention and Job Satisfaction

- A well-defined orientation process with mentoring and ongoing support is critical to retention.
- Retention of new healthcare employees is essential: new workers have different expectations of a work culture.

Flexible Scheduling and Delivery of Training/Education

- The number of local programs, particularly specialty programs, is limited; on-site, on-line and other delivery methods are underutilized.
- People getting master's degrees need flexible programs because many of them work while obtaining their education.

Affordability

- Advanced education often requires a certain number of unpaid, clinical hours, which causes financial stress for those workers pursuing additional education.
- Health care workers moving from unlicensed assistive personnel positions are often at a financial disadvantage since they cannot afford to stop or reduce work while obtaining further education, yet may exceed traditional eligibility requirements of many workforce programs and employer tuition reimbursement may be inadequate.

TRENDS

The trend in health care is toward more specialization.

New technologies and regulatory requirements require ongoing training of health care workers.

While entry-level positions like medical assistant or nursing aides will continue to be needed, most employers identify degreed and licensed occupations as the most critical of all high-demand health care jobs.

CRITICAL BARRIER

Upward career mobility is hindered by a lack of flexible, affordable training.

RECOMMENDATION

- Develop an inventory of regional education programs and courses (including those offered by industry) and a resource list of tuition and financial assistance and ensure this information is shared among employers, educators and workforce providers.
- Develop a workforce and employer supported revolving tuition fund that pays for new and existing workers to receive education and training in high demand health care occupations.
- Enhance online course offerings to increase access to additional education and make it more flexible for existing health care workers to enter programs to advance their degree, wages or position.
- Establish a Southwest Washington health care employer group that increases job satisfaction by sharing recruitment and retention best practices.
- Coordinate in-house training modules with community college programs. Ensure accredited in-house training articulates to community colleges if employee wishes to continue training.

Reversing the Trends: What Will It Take?

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON HEALTH CARE CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

CHALLENGE 4 ENABLING UPWARD CAREER MOBILITY

YEAR 1 ACTION PLAN

Coordination: Floating Career Specialist

Establish a career specialist position that rotates among employers to:

- Develop an inventory of regional education and training programs (traditional, on-line, and others) and tuition assistance sources.
- Connect incumbent workers to appropriate training, WorkSource and financial assistance.
- Promote flexible training including on-line and in-house programs.
- Identify common workforce and training issues among employers.
- Conduct and manage local health care labor market information.
- Serve as a liaison between health care employers and the Skills Panel.

Initial costs associated with the position will be borne by the Southwest Washington WDC (SWWDC). Continued support will be negotiated between the SWWDC and participating employers.

YEAR 1 ACTION PLAN

This action plan addresses critical aspects of Challenges 1 & 4 and are listed under both.

Funds to increase access: Revolving Training Fund

A revolving training fund will be established to assist incumbent health care workers to obtain the skills necessary to fill high demand positions. The fund will be targeted to individuals who, by completing training, will achieve the self-sufficiency guidelines established by the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council. The SWWDC will provide tuition and lab fee assistance to employees of participating health care providers who have been approved for employer tuition reimbursement and meet SWWDC self-sufficiency guidelines. Employers will reimburse the SWWDC directly for tuition and lab fees provided in accordance with employers' tuition assistance policies.

Reversing the Trends: What Will It Take?

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON HEALTH CARE CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

CHALLENGE 5 UNIFIED REGIONAL VOICE FOR HEALTH CARE

- Existing Washington and Oregon strategies do not address the issues unique to Southwest Washington.
- Border issues with Oregon create unique challenges for Southwest Washington's health care industry.
- Rapid population growth in Southwest Washington creates demands for health care jobs that exceed other parts of the state.

TRENDS

Two out of four occupational clusters identified by the skills panel have no educational programs in Southwest Washington (only Portland).

State investment in higher education for two to three year programs is one in every 51 residents statewide; in Southwest Washington it is one in every 71 residents. For four-year programs, the state average is one in every 66 residents and in Southwest Washington it is one in every 468 residents.

CRITICAL BARRIER

There is a lack of systematic or coordinated means to identify and address health care issues unique to Southwest Washington.

RECOMMENDATION

Complete a health care strategy unique to Southwest Washington that identifies high demand and critical health care occupations, educational capacity to train health care workers and ways for existing employees to advance within health care careers. (This report serves to address this recommendation.)

Continue to convene health care employers, workforce providers and educators in Southwest Washington to raise awareness about health care issues.

- Work with state and other local healthcare organizations to enhance legislative presence and affect legislative change.
- Examine bi-state/multi-state licensure issues.
- Address the lack of reciprocal tuition between Washington and Oregon.
- Support and advocate for state funding of identified local educational expansion plans for health care.
- Explore ways to systematically increase and sustain faculty salaries.

YEAR 1 ACTION PLAN

Continue Southwest Washington Health Care Skills Panel that will:

- Implement industry-driven recommendations identified in this plan.
- Develop a set of legislative priorities.
- Establish a set of performance measures to track progress.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The action plans listed in this report are those that can be addressed by the resources of the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council (SWWDC) and the WorkSource system. Since the workforce development funds are limited to certain eligibility requirements or types of activities, not all critical issues could be addressed by the SWWDC. Therefore, this report also acknowledges the activities of regional partners that directly address issues identified by the Skills Panel. These activities include:

- Expansion plan for nursing programs at Lower Columbia and Clark Community Colleges.
- Expansion plans of Oregon Health Sciences University and Oregon Institute of Technology.
- Retention efforts of various health care employers.
- Health care career awareness and outreach programs between employers and high schools.
- On-line training and distance learning courses used by employers to increase worker skills and keep them up to date with regulatory matters.

FOR RELATED APPENDICES

Please go to www.swwdc.org

You will find the following appendices of data:

- A. Nursing Work Group
- B. Laboratory & Imaging Technology Work Group
- C. Medical Office Work Group
- D. Career Ladders and Educational Information
- E. Background Data and Statistics
- F. Advisory Panel, Skills Panel and Workgroup Members