

Eastern Connecticut Healthcare Regional Sector Partnership Launch Meeting Summary

Background: What is the Eastern Connecticut Healthcare Regional Sector Partnership?

A group of thirty-two healthcare executives from across Eastern Connecticut met on January 30, 2023 to form an industry-driven, regional partnership committed to strengthening the healthcare industry. This partnership is being modeled off [other, similar partnerships](#) active in 20 states around the country. It will serve as a forum for healthcare business leaders to work together in strengthening their industry in collaboration with partners in education, workforce development and economic development. A list of industry partners is included at the end of this summary.

The partnership is being convened by Quinebaug Valley Community College and the Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region (seCTer), with support from the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board, Three Rivers Community College, and the Northeastern Connecticut Chamber of Commerce, among others.

The launch meeting included a discussion of trends and opportunities for the industry as well as required actions to capitalize on these opportunities. The team came away with five initial working groups, with healthcare industry champions volunteering in each area. The discussion is summarized below.

Trends and Opportunities for Healthcare in Eastern Connecticut

Business leaders first discussed the potential for the healthcare sector in Eastern Connecticut, identifying opportunities or drivers of growth, including:

- Creating pathways into rewarding healthcare careers that expand the pipeline of talent and reflect the diversity of the region.
- Giving employees and younger people more reasons to stay here in Eastern Connecticut.
- Working together to stabilize the cost of labor and to stop the wage “arms race”.

Actions Required to Leverage Opportunities

Industry participants next identified the most important requirements to capitalize on the opportunities for the healthcare sector in Eastern Connecticut. They prioritized five initial areas for action. They also identified two priorities to discuss in the next full partnership meeting.

Attract More People to Healthcare Careers

Action Team Kickoff Call: Thursday, February 9, 8am-9am via [Zoom](#)

Industry Champions: Bill Aniskovich, CEO, Stonington Behavioral Health; Karen Donorfio, VP of Operations, Apple Rehab; Carrie Dyer, CEO, Reliance Health; Dan Gerwien, HR Manager, Perception Programs; Stacey Lawton, CEO, SCADD; Melissa Meyers, CEO, Generations Family Health Center; Billy Nelson, Executive Director, Fairview Healthcare Center; Lisa Ryan, Administrator, Matulaitis Nursing Home; Kristie Scott, CEO, Perception Programs; Robert Viens, Director of Pharmacy, Day Kimball Hospital; Zakkyya Williams, Community Relations Coordinator, Yale New Haven Health

This priority focuses on getting people excited about careers in healthcare, including:

- Focusing on diverse and underrepresented populations to achieve a workforce pipeline reflective of a diverse population.

- Emphasizing why young people should consider healthcare careers and visiting high schools to talk to counselors and students.
- Better marketing of training programs to general public,
- Recruiting primary doctors.

Improve Training (Quality, Quantity, Access)

Action Team Kickoff Call: Wednesday, February 8, 9am-10am via [Zoom](#)

Industry Champions: Greg Allard, Vice President, American Ambulance; Jim Fidanzo, Administrator, Mansfield Nursing & Rehab Center; Diane Manning, President/CEO, United Services; Ginny Person, Administrator, Saint Joseph's Living Center, Inc.; Curtis Rodowicz, Administrator, Colonial Health & Rehab Center of Plainfield

This priority focuses on strengthening and expanding local career paths in healthcare, including:

- Improving the **quality of training** for candidates who are new to healthcare and for internal staff through formal structures for a healthcare pipeline. Ideas for improving training for internal staff included growth opportunities for line staff, and leadership training for staff. Ideas for improvements to training for candidates who are new to healthcare include: formalizing the healthcare pipeline structure; expanding clinical experience for graduates; and creating/expanding experiential learning tracks at local colleges and universities or coordinating a process to provide students a shadowing experience.
- Improving the **quantity of training** by expanding continuing education and increasing the number of instructors.
- Improving **access to training** by making programs (LPN, CNA) easier to access geographically, making programs easier to find through a directory of programs, and identifying financial assistance such as organizational sponsorships (for LPN, RN, CNA), tuition forgiveness programs that are actually accessible (can qualify for benefits), or tuition free training in exchange for years of service.

Improve Quality of Life for Employees

Action Team Kickoff Call: Friday, February 10, 8am-9am via [Zoom](#)

Industry Champions: Greg Allard, Vice President, American Ambulance; Amy Bentley, Administrator, Beechwood Rehabilitation; Angela Brown, Director of HR, Fairview Healthcare Center; Carrie Dyer, CEO, Reliance Health; Pam Kinder, VP of Business Development, United Community & Family Services; Alexandra Lucas, Regional Director of Business Development, Complete Care Management; Suzanne Marvin, Administrator, CareCo Shoreline; Shaun Mastroianni, President & CEO, Pierce Memorial Baptist Home; Emily Morrison, Director of Development, United Services; John O'Keefe, Chief Nursing Officer and Vice President, Patient Services, Day Kimball Hospital; Ted Vinci, Administrator, Complete Care Harrington Court; Carley Warzecha, Manager of Workforce Development and Volunteer Services, Hartford HealthCare; Joe Zuzel, Director of Community Health, Hartford HealthCare

This priority focuses on creating an environment of dignity and respect for healthcare workers and the individuals being served and making communities more livable and attractive, including:

- Collaborating and sharing best practices to improve healthcare working environments such as providing a sense of community for remote workers, reducing workplace violence, reducing workplace injury, and recognizing that non-direct staff are essential too.

- Investing in neighborhoods to make communities attractive by improving workforce housing and addressing childcare issues.
- Addressing burnout, mental wellness of staff, including stopping stigma around mental health support.
- Changing the narrative around fear of losing state benefits due to working and earning more.

Policy

Action Team Kickoff Call: Will be scheduled.

Industry Champions: Greg Allard, Vice President, American Ambulance; Patrick Green, Executive Vice President, Yale New Haven Health; Donna Handley, Senior Vice President, Hartford HealthCare; Shaun Mastroianni, President & CEO, Pierce Memorial Baptist Home; Steve Vera, CEO, Wachussett Healthcare; Setu Vora, Chief Medical Officer, Mashantucket Pequot Tribe - Pequot Healthcare

This priority focuses on using the collective business voice of the partnership to educate town and state officials and make the case for improved policies to benefit the healthcare sector, such as:

- Updating education requirements for positions such as nurses.
- Creating government supported incentives for SDOH need of workers.
- Allowing hiring of unvaccinated applicants for skilled nursing facilities.
- Bypassing Conrad-30 J-1 visa waiver.
- Facilitating license transfer between states.

Stabilize Cost of Labor

Action Team Kickoff Call: Will be scheduled.

Industry Champions: Bill Aniskovich, CEO, Stonington Behavioral Health; Kyle Kramer, CEO, Day Kimball Hospital; Steve Vera, CEO, Wachussett Healthcare; Liisa Livingston, CFO, Fairview Healthcare Center (invited)

This priority areas focuses on stabilizing the cost of labor. Ideas included:

- Stop the wage “arms race”
- Agency rate control
- Indexing from funding/billing sources
- Normalize to fair market value
- Reimbursement that matches cost

Technology

No action team yet. Champions are initially joining training action team call.

Industry Champions: Nicole Lewis, Executive Director, Villa Maria Nursing & Rehab, Paula Muenier, Apple Rehab; Setu Vora, Chief Medical Officer, Mashantucket Pequot Tribe - Pequot Healthcare

Ideas for this potential priority area included streamlining work processes with technology (automated intelligence, etc.); allowing more virtual/telehealth appointments to free up medical transportation; and using technology to adapt to work from home environment.

Collaborate for Quality and Efficiency (Care Coordination)

Need more champions for a viable action team; will revisit in the future.

Industry Champions: Paula Meunier, Apple Rehab

Ideas for this potential priority area included sharing best practices, inter-organizational sharing of resources that are non-clinical, protecting the safety net, and increasing service lines via cooperation with partners.

Next Steps

Over the next three weeks, each action team will meet via Zoom to clarify objectives (ie, what does success look like) and near-term action items to advance their priority areas. The full partnership will reconvene later this year to take stock of progress and strategize about needed next steps to move the agenda forward.

Launch Meeting and Action Team Participants

Industry Partners

- Jane Downing, Owner and Operations Manager, Home Instead (co-chair)
- Patrick Green, Executive Vice President, Yale New Haven Health (co-chair)
- Donna Handley, Senior Vice President, Hartford HealthCare (co-chair)
- Pam Kinder, VP of Business Development, United Community & Family Services (co-chair)
- Diane Manning, President/CEO, United Services (co-chair)
- Emily Morrison, Director of Development, United Services (co-chair)
- Lisa Ryan, Administrator, Matulaitis Nursing Home (co-chair)
- Bill Aniskovich, CEO, Stonington Behavioral Health
- Greg Allard, Vice President, American Ambulance
- Amy Bentley, Administrator, Beechwood Rehabilitation
- Angela Brown, Director of HR, Fairview Healthcare Center
- Karen Donorfio, VP of Operations, Apple Rehab
- Carrie Dyer, CEO, Reliance Health
- Jim Fidanzo, Administrator, Mansfield Nursing & Rehab Center
- Dan Gerwien, HR Manager, Perception Programs
- Kyle Kramer, CEO, Day Kimball Hospital
- Stacey Lawton, CEO, SCADD
- Nicole Lewis, Executive Director, Villa Maria Nursing & Rehab
- Alexandra Lucas, Regional Director of Business Development, Complete Care Management
- Suzanne Marvin, Administrator, CareCo Shoreline
- Shaun Mastroianni, President & CEO, Pierce Memorial Baptist Home
- Melissa Meyers, CEO, Generations Family Health Center
- Paula Muenier, Apple Rehab
- Billy Nelson, Executive Director, Fairview Healthcare Center
- John O'Keefe, Chief Nursing Officer and Vice President, Patient Services, Day Kimball Hospital
- Ginny Person, Administrator, Saint Joseph's Living Center, Inc.
- Curtis Rodowicz, Administrator, Colonial Health & Rehab Center of Plainfield

- Kristie Scott, CEO, Perception Programs
- Steve Vera, CEO, Wachussett Healthcare
- Robert Viens, Director of Pharmacy, Day Kimball Hospital
- Setu Vora, Chief Medical Officer, Mashantucket Pequot Tribe - Pequot Healthcare
- Ted Vinci, Administrator, Complete Care Harrington Court
- Carley Warzecha, Manager of Workforce Development and Volunteer Services, Hartford HealthCare
- Zakkyya Williams, Community Relations Coordinator, Yale New Haven Health
- Joe Zuzel, Director of Community Health, Hartford HealthCare

Co-Conveners and Support Partners

- Patricia Meyer, Director, Workforce Development & Continuing Education, QVCC (co-convener)
- Paul Whitescarver, Executive Director, seCTer (co-convener)
- Joseph Violette, Business Retention and Expansion Specialist, seCTer (co-convener)
- Tracey Ariel, Program Director, Office of Workforce Strategy
- Angela Adams, Executive Director, Greater Norwich Area Chamber of Commerce
- David Allard, Senior Manager of Talent Acquisition, EWIB
- Diane Bordonaro, Regional Workforce Officer, CT State
- Patricia King, CTEC
- Betti Kuszaj, Executive Director, Northeastern CT Chamber of Commerce
- Carol LaBelle, Sr. Director of Programs & Special Projects, EWIB
- Linda Riquier, EWIB
- Malia Sieve, Career Pathways Site Director, Eastern Connecticut, ReadyCT
- Ben Stang, Director of Healthcare Workforce Strategy, Social Venture Partners
- Erin Sullivan, Director, Workforce Development & Continuing Education, TRCC
- Tracy Tremblay, Community Impact Initiatives Manager, United Way of Southeastern CT