

Suffolk County Community College teams with Catholic Health to train medical assistants

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SCCC officials said they would look for additional health system partners as the program expands. Credit: Newsday/Steve Pfof

By Carol PolskyCarol.Polsky@newsday.com Updated September 29, 2022

A new program to train medical assistants — and help place them in jobs — starts in November at Suffolk County Community College in a collaboration with Catholic Health.

The 7 1/2-month-long continuing education program will initially enroll 24 students, with a tuition of \$2,999. The course combines online classes with on-campus labs, plus clinical practice rotations at Catholic Health facilities.

Catholic Health, which helped develop the course, also would provide guidance with job placements and tuition assistance to its own employees who enroll.

Carol Wickliffe-Campbell, chief of staff to SCCC President Edward Bonahue, said the program grew out of discussions with the president of Catholic Health on critical workforce needs and signals a desire to expand workforce development training pipelines. “We hope to see more of this to meet the needs of multiple employers across Long Island,” she said.

Dr. Liesl Jones, vice president for academic affairs, said at SCCC, an open-access college, the program would accept any applicant with a high school diploma, and that a health care background was not required. A certificate would lead to a “good-paying job,” she said, or could be the first step in further health profession studies such as nursing.

The Suffolk County Department of Labor also will advertise for applicants and target underserved Suffolk communities, offering grants to some eligible students. SCCC has campuses in Selden, Riverhead and Brentwood.

Online classwork in subjects like medical terminology with an emphasis on anatomy and physiology, electronic health records and administrative assisting, clinical medical assisting and clinical practice in areas like phlebotomy, vital signs and EKGs, will be combined with labs at SCCC’s Eastern Campus in Riverhead and the Michael J. Grant Campus in Brentwood.

College officials said they would look for additional health system partners as the program expands.

It would join existing medical assistant training programs on Long Island, including ones offered by Molloy University in Rockville Centre and Adelphi University in Garden City; by Nassau BOCES adult education (with a tuition of \$5,995); and Nassau Community College, which offers both an associate's degree and a three-semester certificate program.

Northwell Health funds scholarships to employees to get their certificate at NCC in a partnership they call "Earn and Learn," in return for a one-year work commitment at Northwell Health as a medical assistant.

A number of City College of New York community colleges and private career training schools also offer degrees and certificates in the field, where demand is growing.

In a statement, Catholic Health President and CEO Patrick O’Shaughnessy said, “Medical assistants provide indispensable support to our clinical teams, not only at our hospitals but also at our many physician practices and ambulatory care facilities. By partnering with Dr. Bonahue and Suffolk County Community College, we can cultivate talent to help improve the health of Long Islanders.”

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Carol Polsky writes news and features on wide-ranging topics, from superstorm Sandy, 9/11 and presidential elections to healthcare and the economy.



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