



## **WorkKeys® / National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) Employer Experience**

### Background

- Organization: Health Field Collaborative
- Location: Kent County
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- Detail about organization:

Health Field Collaborative is an employer member organization which has grown from the original 5 members to 8 members in 2006, including 3 acute care and 5 long-term care facilities. Programming addresses workforce development needs including retention, training and advancement of incumbent workers and recruitment of new employees.

### The Need

The Health Field Collaborative's stated goal is to stabilize their workforce and advance candidates through a rigorous assessment and training program to meet their current and future staffing needs. Building on their A.C.T. (Assess, Counsel, Train) program which bridges low-wage workers to healthcare job ladders and lattices, a WorkKeys/NCRC pilot was initiated to serve as an assessment component. Used along with an existing "soft skills" assessment tool, WorkKeys/NCRC was introduced to help employees determine skill levels and provide valuable information to support career counseling and mentoring. It was hoped that WorkKeys/NCRC would lead to self-discovery, offer encouragement and build the employee's confidence level as they formulated their career plan for entry-level work and beyond.

### The Action

WorkKeys/NCRC was marketed to the current employees within the organization at all levels. Sixty-three individuals were assessed with the following results: 29% earned Bronze, 35% earned Silver and 14% Gold certificates. The participants had a positive reaction to the new knowledge gained about themselves. One employee earning the Gold certificate joyously reported that she "found out she was smart." KeyTrain workshops were offered to employees interested in improving their skill levels. A series of career ladders were developed based on ACT database information.

The team also hosted a day of assessments for transitional workers with a manufacturing background. Of the transitional workers assessed, 7% earned no certificate, 10% earned Bronze, 45% earned Silver and 38% earned Gold certificates.

This activity clearly indicated that former manufacturing workers have the basic skills to perform entry jobs in healthcare and provided valuable insight for developing transition plans for future health care workers. Participants uncovered career interests in the process and also became better equipped to determine next steps from an educational perspective. One displaced male worker rediscovered his interest in dentistry and as a result enrolled in school to become a dental hygienist.

### The Results

The WorkKeys/NCRC pilot as part of the A.C.T. program provided many individuals with confidence and guidance to maximize their career opportunities. Positive examples from the pilot included a woman previously employed in environmental services who learned that medical technology was an area of interest and consistent with her basic skills. With the help of The Health Field Collaborative, she was able to move into a position in a lab as a phlebotomist and is now pursuing training to become a Medical Technologist. Results such as this have led to plans by the Health Field Collaborative to further develop their A.C.T. program with WorkKeys/NCRC as a critical component. The objective measurement provided by WorkKeys/NCRC overcomes generic stereotypes to provide concrete data on an individual's abilities. Through the Health Field Collaborative pilot, the organization has uncovered an excellent tool and employees have found a source of hope.

In 2008, activities will be undertaken to improve the assessment, counseling and training model and resolve open issues including logistical details around the administration of WorkKeys/NCRC.