

Health Care Career Pathways and English Language Learners

Getting started

The Health Care Career Pathways and English Language Learners (ELLs) is a report produced by the National Institute for Literacy that explores the growing demand for workers in health care careers and strategies for helping ELLs get on a career pathway. It explores the challenges facing ELLs and showcases programs that are having success. This resource will help you understand the challenges faced by ELLs and strategies for dealing with those challenges. Health careers are one of the fastest growing employment sectors in the US and jobs range from entry-level in direct care through positions requiring extensive education. This resource will provide a framework and ideas for addressing the gap between available workers and training a growing segment of our population to fill these “in demand” jobs. Health Care Career Pathways and English Language Learners can be found at <http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/HealthCareCareerPathways.pdf>

Guiding questions

- What are the challenges facing adult English Language Learners?
- What are the unique challenges facing ELLs who are interested in a health care career pathway?
- What do you think about the promising practices outlined in the report?
- Are these models replicable in your community?
- Why is outlining detailed career maps so important in health care careers?
- How can we help students move beyond entry level jobs?

Opening activity

Ask all participants to read the Executive Summary and Introduction of this report on pages 1-3.

- Discuss the need in your community for addressing health care careers for ELLs. Is this an important priority in your community? What are the current training and education options in health care careers in your community?

Discussion topics and activities

Refer to the **Challenges Facing Adult English Language Learners in Health Care Pathways** section, pages 4-8:

This section of the report explores the issues facing ELLs in achieving their goals of obtaining employment that provides a family sustaining wage and finding meaningful work.

- Introduce the personal challenges – education background, English language proficiency, technical language skills and life demands.
- Introduce the structural challenges – lack of access to education and training, access to financial aid, articulation among program providers.

Facilitate discussion about these challenges with your team. Suggested questions to facilitate discussion:

- What are the major educational obstacles for ELLs?
- What has been your experience in serving ELLs related to their educational background?
- How does your program address these challenges?
- What are the major structural challenges facing ELLs?
- How does your community address these challenges?

Refer to the **Health Care Career Pathways for Adult English Language Learners** section, pages 7-12:

In this section of the report, you will explore career pathways in health care for English language learners.

- Introduce the features of and rationale for a career pathways program.
- Introduce the three basic career pathways in health care (patient care, allied health, medical administration).
- Have the group discuss current options in their program/community.

Facilitate discussion with your team about the special considerations in developing health care career pathways for ELLs. Suggested questions to facilitate discussion:

- What are the implications of cultural difference and how can the program support cross-cultural competence?
- How can adult education do a better job of making ELLs aware of the opportunities in health care careers?

Refer to the **Promising Practices** section, pages 12 – 25:

In this section, you will explore programs and networks that have had success in preparing ELLs for health care careers.

- Facilitate a [jigsaw activity](#) to explore promising practices. Have each member of the group read the section on one of the promising practices outlined in the report. Depending on the size of the group, people can work independently or in small groups. The team will present the promising practice to the large group.

- Facilitate discussion with your team about the promising practices. Suggested questions to facilitate discussion:
 - Of the models described in the report, is there a model that you think would work in your program?
 - What would it take to implement that model in your program/community?

Refer to the **Continuing Challenges and Research Needed** section, pages 25-29:

In this section, you will explore the continuing challenges faced by providers of career pathways programs in health care careers and the learners they serve. The two major challenges identified in the report are funding and access. Suggested discussion questions:

- What are some ideas for addressing funding constraints that are identified in the report?
- What are some of the ideas for addressing access that are identified in the report?

Facilitate discussion with your team about the continuing challenges. Suggested questions to facilitate discussion:

- What do you know about scholarships and other tuition subsidies for adults who want to pursue a health care career?
- In 2006 -2007, only 4.2% of WIA clients received ABE or ESL training in conjunction with WIA services. What suggestions do you have to expand access to foundation skills education programs?
- What kind of outreach and publicity can your program do to let students know about the availability of education and training programs and how they can pay for their education?
- Do you network with other similar programs in your community or in the state? Do you share resources? If so, in what ways do you network and share resources?

References

National Institute for Literacy. (2011). Health care career pathways and adult English language learners. Retrieved from

<http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/HealthCareCareerPathways.pdf>

Aronson, E. (2014). The jigsaw classroom. Retrieved from <http://www.jigsaw.org/steps.htm>

