
Competency Models In Action:

Health E-Workforce Consortium Expands the Reach of Health Information Training Initiatives

May 2015

- Creating a new course to prepare individuals for health information technology certification
- Collaborating with multiple partners
- Providing students with access to Electronic Medical Record simulations

Introduction

When it comes to preparing individuals for meaningful careers in health information technology occupations, the Health e-Workforce Consortium is ahead of the curve. The Consortium, funded by a U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (ETA) Round 2 Trade Adjustment Assistance and Community College Training (TAACCCT) grant, has made great progress towards its goal of training returning veterans, trade-impacted workers, and others for careers in health information technology.

In collaboration with a Round 1 TAACCCT grantee, MOHealthWINS and the Stanford University Open Learning Initiative, the Consortium has developed a new Health Information Technology Foundations course. The curriculum prepares learners to take the Health Information and Management Systems (HIMSS) entry level examination (Certified Associate in Health Information and Management Systems), resulting in industry certification. This certification, which reflects the Industry-Wide and Industry-Sector tiers of ETA's Electronic Health Records (EHR) Competency Model, was also developed by the Consortium in partnership with its industry partner, HIMSS. The Consortium has also created 75 new health IT courses (47 programs) as well as faculty development materials and simulations.

Workforce Need

The Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act of 2009 directed the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology to promote the adoption and meaningful use of EHR. By 2013, nearly six in ten hospitals had adopted at least a basic EHR system. This represents an increase of 34% from 2012 to 2013 and a five-fold increase since 2008.¹ Given the exponential growth in this industry sector, it is clear that a competent, well trained workforce is required for successful implementation of health IT.

¹ Charles D, Gabriel M, Furukawa MF. "Adoption of Electronic Health Record Systems among U.S. Non-federal Acute Care Hospitals: 2008-2013," ONC Data Brief, no. 16. Washington, DC: Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, May 2014.

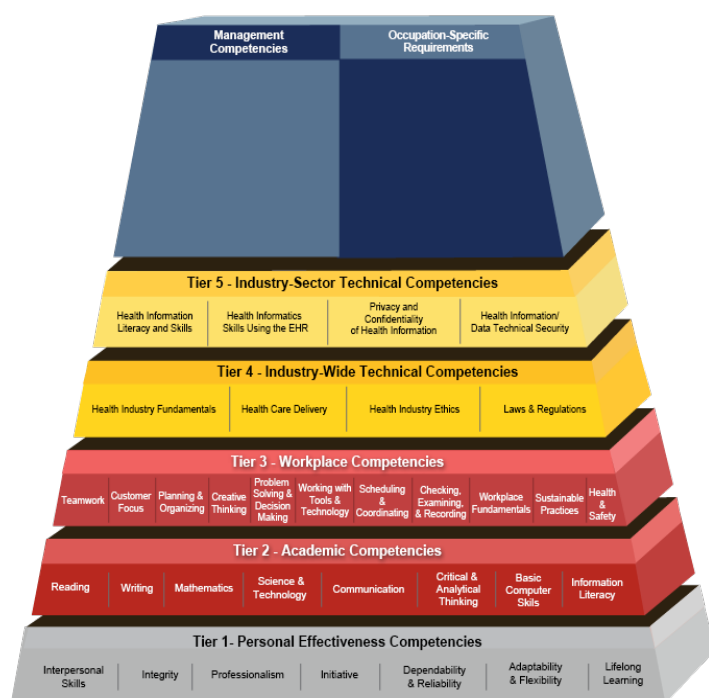
The unemployment rate for veterans who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces at any time since September 2001 – a group referred to as Gulf War-era II veterans – was 7.2 percent in 2014 compared with a nationwide unemployment rate for all persons of 5.5 percent in March 2015.² The potential for a successful match between growing numbers of tech-savvy returning veterans and the robust health IT industry sector is compelling.

Approach

“It took us two years to develop this metrics-driven course,” says Patricia Dombrowski, Executive Director of the Health e-Workforce Consortium at the Bellevue College, Life Sciences Informatics Center. “In addition to MOHealthWINS and the Open Learning Initiative at Stanford University, we worked with other collaborative partners to develop this curriculum – the Center for Applied Science and Technology, and Creative Commons.”

Launched in November 2014 the course offers an overview of healthcare, health information technology, and health information management systems. The focus is on the role and responsibilities of entry-level health IT specialists in each phase of the health information management systems lifecycle. This industry certificate is designed for students who have previous experience in IT or healthcare and it is designed to serve as a pathway into health IT careers.³

Electronic Health Records Competency Model



“This downloadable course, currently housed on Stanford University’s servers and soon to be linked to the Skills Commons website, is eminently suited to returning veterans,” says Ms. Dombrowski. “It is self-paced and enables them to build upon their existing skills sets to prepare for health IT careers.” The course encompasses many of the Industry-Wide and Industry Sector Competencies of ETA’s EHR Competency Model, including Healthcare Delivery, Health Industry Fundamentals, Privacy and Confidentiality of Health Information, and Health Informatics Skills using the EHR, as well Foundational Competencies such as Teamwork, Communication and Professionalism.

“It is effective e-learning at its best,” says Ms. Dombrowski. “The curriculum is activity-rich,

² U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics News Releases, March 2015

³ <http://oli.stanford.edu/health-technology>

replete with learning reinforcement, highly interactive and offers online assessments. In addition, faculty in all disciplines can assess and embed the curriculum in their own classes.”

“We’ve also made huge progress in bridging the gap our students face in getting access to electronic medical record simulations,” says Ms. Dombrowski. The Consortium has created free hands-on practice activities to provide students with meaningful exposure to electronic health records to help prepare them for employment. The simulations give students an important opportunity to learn about and practice using two open source EHR systems: OpenEMR, an outpatient system and VistA CPRS, the inpatient system used throughout the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers.⁴ Health Informatics Skills Using the EHR is a key component of ETA’s EHR Competency Model’s Industry-Sector Competencies.

Next Steps

“The Consortium members continue to share a commitment to welcoming returning military veterans in the health IT field,” says Ms. Dombrowski. “TAACCCT funding supported a substantial veterans’ initiative at the HIMSS annual conference this year. ‘A Hero’s Welcome to Health IT’ permeated the conference in addition to an all-day workshop, providing participants with a “boot camp” opportunity to learn about education opportunities, interact with other veterans already in health IT occupations, and speak with health IT employers. We’ve now set our sights on introducing a health IT program at the high school level for underserved youth.”

Related Links

U.S. Department of Labor TAACCCT Health e-Workforce Consortium
<https://hiteducation.org/dol-taa-ccct-health-e-workforce-consortium/>

Health Information Technology Foundations
<http://oli.stanford.edu/health-technology>

Electronic Medical Records (EMR) Simulations
<https://hiteducation.org/hew-member-college-resources/emr-simulations/>

HIMSS A Hero’s Welcome to Health IT Conference
<https://www.himssconference.org/career/veterans-services>

HIMSS Veteran’s Preconference All Day Workshop
<https://www.himssconference.org/education/veterans-career-boot-camp>

⁴ <https://hiteducation.org/hew-member-college-resources/emr-simulations/>