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Idaho Department of Labor collaborates with St. Luke's on new medical assistant apprenticeship program

The Idaho Department of Labor has partnered with St. Luke's on a new apprenticeship program to meet the demand for more certified medical assistants (MA) in the Treasure Valley and Blaine County.

The first group of eight recruits started the St. Luke's apprenticeship program in January. As a competency-based program, students earn their credentialed MA status once they have demonstrated knowledge and skill in the examination and treatment of patients. Most students complete the training in nine to 12 months.

Funding is provided from a a \$1.4 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor awarded to Idaho in 2016 to expand registered apprenticeships throughout the state in health care, information technology, advanced manufacturing, and energy. The Idaho Labor and Idaho Division of Career & Technical Education are working together on ApprenticeshipIdaho with industry partners PTECH, TechHelp, the Idaho Hospital Association and the Idaho Technology Council.

Demand for MAs, and health care workers in general, is high in Idaho and throughout the country, and hiring skilled workers is competitive, said John Russ, ApprenticeshipIdaho coordinator at the Idaho Department of Labor.

With support from the federal grant, participants in the MA apprenticeship program are paid during their training. The registered apprenticeship "earn and learn" structure provided a solution to a significant shortage of trained MAs, he said.

"There are a lot of advantages to a registered apprenticeship program," said Alicia Young, MSN, MBA, RN, St. Luke's Clinic Chief Nursing Officer. "This unique training model ensures that the MA participants are trained on the job, in our clinics, while meeting specific job elements they will need to succeed as MAs at St. Luke's. The MA apprentice is paid competitive wages while gaining on-the-job experience, and an amazing team of St. Luke's Clinic nursing leaders supporting each candidate through their program journey."

Besides the appeal of earning wages while training, outreach efforts such as phone screenings helped with recruitments efforts, Russ said. Department of Labor staff worked closely with the St. Luke's nursing and operations team to develop the program and recruit applicants.

Applications are being accepted for the next cohort starting in April 2018. For information, see <https://careers-slhs.icims.com/jobs/10943/medical-assistant---training-program/job>.