



# STEP

into Healthcare

# STRATEGIC PLAN



**Southern Tier**  
Health Care System Inc.

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# Southern Tier Health Care System Inc.

*"We're Better Together"*

For more than 25 years, the Southern Tier Health Care System (STHCS) has worked collaboratively to address the health and wellness needs of southwestern New York's rural communities. A 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, STHCS is headquartered in Olean, N.Y., with programs supporting 250,000 residents throughout Allegany, Cattaraugus, and Chautauqua counties.

These areas are federally designated as HPSAs, meaning they lack an adequate number of primary care and mental healthcare professionals. Moreover, the socioeconomic conditions of our communities make it challenging for residents to access these limited services. More than a quarter of the children in the areas we serve are living in poverty; our counties rank in some of the lowest percentiles statewide in health outcomes.

With an emphasis on leveraging new technologies to scale access to healthcare across our communities, we partner with healthcare providers, parents & caregivers, educators, law enforcement, faith leaders, and other public health and social services officials to deliver the most holistic care possible. Our programs range from training and accrediting local EMS agencies to promoting mental health by educating community members in life-saving techniques such as Narcan training, Stop the Bleed, and suicide prevention.

Working with our 12 collaborating partners, STHCS develops and implements programs that identify and remove barriers to health care. In collaboration with our federal, state, and local partners, STHCS advances the broader Department of Health priorities that are designed to enhance the capacity of our health care system and to offer a wide range of tangible assistance to our underserved communities.



## The Creation and Early Implementation of Step into Healthcare

Donna Kahm, President and CEO of the Southern Tier Health Care System, had a conversation with a local healthcare employer who was distressed at their lack of success filling open positions. This discussion was the starting point for an idea and then an effort for STHCS to support local employers in filling hard-to-fill entry-level positions.

During the pilot period, STHCS filled 10 hard-to-fill positions across two employers by designing a universal application process, promoting positions on the employers' behalf, and facilitating the connection between employer and candidate. STHCS also included a variety of educational courses for select students, allowing them to have a hands-on experience in the medical field, while also attending standard classroom lectures.

### The Goal

STHCS, inspired by early success of Step into Healthcare, believes that the program could serve more people and become more robust with a dedicated staff person and the ability to further develop the program. STHCS wants to ensure that the plan, however, was guided by all those who would be a part of the program – schools, employers, and those looking for work.

STHCS determined that a strategic plan for the program was an appropriate effort. STHCS secured funding from Health Research Inc. to hire Program Savvy Consulting to conduct a stakeholder feedback process and to facilitate the creation of a strategic plan for Step Into Healthcare.



## The Stakeholder Process

Program Savvy Consulting spoke to 8 individuals across 5 employers (2 who have participated in the Pilot of Step into Healthcare) and 2 individuals from school districts. In addition, 5 early participants in Step into Healthcare were interviewed to share their experience from the candidate perspective. There were several themes that were evident across the interviews.

### Themes from Employers:

- Ensuring that STHCS has a good sense of what the employer seeks in its workforce (connected to values, attributes, and needs). Most spoke of the need for compassion, and screening for this characteristic could be beneficial.
- Many of the positions being filled are difficult positions (direct care to employees). Helping candidates appreciate what they are applying for could help in job acceptance and retention.
- Facilitating the number of applicants for open positions, especially hard-to-fill positions.
- Preparing the applicants for the interview process so that the applicant best represents their own talents and abilities and meets “basic” expectations of employers (timeliness, dress).
- Be an ongoing mentor for the candidate as they navigate through early employment.
- For employers with training programs for various clinical areas, support in promoting and filling those trainings was desired.
- While each employer had different degrees of difficulty in the recruitment and retention process, most experience difficulties with getting applicants for open positions, candidates showing up for interviews, candidates being appropriately prepared for interviews, and candidates performing well in their job and staying.
- Employers were open to paying for services if value of program was evident.



### Themes from School Districts:

In BOCES, there is a strong focus on job preparation and some programs are specifically connected to healthcare. This focus is not as evident outside of BOCES. There was an openness to STHCS representing the field of healthcare employment in school job-related events and activities and classroom presentations. Tabling at schools is welcomed.

- Connecting students to healthcare-related trainings and preparation opportunities was desired, especially EMT programs. School websites are viewed as a mechanism to accomplish this.
- The healthcare-related programs at BOCES have grown since the start of COVID.
- There is a need for students to understand the process better – that training exists, that more college isn’t necessary (for those not desiring it), that career advancement opportunities exist; the variety of jobs available. This career exploration could begin in Middle School.
- Facilitating internship programs is welcomed.
- Teaching the application/interviewing/job search process in general is needed, and if taught by someone from healthcare it will help the student think of healthcare.
- Many family members of students are unemployed. Some alumni of the program are unemployed.





### Themes from Prior Participants:

- Participants felt prepared for the interview and they reported that the interview went well.
- Participants would not have heard about the open position without the connection to Step into Healthcare.
- Participants desired a quicker turnaround at various points in the Step into Healthcare process.
- Participants desired more robust descriptions of the jobs that were listed and which jobs were most in need of applicants.
- Participants were extremely pleased with the number of hours they worked, as well as the amount of hands on experience they were able to achieve.
- Participants enjoyed the additional work that was done outside of the classroom and official riding hours, allowing them to bring their homework and classroom work together and expand their knowledge.
- Participants felt the shadowing of other EMT and healthcare workers played a large part in helping them understand what career path they wanted to go on to.



## The Strategic Plan

As a result of the stakeholder feedback process, as well as, STHCS's early experience with Step into Healthcare and the healthcare field as a whole, the following plan reflects the intent to further develop the Step into Healthcare.

This plan is three years worth of efforts, following the hiring of a full time Step into Healthcare Coordinator.

### STRATEGIC PRIORITY ONE: Secure Sustainability for Step into Healthcare

#### **Funding is secured for three years of program development and staffing.**

- Hiring of a full-time Step into Healthcare Coordinator is achieved.
- Training is designed and implemented to enhance candidate's success in interview process.
- Materials are developed in support of program, to both promote and manage program elements.
- School-specific presentation/job fair materials are designed to support school and student integration.
- Social media strategy expenses are funded to support recruitment process.
- Website upgrades to support application process at STHCS and potential integration with school websites. Travel dollars for school visits across region enable outreach to schools throughout the region.

#### **A fee for service and/or retainer model process is developed and implemented across employers.**

- Research on cost to hire and cost of turnover as point of comparison is conducted.
- Actual cost of providing service is calculated (following full development of program to account for all features and built in efficiencies).
- Options for employers to participate (fee for service, retainer model) is developed to support funding of program and "acceptable" to employers.
- Capacity of Step into Healthcare is determined (how many employers/schools can be supported for each staff person).

### STRATEGIC PRIORITY TWO: Program Development

#### **Step into Healthcare Program is designed to meet employers' expectations and needs.**

- Process is developed and implemented to gain understanding of needs of organizations and positions including desired values and attributes.
- Candidate recruitment (for employment and training programs) on behalf of organization utilizing technology, social media, and relationships with schools is further developed.
- Candidate preparation through development of training and coaching is developed and implemented.
- Scheduling of interviews in collaboration with employer is designed.
- A process for regular check-ins and guidance for new hires is designed.

#### **Step into Healthcare program integrates with school district career activities.**

- Participation at school-sponsored job fairs and career days (on behalf of the industry) are designed and implemented.
- Mechanism is developed to share training opportunities and open positions within school districts (both training connected to employers and outside of employment-sponsored training).





### **STRATEGIC PRIORITY THREE: Data Collection and Quality Improvement**

**Data collection process is developed and implemented to demonstrate value to employers, schools, and candidates and to guide sustainability plan. Data to include:**

- Recruitment (employment and educational programs).
- Social media recruitment statistics.
- Number of candidates interviewed through Step into Healthcare.
- Number of candidates hired through Step into Healthcare.
- Retention of new hires.
- Diversity of candidates/new hires in process.

**Process to collect regular feedback (satisfaction measures) on the program is developed to guide quality improvement and future program development.**

- Processes for employers, schools, and candidates are developed.
- Dashboards for program participant experiences are created to track trends in feedback.
- Quality improvement process is developed to respond to feedback and to guide program improvements.

**Interest and feasibility is determined for the following ideas, for consideration in future phases (post this strategic plan timeframe):**

- School/Healthcare Internship Program – determining interest from schools and employers.
- Recruitment for other hard-to-fill positions (beyond entry-level).
- Executive Coaching for Healthcare Leaders – to identify and address barriers to retention.
- Expansion of program (to additional employers; to additional schools) and required funding/staffing to accomplish.
- Expansion of program to school families and alumni.
- Mechanisms/process to reach unemployed adults to integrate into program.
- Expanded mentorship of candidates who become employed.

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A program of



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