

Eastern Connecticut Healthcare Partnership (ECHP)

May 14, 2026 Meeting Summary

EWIB, Franklin

MEETING SUMMARY

Participants reviewed and discussed the following opportunities to build the workforce pipeline:

- Marketing healthcare careers in the region via producing “day in the life” videos.
- Participating in the CT Summer Youth Employment program – with a range of options available from student internships to tours / job shadowing.
- Partnering with Youth Healthcare Pipeline Initiative (YHPI) high schools on instruction / clinical placements in CNA and EMT training.
- Partnering with CT State and postsecondary partners to build the workforce pipeline in areas of need (e.g., respiratory therapist).
- Working with the Business Services Team to support incumbent worker training and on-the-job training via EWIB’s new IWT grant.

See the [meeting slides](#) and below for details on these opportunities and ways to get involved.

WELCOME

Partnership Co-Chair Pam Kinder (UCFS) welcomed everyone to the meeting, and asked employers to share one word that describes “your biggest workforce challenge right now.” Responses included: Staffing (multiple participants); Education / training / upskilling; Crisis; Succession planning; Healthcare benefits; Rural; Transportation; Time; and Capacity.

Dave Bechtel reviewed the agenda – noting that this meeting builds on the discussion at our October meeting and includes new opportunities and projects that can help address workforce challenges. See the [meeting slides](#) for details on each of the agenda topics discussed below.

BUILDING THE HEALTHCARE PIPELINE – ATTRACTING FUTURE EMPLOYEES

Marketing Careers in the Region

Pam shared an opportunity for employers to participate as a site in brief “day in the life” videos that can showcase key careers at their organizations. Pam introduced CT State Three Rivers student Dyllan Haggett, who can devote 90 hours over the summer to developing and producing the videos. Pam noted that UCFS will serve as the first site to refine the process. These videos can be utilized by both employers and support partners as part of recruitment, student orientations, career events, etc.

Pam encouraged employers to participate – and five healthcare employers indicated their interest in participating (via an online survey).

CT Youth Employment Program / Summer Healthcare “Boot Camp”

Cyndi Wells (EASTCONN) shared information on opportunities for healthcare employers to participate in the Summer Youth Employment program. Youth (ages 14-24) are paid via the CT Youth Employment Program. Employers can participate in a range of ways:

- Offer summer internships, which are typically 12-20 hours / week for 5 weeks.
- Participate in a planned 20-hour Healthcare “Boot Camp” as a guest speaker, site for tours, or by participating in informational interviews or job shadowing. EASTCONN will deliver a range of interactive and immersive trainings (e.g., virtual reality simulations) as part of the program.

Participants discussed the program and opportunity:

- How are youth selected? All youth who complete the application are interviewed, with the goal of matching them to a worksite that aligns with their interests and is logistically feasible. EWIB received more funding this summer, so is able to serve more youth (if there are employers that can provide internships). Last year, they served approximately 450 youth, with 500 on a waitlist.
- What percent of youth are hired? About 25% are hired. Most youth are in high school (16 or 17 years old), so would not be hired at the end of the summer.
- What are employer responsibilities for the internships? There is a worksite agreement, where employers agree to complete a feedback form two times during the program, supervise the youth, and support trainings at the worksite (EASTCONN can help with this). EASTCONN pays the youth.
- Melissa Meyers suggested “Jump Start” instead of Boot Camp.

Employers can contact Heather O’Brien at hobrien@eastconn.org to get involved.

Durable Skills Training

Cyndi also described EASTCONN’s new durable skills training. EASTCONN shared an early version of the curriculum (then called “Healthcare Soft Skills”) at the December 2025 HEAT Team meeting. EASTCONN is currently delivering this 25-hour interactive training to high school students in the Youth Healthcare Pipeline Initiative (YHPI) and will deliver it as part of the Summer Youth program.

Cyndi noted that the Durable Skills modules can also be customized and delivered for current healthcare employees. While the training is not an industry-recognized credential, they do offer digital badges for training modules. (At the December HEAT Team meeting, several employers expressed interest in offering this training for new employees.)

Youth Healthcare Pipeline Initiative (YHPI) Update

David Allard (EWIB) shared an update on YHPI – which expanded to four new schools in 2025-26, with 174 students enrolled pursuing credentials in CNA (123), EMT (40), and medical interpreting (11). Last year, 92% of students reported being employed or enrolling in post-secondary education after graduating.

Michael Nogelo (EWIB) noted that the funding for YHPI and the Healthcare Partnership is ending on June 30, 2026. While there are several funding sources to sustain these efforts, there may be gaps in funding in the short-term. To sustain YHPI, EWIB has discussed an “Adopt-A-School” model where employers support clinical placements and instruction.

Participants discussed opportunities to strengthen and sustain YHPI:

- Can the Partnership develop a way for employers to easily connect with YHPI students? It's difficult to connect given the number of high schools involved in YHPI. David suggested **contacting the Business Services Team** (Jeff Martel jeff@nectchamber.com or Joelle Garrett at JGarrett@chamberect.com) to facilitate recruitment efforts.
- It would be helpful to involve the United Way's Eastern CT Health Collaborative (EHC), which is working with New Capacities and NFA on workforce pathways.
- Co-chair Mike Davis (HHC) suggested having employers deliver instruction as a way to sustain YHPI. David noted that this was successfully piloted in Killingly.

Strengthening Partnerships with Educators

Salvador Bondoc, Dean of Nursing, Allied Health & Human Services at CT State Community College, presented CT State's logic model and examples of academic-employer partners (see [slides](#) for details).

- In launching new academic programs, CT State looks at workforce data, assesses the feasibility of new programs (including employer partnerships and student interest), and identifies resources for programs.
- Current partnerships include a new Respiratory Care program at Gateway with support from YNH, replication of Quinebaug Valley's Medical Lab Tech program at Housatonic with support from Workforce Alliance, and a new Public Health program at Three Rivers (among others) with support from DPH.
- Future initiatives include exploration of healthcare program replication at Three Rivers, regional healthcare career fairs (vs. campus-specific), and preparation for Workforce Pell.
- Success factors include: (1) regular, consistent, focused and collaborative communication across partners; (2) shared goals; and (3) sharing of expertise.

Participants discussed the following topics:

- What is CT State's overall visions for meeting workforce needs? Can CT State just look at data to identify candidates and then work with employers to prioritize? Sal noted that data is important, but CT State also looks at feasibility. Is there employer support? Is there student demand? What resources can CT State utilize? It can take three years to launch a new program, so it's important to assess its feasibility.
- Sal noted that replicating an existing program is much faster – the program would just need Board of Regents approval.
- Carrie Dyer (Reliance) noted that her workforce needs are for non-licensed direct care staff. She is part of the Direct Service Professionals (DSP) effort, but DSP does not have a credential yet. Sal stated that CT State has a non-credit side, but this is a different system that works closely with employer partners.
- Melissa Meyers asked about healthcare programs across the entire CT State system, including online programs. Sal will share the updated listing of programs by campus, and noted that Health Information Technology (at Middlesex) is the only online healthcare program. Nancy Taylor stated that Charter Oak has an online Revenue Cycle Management program, and Karen Bellnier stated that Mitchell College has an online [Health and Human Services](#) degree program.

BUILDING THE HEALTHCARE PIPELINE – ENSURING A THRIVING WORKFORCE

Child Care Resources

Dave shared an update from the Quality of Life Team on early childhood education (ECE) resources:

- [Southeastern CT Childcare Collective](#), contact [Kathleen Hollister](#)
- Northeast CT Childcare Needs (NCCN) Project, contact [Maggie Francis-Gietzen](#)
- [New London County Tri-Share Pilot](#), see [this link](#) for overview, contact [Adrenna Paolillo](#)

Industry Driven Skills Training Grant for Healthcare Employers

Jeff Martel (Business Services Team) shared information on a new grant that supports incumbent worker training (IWT) and on-the-job training (OJT). This grant is available to healthcare and manufacturing employers in eastern CT.

The grant has different elements (see [slides](#) for details), but Jeff urged employers to contact him at jeff@nectchamber.com or Joelle Garrett at JGarrett@chamberect.com to work through the details. Jeff and Joelle will do their best to make the contracts happen.

Participants shared other training opportunities:

- Tracy Ariel (OWS) noted **Workforce Pell** as an opportunity to expand financial aid for short-term, career-focused training programs. Committees are forming now to validate credentials that will be eligible for Workforce Pell (need to meet federal criteria), and OWS will ask the Regional Sector Partnerships to provide subject matter experts to serve on these committees. Individuals can also contact Tracy at Tracy.Ariel@ct.gov to learn more about joining a committee.
- Natalie Crino (HEC) shared information on **Community Health Worker (CHW)** training. There are two options: 2,000 hours of experience, or 1,000 hours and 90 hours of training (which HEC offers).
- Maria Belval (Three Rivers) noted that their goal is to complete the **Direct Service Professional (DSP) certification** by June 30.
- Chris Mulhall (CHC/ACT) suggested considering non-certified roles – including **billing & coding** and **revenue cycle management**. Ginger Frasca (Generations) agreed that these are critical roles that can be difficult to fill.
- Ginger encouraged employers to offer clinical rotations – Generations has had success in hiring medical assistant students.
- Kimberly O'Halloran shared that the next meeting of the **Windham Chamber of Commerce Health & Wellness Council** is on May 28. See [this link](#) for information.

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Co-chair Mike Davis (HHC) thanked everyone for their participation and summarized next steps:

- Consider serving as a site for "day in the life" videos.
- Consider participating at some level in the Summer Youth Employment program (i.e., guest speaker, interviewing, intern site).

- The **HEAT Action Team will meet on June 11th** to discuss the “Boot Camp” and HEC’s expanded training via the Rural Health Transformation grant. Members can email Dave Bechtel (bechtel@xsector.com) to join an Action Team and learn more about the topics discussed at meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

Industry Partners: Ginger Frasca and Melissa Meyers (Generations Family Health Center), Mike Davis, Nicole Shaw, Carley Warzecha, and Joseph Zuzel (Hartford HealthCare), Dr. Gwenn Rosenberg (New London Natural Health), Carrie Dyer (Reliance Health), Cheri Golia (SCADD), Pam Kinder (United Community & Family Services), Diane Manning (United Services), and Ann Hogan (Yale New Haven Health)

Support Partners: Nancy Taylor (Charter Oak State University), Christopher Mulhall (Community Health Center Association of CT), Tiffany Morrissey (CT Health Council), Tracy Ariel (CT Office of Workforce Strategy), Dr. Salvador Bondoc (CT State), Jacquie Wetherell (CT State Quinebaug Valley), Maria Belval (and her students), Erin Sullivan and Dyllan Haggett (CT State Three Rivers), Cyndi Wells (EASTCONN), Dr. Eunice Mathews Armstead (Eastern CT State University), David Allard, Melissa Laws, Allie Moscaritolo, and Michael Nogelo (EWIB), Natalie Crino (Health Education Center), Karen Bellnier (Mitchell College), Jeff Martel (NE Chamber of Commerce), Alyssa McClain and Carrie Pederson (OIC New London County), Carol Heller (Social Impact Partners), Cesarina Thompson (St. Joseph's University), Kim O'Halloran (Windham Chamber of Commerce), Dave Bechtel (Cross Sector)