4 Diving In

Internal Policy Projects With Big Impact

This section highlights places to get started with your impact workforce strategy, identifying quick wins.

Policy Fixes

Adjust Tuition Reimbursement Programs to Allow for Tuition Advancement

Tuition advancement, rather than tuition reimbursement, can provide significant benefit to employees who might not have the savings to pay for technical training certificates out-of-pocket. Instituting a policy that provides tuition advancement for employees below a certain wage threshold or for certain programs can make training opportunities more accessible.

FROM THE FIELD

To support equitable advancement, one healthcare system continues to champion its education benefits program, which provides up to 100% tuition coverage for associates looking to pursue careers in priority clinical pathways. These supported pathways include nursing, nursing support, medical assisting, surgical technology, imaging, sterile processing, laboratory, and respiratory services.

To further expand opportunity, the health system is building partnerships with innovative national and local schools to provide access to quality programs that support various learning styles and needs.

Change Policies Preventing the Hire of Individuals with Justice System Involvement

Justice-involved individuals, and in particular people returning from incarceration (also known as "returning citizens"), face some of the steepest barriers to finding jobs. More than half a million people reenter society from incarceration each year in the U.S., and many are unable to find work. Unemployment rates are particularly high for formerly incarcerated Black men and women.

Health systems can take steps to ensure returning citizens in their communities have access to life-changing opportunities at their institutions by adjusting background check policies to be fairer and more appropriate, and developing intentional, outside-in pathways to employment. By doing so, systems can gain skilled workers who can help to fill critical roles, who might otherwise be turned away.

FROM THE FIELD

The University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) convened a workgroup in 2021 to evaluate its processes for conducting background checks, which then led to proposed internal process changes that could remove barriers for people with records. With support from leadership, UCSF began to adjust policies and procedures such as: eliminating a requirement to include conviction disclosures

as part of candidates' background checks, increasing transparency about the background check process to make clear to applicants when they would be asked about their records, removing marijuana from the drug screening process (which is consistent with state law), and introducing a process to refer candidates to community partners for support if their job offer is rescinded due to a background check. To build support for this novel approach and to help mitigate bias against individuals involved in the justice system, UCSF provides cultural and belonging training to hiring managers, recruiters, and other staff.

Revise Job Descriptions to Eliminate Unnecessary Requirements

Job descriptions can include requirements that inadvertently screen out candidates that are actually qualified for the job. This can happen if job descriptions have not been updated in a long time or if position categories are grouped together. An important first step in addressing unnecessary requirements is to look at job descriptions for entry-level and mid-level employees and evaluate the requirements. One example of requirements that pose an unnecessary barrier for applicants is requiring years of experience in the healthcare field, even if the candidate has transferable skills from a different field. Another example is adding software experience requirements to all positions even if these skills are needed in one department but not another. Many of these restrictions keep qualified people out.

FROM THE FIELD

One health system reviewed job descriptions to evaluate the need for including a degree requirement versus certain skills and experience (while excluding licensure requirements), as part of an overall strategy to recruit residents from local lower-income communities and provide opportunities for career advancement. Many job descriptions were rewritten with more inclusive, skills–based language, and connections to career pathways were also incorporated in the process.

Impactful Practice Upgrade

Communicate with Workforce Partners and Intermediaries About Forecasted Job Needs

One easy, first step institutions can take to help address local hiring needs is to create regular communication channels between human resources, departmental job forecasting, local workforce intermediaries, and other training and employment partners. Workforce partners are able to channel philanthropic funds towards tailored job training. By creating channels of communication about anticipated job needs, intermediaries are able to create specific trainings for those high-need positions.

Work with Intermediaries to Address Personal Life Challenges

Many health systems provide wraparound services to employees to help them overcome challenges in their personal life that may make it difficult to show up to work on time and be fully engaged.

FROM THE FIELD

Advocate Health, which serves patients in six states, partners with several community-based organizations to support the recruitment and retention of justice-involved individuals. These organizations include the Center for Self-Sufficiency, Goodwill Workforce Connection, City Startup Labs in North Carolina, SEMBDC in Georgia, Employ Milwaukee in Wisconsin, and Cara and Safer

Foundation in Illinois. As organizations that work directly with justice-involved individuals, they are equipped to guide people to overcome structural and societal barriers, such as finding employment and succeeding in their jobs. This support may include providing soft skills training, helping to set up reliable transportation, navigating complex hiring processes and state laws, addressing healthcare needs, or identifying childcare solutions.

One partner organization provides a job coach to justice-involved hires during their first year of employment at the health system. This job coach works with the new employee's manager to identify potential solutions to job performance issues before corrective actions or termination may occur. For example, when one teammate had issues showing up to work on time, the job coach helped by troubleshooting transportation challenges and ensuring the teammate had access to a reliable bus line.

Flag or Tag Candidates Sourced by Workforce Intermediaries

A best practice is to tag applicants who come to the organization through an intentional, outside-in pathway in the organization's applicant tracking system or human capital management (HCM) system, or amend the system to allow for such tagging. By tracking these employees' progress, health systems can monitor program effectiveness and workforce outcomes, assess how individuals are progressing in their career journeys, and identify additional supports for new employees to help facilitate the transition into their roles. Baystate Health, for example, uses their HCM system to track their employees' promotional activity. Possible options to consider include using employee ID numbers or applicant tracking IDs, and designating a common tracking source.

FROM THE FIELD

At Kaiser Permanente, the talent acquisition team developed a process to provide priority consideration for U.S. veteran candidates in their applicant tracking system as part of the health system's High Impact Hiring model. Job applicants are asked whether they served in the U.S. military. By answering affirmatively, they are given priority status in the candidate flow to place them in a position to be considered by the hiring managers. This provides a mechanism to ensure that consideration is given through a process and resources. This process has helped to increase the number of veteran candidates being considered by 15% and provides an internal investment in this group that has been historically disadvantaged.