

For Immediate Release

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“Educator Externs” Get Up-Close Look at Healthcare

PROVIDENCE, RI – This summer, 14 educators from across the state will participate in the sixth annual “Educator Externship” program. The program, created by the Hospital Association of Rhode Island Health Partnership Council (HPC) and funded by Rhode Island School-to-Career, provides middle school and high school teachers with a hands-on learning experience within the healthcare field. Participants are then encouraged to take their new understanding of the industry back to their classrooms and share healthcare career options with their students.

To date, 120 teachers have participated in the program, and it is estimated that approximately 50,000 students have been exposed to health career awareness curriculum developed by the educators since the program’s debut. This year’s participants represent the school departments of Bristol, North Smithfield, Providence, South Kingstown, Warren, Warwick, South Kingstown and Woonsocket. The externs will be hosted by Memorial Hospital of Rhode Island, The Miriam Hospital, Rhode Island Hospital, Roger Williams Medical Center, Women and Infants Hospital, Veterans Affairs Medical Center and the Adult Correctional Institute. During their week long experience, the teachers were assigned to various services of the facilities, ranging from physical therapy to obstetrics.

“To meet the workforce needs we face, the connection between the healthcare industry and education must be strengthened,” said Ruth E. Ricciarelli, Director of Workforce Development, Hospital Association of Rhode Island. “This program prepares our students to be active members of our workforce through appropriate coursework and career counseling.”

The HPC is a consortium of hospitals, healthcare organizations, higher education, community-based and professional organizations, legislators, insurers and labor. The Council works to establish standards in education for those wishing to pursue healthcare careers and to strengthen links between education and industry. The HPC has identified through youth focus groups that 75% of students seek career information from educators and guidance counselors. However, only 40% of Rhode Island’s high school graduates have college-ready transcripts demonstrating the appropriate coursework for a career in healthcare thereby delaying entrance into the workforce.

The Department of Labor & Training estimates that 70,000 people are employed in the healthcare and social assistance industries and predicts that it will be the fastest growing sector through 2012 creating an additional 16,000 jobs.

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