

A Certified Health Career

By Pamela Adamson

The health careers certification program is helping to certify success for its students while meeting the needs of Southeastern Oklahoma for trained health-care workers.

A one-teacher program with first- and second-year high school students as well as first- and second-year adult students all in one classroom may sound challenging, but through the health careers certification program at Kiamichi Technology Center in Hugo, Oklahoma (KTC-Hugo), students gain valuable work-based experience, skills competency, and are provided the opportunity to certify in a variety of health career pathways.

A core curriculum basic to health care (*i.e.*, medical terminology, basic anatomy and physiology, legal/ethical issues, safety and infection control) is taught, and in-depth study begins with personalized career choice diversification. Industry needs are different from location to location, and rural needs tend to be different from those in a metropolitan area, but the content of what we teach is the same, no matter what the location.

Because we are a small rural community, health industry needs are for individuals who can function in numerous roles within one facility. There is not a large employment turnover in the few doctors' offices in our area, so anyone fortunate enough to receive employment in one of the sites must be highly diversified, motivated, skilled and certified. Unless there are personal ties involved, the days of hiring and training individuals on the job have pretty much vanished in many local communities. In our area, if an opening becomes available in a facility, the work-site will generally call the technology center before calling the employment

office. On many occasions, the site has already selected a new employee from the students who rotate through their facility for work-based training.

This school is fortunate in having wonderful worksites that allow students to rotate through their facilities, and the additional training they provide has been exceptional. My advisory committee is made up entirely from my rotation worksites.

Even if the student is not employed, the experience and training received from the onsite rotation is extremely valuable, whether the student works in a doctor's office or hospital, or chooses higher education.

Career Pathways and Options

Students in our health career certification program may train for positions as a respiratory therapy assistant, registered medical assistant, nursing assistant, medical laboratory assistant, physical therapy aide, radiology assistant, dental assistant, veterinary assistant or ward clerk.

The medical assisting pathway is our nursing option. If a student is seeking to apply to a nursing program, I ask him or her to consider the clinical medical assisting pathway. This allows the student to become acquainted with many of the skills that will be required as a staff nurse. Through clinical medical assisting, the student is introduced to, and/or learns pharmacology and administering medications, phlebotomy/lab skills, EKG skills, minor office surgery, instrument care, physical/history documentation, billing/coding/insurance, communication skills, disease processes, obstetrics, pediatrics, gerontology, and a variety of other skills.

Through one of our credentialing agencies the student can obtain separate



Jennifer Cooper of Paris, Texas, takes the temperature of Kendra Howle of Boswell, Oklahoma, as part of her vital signs training in preparation for clinical rotations.



Above: Kimerly Bruce of Rattan, Oklahoma, takes the blood pressure of TaShaunda Bell of Paris, Texas, as part of vital signs and patient history collection training. **Right:** Ashlyn Harlan of Hugo shares information on completing a student assignment.

certification cards for phlebotomy technician and EKG technician in conjunction with the Certified Clinical Medical Assistant. KTC-Hugo's health careers certification program offers students the option of preparing for national certification as a pharmacy technician, EKG technician, phlebotomy technician, billing/coding specialist or certified medical lab assistant.

If employment is available in a clinic, and a student is available to fill the slot, it may not be as a medical assistant, but may be in the lab or even the radiology department of the clinic. For the students who do not wish to participate in patient care, administrative medical assistant with billing and coding is recommended. For those individuals, I also recommend and encourage additional training in our business technology program.

Growing More Medical Assistants

A student must be a second-year high school student or a full-time adult stu-

dent completing 1,050 hours of theory and work-based learning to participate in the medical assisting program here at KTC-Hugo. Depending on the requirements of the facility, a student hired as a result of his or her work-based rotation may return for advanced

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training. First-year high school students may be introduced to the medical assisting program in the final nine weeks of their first year.

In previous years, it was rather

unusual to have a student interested in the medical assistant pathway of this program. It was not difficult finding a worksite to accommodate medical assistant students or job availability to hire them. This year, however, I have a unique situation—for me anyway—of having 12 adult students in this program, all of whom are seeking medical assistant as their in-depth study regimen.

Hugo could soon be catching up to the other areas where medical assisting programs are in demand. We will have to wait and see what next year brings. One thing remains certain, however; KTC-Hugo's health career certification program is an important part of the technology center's mission to deliver workforce training and services throughout Southeastern Oklahoma. **■**

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