

Summary: Health Science Industry Survey for Career Technical Education January 2022

NMPED Overview

Medical technologies and human touch come together in the Health Sciences. As the proportion of Americans over age 65 grows and more people survive serious injuries and other health issues, the need for healthcare has increased. The healthcare field is expected to include the greatest increase of new jobs in New Mexico over the next 10 years and about one third of the state's hot jobs. NMPED strongly believes in preparing our state for this demand by increasing the number of health science programs in our secondary and postsecondary schools to adequately prepare students to take this career path.

In the 10 regional New Mexico Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment meetings conducted in early 2020, 8 out of 10 regions in our state identified health science professions as a top priority. The need has grown during the pandemic and we expect it to be identified as a priority in all 10 regions in the upcoming funding cycle. The following programs are funded through Perkins V: Allied Health, Biomedical Sciences, Biotechnology, Emergency Medical Technician, Health Informatics, Health Information Technology, Health Science Fundamentals, Medical Interpreter, Medical Laboratory Technology, Nursing, Paramedic, and Pre-nursing.

In light of the current demands on our healthcare industry, the College and Career Readiness Bureau opted to survey our partners in the healthcare field in order to obtain feedback to share with our education partners and communities.

Top Entry Level Jobs and Needs

Respondents listed various jobs as top needs, including Medical Assistants, LPN's and RN's, Pharmacy Technicians, Data Entry and Medical Records, Mental Health Providers, Dieticians, Lab Technicians, and Patient Care Coordinators. They also reported need for Dental Hygienists, Clinical Social Workers, Diagnostic Medical Imaging Technicians, Allied Health Professionals, and Emergency Medical Technicians. Most agreed that industry certifications such as OSHA, CPR/First Aid, EMT and others were beneficial to set students apart during hiring. Depending on the position and job requirements, high school graduates could be hired for various entry level positions. In fact, this word cloud displays the top responses to this question:



Hiring Challenges

Almost every respondent mentioned the biggest challenge at the time is the lack of qualified applicants for various positions, and many also said attracting the right candidate for the right job. Hiring professionals find that often candidates do not fully understand what a specific position would entail. Therefore, they would like to see more career exploration within the field at the secondary and postsecondary level so that students can become more familiar with the specifics of particular occupations, before entering the profession.

Respondents reported that they must look for out-of-state applicants for many jobs, including RNs, Pharmacy Technicians, Dental Hygienists, Lab Technicians, Physician Assistants, and Respiratory Therapists were listed.

What can be done to improve high school or postsecondary health science programs and what can your company do to support these programs?

A common theme in responses to this question was the need for more exposure to the many varied careers within healthcare field, whether it be through guest speakers sharing their experiences and details about their jobs or instructors working with industry to create job shadowing and internship opportunities. Additionally, in order to increase programs and provide opportunities for students, there is a strong need for qualified healthcare instructors. Respondents indicated that without pay incentive for instructors, hiring instructors will continue to pose a challenge. Despite the current demands on healthcare professionals, many expressed their willingness to collaborate with educational institutions to provide training opportunities to our students. They reported a strong desire to build partnerships to strengthen programs and support one another. Most respondents said that they currently offer work-based learning opportunities and want to collaborate with educators. Some currently have partnerships with the educational institutions in their communities, For those that do not, they rely on social media and/or word of mouth.

Suggested Recruitment Strategies

Respondents encouraged educators to provide more exposure to the wide range of career opportunities and jobs within the field, as well as to strive to provide “hands-on” experiences in the various areas when possible. One innovative idea that was expressed was to encourage students in other areas, such as information technology or manufacturing, to consider careers along the same lines within healthcare. Other ideas included increasing tuition assistance and incentives for internship opportunities and building stronger partnerships between industry and educational institutions.

Next Steps

Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment meetings will take place regionally over the next several months, with an emphasis on reviewing existing programs, considering how well programming met the goals of the prior application, and identifying best uses of future CTE funding at both the secondary and postsecondary level. Funding applications will be submitted in late spring for funding awards in Summer 2022. Employers are encouraged to partner with a teacher, principal, district leader, or regional representative to help identify specific practices that will strengthen programs that meet local needs.

If you want more information about providing program-level input for how funds can improve CTE, please reach out to get more involved by contacting any of the PED CCRB Staff.

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