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Preparing Today’s Workforce for Tomorrow’s Jobs

Healthcare Consortium Report

According to the Northwest Tennessee Workforce Study completed in 2004, the healthcare industry faces a critical lack of workers. In order to meet the future workforce needs of the healthcare providers in our seven counties, a consortium of healthcare providers has been formed. The Northwest Tennessee Workforce Board has contracted with the Business and Economic Research Center at Middle Tennessee State University to conduct a study of the current and future state of the healthcare industry in rural northwest Tennessee. Dr. Murat Arik is the Associate Director of the Business and Economic Research Center and is working very closely with us to prepare this study.

The goals of this consortium and study are to:
- Identify workforce needs in the broad range of healthcare occupations.
- Establish clear career paths through a regional healthcare career ladder.
- Create awareness of the challenging preparation needed in middle and high schools to adequately train for healthcare occupations.

Thus far, there have been three reports submitted by Dr. Arik covering the topics of Challenges of the Healthcare Workforce in Rural Northwest Tennessee: Perspectives of Healthcare Providers; and Healthcare Workforce Supply and Demand.

The first report, Challenges of the Healthcare Workforce in Rural Northwest Tennessee: Perspectives of Key Professionals, was conducted through interviews with community leaders who are closely involved with the healthcare industry. The conclusion of this report was that there are many challenges that threaten to create a major setback in service delivery in the next ten years. A comprehensive plan that focuses on insufficient educational backgrounds is necessary to effectively address this issue.

The second report covered the topic, The State of the Healthcare Workforce: Perspectives of Healthcare Providers. The overall conclusion from the perspective of healthcare providers is that there is potential for substantial growth and there are definite workforce challenges. A cooperative effort among various stakeholders is essential to overcoming these challenges.

The third report addresses the topic of Healthcare Workforce Supply and Demand in northwest Tennessee. Each sector in the healthcare industry was analyzed through survey data, census data, and other sources to determine the supply and demand in 2005 and what is projected for 2015. It is projected that in the next ten years, nearly 1,100 jobs are expected to be vacant due to either retirement or turnover and more than 900 jobs will be created in the region’s healthcare sector. Due to the vacancies and growth potential, workforce education and training should be critical.

We are looking forward to the final three reports to complete this analysis. These reports will cover the topics of: Regional Healthcare Career Ladder, Perception of School Age Children on the Healthcare Professions, and Funding Sources of Workforce Training.