



**school
to work**

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Building a School to Work Program

Attracting minority students
to the healthcare field

bi3 Resource Guide
Spring 2022



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Overview

A growing body of research shows that having a culturally, racially and ethnically diverse healthcare workforce that reflects the community it serves can positively impact patient satisfaction, build patient-provider trust, and improve healthcare access and outcomes for all.

There are many barriers for minorities in health professions, including the cost of education; lack of academic preparation to meet admissions requirements, especially for doctoral degree programs (e.g., M.D., D.O., D.D.S., Pharm. D.); lack of mentorship and limited exposure to health careers¹.

Well-designed work-based learning programs provide healthcare organizations with access to diverse talent. Participating students benefit from robust “earn-and-learn” experiences that can change the trajectory of their lives for years to come.

In 2018, bi3 awarded a four-year, \$1.1 million grant to their strategic partner TriHealth, an integrated healthcare delivery system in southwest Ohio, to create a unique School to Work (STW) apprenticeship program. The goal: To inspire minority students to pursue careers in healthcare. TriHealth partnered with Cincinnati Public Schools, the community's largest district, serving more than 36,000 students annually, many of whom live in poverty. High school students apply to participate in the two-year paid apprenticeship program that provides them hands-on experience and mentorship in various clinical and non-clinical departments within healthcare. The program answers the call to build a more diverse healthcare workforce and provide students with an experience they cannot get in the classroom or through typical part-time jobs.



"Now I know different things about the hospital that I didn't know, and people are always open to give me advice about their journey from maybe becoming a nurse to a doctor. It just changes the way I see a lot."

– Benya Coleman, CPS Hughes High School '22
TriHealth School to Work Student 2020-2022

¹Toretsky, Christopher, Sunita Mutha, and Janet Coffman. "Breaking Barriers for Underrepresented Minorities in the Health Professions" Healthforce Center at UCSF, 30 July 2018.

What Is School to Work?

The goal of a STW program is to inspire minority students starting their junior year of high school to pursue a career in healthcare by providing real-world experience and guidance through mentorship with healthcare professionals, as well as teaching professional skills and financial literacy. In addition to increasing access and exposure, the program focuses on reducing barriers caused by poverty and community isolation that many minority students encounter.

Students are provided a first-hand glimpse into a wide range of healthcare opportunities, with a goal of students rotating through several different roles and departments within a healthcare system. The STW model uniquely allows students to earn a modest income that contributes to their family. For many students, the pressures and demands of being in a low-income family can force them to abandon their schooling to provide financial support for their household. STW enables them to continue their education while positioning them for long-term success.

School to Work programs seek to:

- 1.** Inspire and empower students by providing meaningful paid experiences in the healthcare field and teaching soft skills that can position them for long-term growth and success
- 2.** Disrupt the cycle of poverty for students and families through access to career pathways in healthcare
- 3.** Establish participating health systems as leaders in diversity workforce development while developing the next generation of diverse healthcare professionals



TriHealth's School to Work program

The STW program in Cincinnati is a partnership between TriHealth and Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS), the community's largest district, serving more than 36,000 students annually, many of whom live in poverty. The program provides CPS students with the opportunity to participate in a two-year paid apprenticeship within TriHealth.

STW helps TriHealth build community partnerships, increase the engagement of team members who serve as mentors for students, build a pipeline of diverse talent for the system and enrich students' lives. Mentors also work with students to build valuable professional skills, assist in completing college applications, facilitate recommendation letters, prepare for job interviews and more. The students are exposed to unique experiences to fuel their future school and career aspirations while building their social capital.

All nine students in TriHealth's inaugural STW class (2019-2021) graduated from high school. After graduation, all program participants attended college or trade school or enlisted in the military. Half of the class continued working for TriHealth in part-time, entry-level positions. Most recently, the University of Cincinnati awarded one student graduating in 2022 a full scholarship, including expenses, to pursue medical sciences.

TriHealth modeled its program on the success and proven outcomes of Rochester General Hospital's Youth Apprenticeship Program in New York

Since Rochester General Hospital's Youth Apprenticeship Program began in 1989, nearly 600 students have completed it. Over a nine-year period, 100% of the 200 students completed the program, graduated from high school and gained college acceptance. Each year between 85%-95% of these students pursued careers in healthcare, 75%-80% of students finished a two-year or four-year college degree and 60% remained in the healthcare field.

"I can credit the School to Work program as the most impactful experience that helped me choose to become a nurse and then to become a physician. My time working in Rochester General Hospital with program leaders, mentors and job coaches helped me believe in myself and achieve my passion of caring for patients."

– Adaobi Ikpeze, R.N., M.D., Pediatric Residency, Rochester General Hospital Youth Apprenticeship Program Participant 2008-2010



Getting Started

Assessing feasibility

- **Gain support and advocates from healthcare system leadership**

The implementation of TriHealth's STW program originated with Jeremiah Kirkland, a TriHealth executive leader and Rochester STW graduate, who gained support from Mark Clement, President and CEO of TriHealth. Clement was familiar with Rochester General Hospital's program and immediately recognized the potential for TriHealth and the community.



"The School to Work program gave me my start in healthcare and helped me believe I could lead in healthcare even though I didn't see many African American leaders or clinicians at the time. I look back 20 years later as a leader helping to provide this opportunity to many other students in another city, and I can't be more grateful."

– Jeremiah Kirkland, Evendale Hospital President and COO, Executive Director of Women's Service Line, and Executive Sponsor of School to Work at TriHealth
Rochester General Hospital Youth Apprenticeship Program Participant

- **Select a partner school with a student population diverse in race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status**

Research school districts to determine high schools that may benefit most from this program.

Factors to consider:

- Free and reduced lunch percentages
- Graduation rates
- Racial and ethnic diversity
- State department of education report cards

- **Build support from the identified school district, including the school board and the selected high school leadership team**

A successful program will have its champions, facilitators and different organizational approaches working together. Identify one leader from the school who will work closely with the healthcare system's project manager to ensure collaboration, coordination and alignment.

- **Assess the readiness of each partner**

Questions to consider:

School district

- Can students work during school hours?
- Can the school's academic calendar accommodate students working 12-15 hours/week during school hours?
- Do the students have access to transportation to and from school?
- Do students have lunch provided?
- How many students will participate in the pilot and from what school?
- Can the school district develop a team dedicated to working with students in the program?
- How will students' participation in the program impact graduation requirements?
- Who will be the main point of contact for the program?
- Has the district engaged in any other co-op programs?
- What supports are available to students from the district to support their participation?
- Does the school have the capacity and resources to be successful?

Healthcare system

- Does the healthcare system culture support mentoring and learning?
- Are there healthcare system staff willing to serve as job mentors for students?
- Is the healthcare system leadership in support of the program?
- What types of funding sources are available to support the program, short-term and long-term?
- Can the healthcare system develop a team that can support the needs of students beyond job support (e.g., financial education, balancing family challenges, building soft skills, etc.)?
- How will the healthcare system communicate and elevate the program internally and in the community?



"The School to Work program enables us to expand the reach of our talent pipeline while providing high school students with meaningful exposure to the world of healthcare."

– **Mark Clement, President and CEO at TriHealth**

- **Develop a plan to identify funding to support the program**

The healthcare system and school district must play an active role in determining funding. Each partner must commit to the program and the value and benefit the program can bring to students and the community at large. Funding for the program may include a combination of operating dollars, foundation/philanthropic support, or in-kind resources from both the school district and the healthcare system.

Building the Program Model and Budget

Essential steps for starting a program

- **Recruit a Program Manager**

The Program Manager plays a key role in the initial planning and development of the program. The Program Manager serves as point-of-contact with the identified school district to establish successful processes and practices and ensure all state-required career and technical education needs are met.

The Program Manager is expected to:

- Identify healthcare system team members/staff from various departments to serve as job mentors
- Develop a didactic curriculum with support materials for students to learn medical terminology at the school along with policies and codes of conduct within the healthcare setting
- Develop recruitment and application processes
- Create marketing materials and work with the school district to promote the program
- Work with community leaders, foundations and philanthropists to fund the program
- Create an interview panel and program governance committee including



"After high school, the School to Work students have two years of hospital experience that gives them the edge when trying to apply for healthcare jobs. I'm teaching them life skills and lessons, how to be productive here at TriHealth or any organization where they may go throughout their careers."

– **Michael Jones, School to Work Program Manager at TriHealth**

representatives from the school district, program operations teams, sponsor organizations and human resources

- Interview all students that complete the application process
- Develop training materials and identify consultants or service groups that can onboard job coaches and students
- Prepare departments to receive students
- Implement and evaluate training programs (i.e., cultural competency, implicit bias, communication, etc.)
- Maintain strong communication with job mentors



While the Program Manager role should be full-time and potentially hired from outside the healthcare system, the job mentors are volunteers already employed at the hospital. TriHealth's STW budget includes the Program Manager's salary and incentives for job mentors.

- **Establish program accountability and measures**

Identify measures at the start (refer to the "Measurement and Evaluation" section on page 9). Successful partnerships foster open and honest communication and seek ongoing feedback. Trust and transparency are essential.

- **Develop a structured meeting calendar**

Ongoing communication and meetings allow partners to identify and mitigate challenges and barriers and determine how to sustain and grow the program in their community.

- **Determine number of students and time needed to build the program**

The first step in building the program model and budget is determining the number of students to serve in the first-year pilot. The program pilot should begin with no less than five and no more than 10 students to provide opportunities for learning and adaptation. Students are eligible to join the program their junior year and remain through their senior year, assuming students maintain a grade average of 2.5 and stay free of significant disciplinary issues. This small cohort allows both parties to build a program model that is both manageable and scalable. The recommended time frame for planning, implementing, piloting, scaling and sustaining is three to four years. After completing the 10-student pilot in 2021, TriHealth is scaling the program to serve 50 students per year.

- **Establish roles and rotations**

TriHealth's STW program model allows each student to rotate through 8-10 departments within the healthcare system throughout the two-year program. TriHealth rotations included Labor and Delivery, Rehabilitation Services, Pharmacy,

"We really love having all of the School to Work students; they do so much for us. We've had a few students return to us on rotation, and we've come to rely on them. We've seen students become experts in things that need to be done around the department. We've had some transitions recently and have even seen one student train new team members. They've had such an impact on us."

— Anna Smith, P.T., D.P.T., Physical Therapist at TriHealth

Transportation, Logistics, Telemetry/Vascular, Behavioral Health, Food and Nutrition, and Perioperative Services.

- Each rotation at TriHealth is between 9-10 weeks, giving the students ample time to build relationships with their job mentors and learn about the various healthcare roles within each department.
- The Program Manager and job mentors are responsible for developing specific hands-on activities and tasks for students to complete as a part of their rotation in each department. There can be more than one job mentor within each department.

The Appendix contains an example chart.



- **Determine hourly wage for students**

In the TriHealth STW program, students are hired and paid as healthcare system employees to earn while they learn. Student wages are a significant portion of the program budget, with each paid a nominal hourly rate and provided with a uniform and supplies.



- **Determine transportation**

A transportation source is a crucial element of the STW program. The healthcare system and school district should work together to determine transportation for the students to and from the hospital. In the TriHealth STW program, students are responsible for their ride to the hospital each morning, with students receiving a bus pass if applicable. A shuttle takes students back to the school following the shift.

A sample budget is included for reference in the Appendix.



Implementing the Program

Recruitment of students

The Program Manager should work directly with the school district to begin program recruitment, selection and onboarding for students. Outreach should begin the January before the upcoming school year.

Recruitment efforts include:

- The school reviews possible candidates with counselors and reaches out to the identified students with program information.
- The school provides program informational sessions, resume writing and mock interview support.
- The school evaluates students who meet the following criteria for application:
 - Enrollment at participating school
 - 2.5 GPA or higher
 - 94% attendance
 - Completed resume
 - Three references
 - Completed work permit

- A team of representatives from the healthcare system and the school interviews students and makes selections.
- Once selected by the school to participate, each interested student completes a program/healthcare system application and gets signed parent/guardian permission.
- The selection team provides feedback to students who are not accepted. These students are encouraged to reapply. If students progress, they may participate in the program for their senior year.

Examples of recruitment materials can be found in the Appendix.



Orientation and execution

- Once students are interviewed and selected, they attend an orientation at the hospital to complete paperwork and receive additional details about program expectations, including healthcare system policies, orientation, grading systems and the student handbook.
- The Program Manager is responsible for working with each student to confirm their work schedule and transportation, as well as communicating with each department's job coach. The Program Manager also coordinates with the school district to ensure students are not missing any of their core classes and are on track for advancement and graduation.
- The Program Manager remains in regular communication with each student to monitor their grades, ensure they have a positive and valuable experience in the program and serve as the first point of contact for resolving student or mentor performance concerns. Job mentors also complete a monthly student assessment.



"The School to Work program is really helpful. You have people here that are willing to help you. You just go to build connections with them. They will even help you with schoolwork. I learned so much about applying for college just through my job."

– Keyona Schill, CPS Hughes High School '21
TriHealth School to Work Student 2019-2021

Examples of the materials described above can be found in the Appendix.

Measurement and Evaluation

Indicators of program success may include:

- Number of students enrolled
- Number of hours worked by each student
- Student GPA
- Student graduation rates
- Number of students hired by the healthcare system post-graduation
- Number of students enrolled in college, a trade school or registered in the military after graduation
- Expansion of program for additional students or schools

System measures to consider:

- Increase in workforce diversity: Programs like STW can serve as a vital component of a healthcare system's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) goals. By intentionally recruiting racially and ethnically diverse students, a healthcare system can increase the diversity of its staff and boost DEI efforts.
- Graduation rates: School systems benefit from programs like this as well. Graduation rates may increase from students' participation in a program like STW as the team monitors students' grades closely while in the program. In addition, the program allows students to work during the school day vs. after school, providing them more opportunities to focus on their studies. The program is too new to track substantive graduation rates, but 100% of the inaugural class graduated, with 100% in the program currently on track to graduate.



Sustainability

Programs like STW need dedicated, sustainable funding to continue long-term. Healthcare systems may consider allocating community benefit dollars, setting up an endowment or establishing an annual giving campaign. Healthcare systems and school district staff may be willing to contribute to and support the program through an annual giving campaign if the opportunity to contribute is made available to them. A strong communications strategy should accompany any fundraising plan. It has been very effective for TriHealth/bi3 to share students' testimonials to garner financial commitments of support from the board and team members. Specific numbers are highly dependent on the proposed number of students participating annually, as their earnings make up a significant amount of the annual budget.

A sample annual budget can be found in the Appendix.

Additional Information: Why Diversity in Healthcare Is Necessary

Diversity in healthcare has a long way to go before it represents the general population it serves. Evidence includes:



A 2018 study referenced in Harvard Business Review showed having a Black doctor resulted in Black men receiving more effective care than when a non-Black doctor treated them.



A recent study from George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health found a severe lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the healthcare workforce³.



While about 12% of the U.S. workforce was Black in 2019, their diversity index* in the healthcare professions studied was 0.54.



For Latinos, who represented 18.2% of the U.S. workforce, the diversity index among the healthcare professions studied was 0.34.



Native Americans, who accounted for 0.6% of the overall U.S. workforce, showed a diversity index of 0.54.

**The diversity index compares the representation of people of color in each profession to their representation in the population. A value equal to 1 indicates equal representation.*

These studies suggest that additional efforts are needed to increase the number of Black, Hispanic and Native American people in healthcare professions. Additionally, measuring and reporting on the representation of these groups in the healthcare workforce and educational pipeline may encourage these efforts.

²"The Need for More Doctors of Color in Greater Cincinnati: A Call to Action for Investing in the Health of Our Community." Doctors Foundation (2020).

³Salsberg, Edward, Chelsea Richwine, Sara Westergaard, Maria Portela Martinez, Toyese Oyeyemi, Anushree Vichare, and Candice P. Chen. "Estimation and Comparison of Current and Future Racial/ethnic Representation in the US Health Care Workforce." JAMA Network Open 4.3 (2021).

Appendix

We have several additional resources available on our website, including:

- 1. About School to Work***
- 2. Building the program***
- 3. Funding the program***
- 4. Implementing the program***
- 5. Program evaluation***
- 6. Cited research***

You can find these resources at bi3.org/school-to-work-resources or by scanning the code below.



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For more information contact:

Jill Miller, President and CEO, Bethesda Inc.
[\(jill_miller@bi3.org\)](mailto:jill_miller@bi3.org) **(513) 569-6652**

Kiana Trabue, Vice President of Strategic Partnerships, bi3
[\(kiana_trabue@bi3.org\)](mailto:kiana_trabue@bi3.org) **(513) 569-9396**

Jennifer Zimmerman, Vice President of Evaluation and Impact, bi3
[\(jennifer_zimmerman@bi3.org\)](mailto:jennifer_zimmerman@bi3.org) **(513) 569-6673**

About bi3

bi3 is on a mission to transform health for all people in Greater Cincinnati by fueling innovation and health equity through grantmaking.

bi3 leverages its strategic partnership with TriHealth to spark and scale new approaches to healthcare and partners with community-based organizations to fuel new solutions to deep-seated community health issues. bi3 envisions a day when every person has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible—a day when a person's health can no longer be predicted by race, ethnicity, ability or zip code.

bi3 is a philanthropic initiative created by Bethesda Inc. to drive innovation in healthcare and improve community health outcomes.

Learn more at bi3.org.