

11-25 Policy Matters

Subject: Accelerating Workforce Development Across Communities

Preheader: Here, Policy Matters. Learn the latest from UPMC's Government Affairs team.



Health systems nationwide face growing workforce shortages amid rising patient care demands. In rural areas, isolation and limited resources intensify these challenges. However, this also presents opportunities for innovation.

UPMC is responding through strategic workforce development initiatives like the UPMC Pathways for Veterans program and Project SEARCH, which help build a resilient pipeline of professionals. We are also submitting proposals that align with the Rural Health Transformation Program's goal of workforce development in underserved areas.

Workplace safety is also a key priority that underpins workforce development. While we are proud of the efforts made to advance workforce development across UPMC, we must also recognize a recent tragic incident at UPMC Altoona in which Travis Dunn, an emergency department technician at UPMC Altoona, was violently attacked by a patient. Thankfully, Travis is now home and recovering, fully supported by all of us at UPMC.

Mike Corso, president of UPMC Altoona and UPMC Bedford, recently delivered a message stating the facts, recognizing the quick and courageous response of our teams, and sharing how we're making our workplaces safer for everyone.



UPMC's Efforts in Advancing the Workforce



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Unique UPMC Program Helps Veterans — And Their Spouses — Start Careers After Service

The UPMC Pathways for Veterans program, launched in 2021, helps increase veteran hiring through personalized job search support. In 2024, it expanded to include military spouses and families, offering six-month paid internships through partnerships like the [ULEAD/UPMC Military & Military Spouse Fellowship](#).

Each month, the team at UPMC contacts all 300+ veteran applicants and connects them with tailored coaching, initiatives, and internships such as [SkillBridge](#). More than 150 military community members have benefited from internship participation in the past two years, contributing to UPMC's recognition as a top-10 Military Friendly Employer in 2025.

[Learn more](#)



UPMC Washington Welcomed Federal and Local Leaders, Highlighting Regional Investments in Workforce Development, Behavioral Health, and Maternal Health

UPMC Washington recently welcomed U.S. Rep. Guy Reschenthaler, U.S. Rep. Rob Bresnahan, and Washington County Commissioner Nick Sherman for a visit, showcasing the hospital's commitment to advancing health care in the region. The visit highlighted UPMC's significant investments in behavioral health and maternal health, as well as workforce strength and retention.

It was a productive discussion that underscored UPMC Washington's role as a model for how regional partnerships can preserve access, strengthen the workforce, and expand specialty care while stabilizing local health care delivery.



CBSNEWS.COM

1,300 Students Attend Pathways for Students Career Fair Hosted by UPMC and UPMC Health Plan

More than 1,300 students from 45+ school districts came together at our 3rd Annual Pathways for Students Career Fair at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center to explore future careers in health care.

Nancy Walker, Pennsylvania Secretary of Labor and Industry, spoke with attendees, highlighting the rewarding and long-term career opportunities across the health care sector.

The networking event empowered students to explore a wide range of industry roles and envision how their skills and interests can shape their future careers.

[Learn more](#)

UPMC Supports Save Healthcare Workers Act (H.R. 3178/S.1600)

Health care workers nationwide face an alarming rise in workplace violence. Studies show that two nurses are assaulted every hour in the United States, and 9 out of 10 emergency physicians report being attacked or threatened in the past year.

The bipartisan Save Healthcare Workers Act (H.R. 3178/S.1600) would make it a federal crime to knowingly assault a hospital worker while on duty. It would provide the same protections currently afforded to airline and airport employees. UPMC supports this legislation as part of its broader advocacy to ensure a safe and respectful environment for all health care professionals.

Rural Transformation Program Proposals Related to Workforce Development

The **Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Program** is a \$50 billion initiative to strengthen rural health care through investments in access, innovation, workforce, and technology. UPMC has submitted targeted recommendations aligned with RHT, focusing on workforce development in rural Pennsylvania, closing care gaps, and building lasting infrastructure in underserved areas.

Key initiatives include:

- **EMT and paramedic program revitalization in north central Pennsylvania** — Strengthens emergency response through increased recruitment and training in rural areas.
- **Family medicine residency at UPMC Horizon** — Boosts primary care access and physician retention in rural communities.
- **Surgical obstetrics fellowship at UPMC Williamsport** — Expands training for maternal care providers to address the critical shortage of obstetrics providers in rural Pennsylvania.



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Project SEARCH Graduates Shine Upon Completion of Program

Project SEARCH, in partnership with Goodwill of Southwestern Pennsylvania, is a one-year program that educates and trains high school students with disabilities, helping them acquire key skills that can lead to employment. Thirty-two students graduated this August, with many securing jobs at UPMC and others actively pursuing employment opportunities.

[Learn more](#)

Recent Freedom House Foundations Graduations

Coordinated by UPMC and UPMC Health Plan, Freedom House is a six-week course that provides students with an introduction to various health care careers. This program is named after the Freedom House Ambulance Service, which was formed in Pittsburgh's Hill District in the 1960s and is known for paving the way for both educating underserved populations and the development of our modern-day EMS system.

UPMC recently celebrated graduations from the program across multiple regions:

- [Freedom House Erie](#).
- [Freedom House Harrisburg](#).
- [Freedom House Pittsburgh](#).

[Learn more](#)

UPMC Mercy School of Nursing Opens in Altoona

UPMC has launched the UPMC Mercy School of Nursing at UPMC Altoona, offering a fast-track, affordable pathway for aspiring nurses in the region. The 16-month diploma program combines hands-on clinical experience with academic coursework, preparing students to become registered nurses and pursue advanced degrees.

[Learn more](#)

UPMC Part of Region's Nursing Schools' Growth

UPMC's Schools of Nursing have reported growth across our six schools of nursing, which have an enrollment of 1,024 students this fall. The schools are at UPMC Mercy and UPMC Shadyside in Pittsburgh, UPMC St. Margaret near Aspinwall, and other locations in Erie, New Castle, and Harrisburg.

"We invested in expansion of spaces while adding additional faculty positions to support the increase, along with adding a variety of start dates for student cohorts and adding a career ladder for our nursing faculty," says Brandy Hershberger, chief nursing officer and vice president of academic affairs at UPMC.

[Learn more](#)



Updates from UPMC Health Plan

- In recognition of American Pharmacists Month, UPMC Health Plan pharmacists collaborated with the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy and Rx Partners to host a free [Pharmacist Care Day](#) on Oct. 8 at the UPMC Health Plan's Pittsburgh Neighborhood Center. The event demonstrated UPMC Health Plan's ongoing commitment to delivering whole-person care by meeting individuals where they are, offering accessible, community-based health services that address both clinical and social needs.
- Christina Barrington, PharmD, chief pharmacy officer, UPMC Health Plan, discussed "Empowering Access and Whole-Person Care" and the role of pharmacists at UPMC Health Plan in a recent *Pharmacy Times* [podcast](#).
- UPMC once again demonstrated its unwavering dedication to the Pittsburgh community by playing a leading role in the "Mission of Mercy" free clinic held on Oct. 24 and 25 at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center. More than 2,080 individuals received vital dental, vision, and hearing care. Many of them face barriers to accessing these services. Among the 1,816 volunteers were UPMC clinicians and UPMC Health Plan employees, who provided compassionate, high-quality care through 1,384 dental exams, 778 eye exams, and 408 hearing exams. This powerful show of service reflects UPMC's mission to improve lives and health outcomes, especially for the most vulnerable members of our region.
- The Alliance of Community Health Plans selected UPMC Health Plan for a pilot funded by the Helmsley Charitable Trust to transform diabetes care for its members. As part of a \$4.2 million initiative, UPMC will integrate diabetes specialists into primary care using electronic health record technology, improving access to continuous glucose monitors (CGMs) for those with insulin-requiring diabetes. This innovative approach will help reduce barriers to CGM adoption, enhance patient outcomes, and support long-term policy changes that recognize CGMs as a standard of care. UPMC's involvement underscores its leadership in advancing equitable, evidence-based solutions for chronic disease management.

Stay Informed

UPMC's Government Affairs Team is committed to delivering relevant and timely news on the latest health care trends, medical research, and clinical developments as they relate to public health issues.



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