

GEISINGER HEALTH SYSTEM

Testimony on Job Readiness

By Cynthia Bagwell, Vice President of Talent Acquisition, Geisinger Health System

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Good morning. My name is Cynthia Bagwell and I am the Vice President of Talent Acquisition for Geisinger Health System. In this role I have overall responsibilities for the recruitment of all positions within the Geisinger Health System. I thank the House of Representatives Majority Policy Committee, Chairman Kerry Benninghoff, and Representative Stephen Bloom for the opportunity to participate in today's discussion on job readiness and job creation.

Geisinger Health System is an integrated health services organization widely recognized for its innovative use of the electronic health record, and the development of innovative care models such as ProvenHealth Navigator® and ProvenCare®. As one of the nation's largest rural health services organizations, Geisinger serves more than 3 million residents throughout 48 counties in central, south-central and northeast Pennsylvania. The physician-led system is comprised of approximately 23,500 employees, including a 1,200-member multi-specialty group practice, nine hospital campuses, two research centers and a 467,000-member health plan, all of which leverage an estimated \$7.7 billion positive impact on the Pennsylvania economy. The health system and the health plan have repeatedly garnered national accolades for integration, quality and service. In addition to fulfilling its patient care mission, Geisinger has a long-standing commitment to medical education, research and community service.

Throughout our market we face different types of challenges. Finding a diverse, skilled workforce in rural areas is particularly problematic. Healthcare presents its own set of challenges as we are subject to many regulatory policies that may not affect other industries. For example, anyone who works in a clinical setting and may have access to children is required to pass a federal fingerprinting and PA child abuse screening. This includes individuals that provide food service and environmental services.

Organizations as vast as Geisinger need highly skilled workers such as physicians, nurses, laboratory technologists, Ph.D. scientist, actuaries, accountants, sales associates and highly trained information technology ("IT") employees. Yet we need in equal numbers entry level workers for food and environmental services, nursing assistants, administrative assistants, maintenance workers, phlebotomists, patient schedulers, etc. Often we have trouble finding candidates who are willing to work and who have the work ethic to stay with the positions.

Job Creation:

Over the past 4 years Geisinger has hired, on average, 1000+ new employees each year. We recruit locally, regionally, and nationally for our positions. Where possible we prefer to hire from within our region. Employees with ties to Pennsylvania tend to remain and become long term employees. However, we also have to be realistic and realize that we do not have a sufficiently trained workforce to meet all of our needs. In order to help address this challenge we have put some programs in place to address various skill deficits and at the same time provide a pathway to fulltime employment for many. I would like to share with you a brief summary of some of these programs.

We recognize the benefit of linking up with local colleges, universities, high schools and CareerLinks.

1. High School Cooperation programs (“coops”)
 - a. We offer coops in pharmacy, respiratory and nursing vocations. The students work 2-3 hours per day, they are paid, and they receive high school credit. Students are trained to be pharmacy techs, respiratory techs, or nursing assistants. Many of the students have gone on to university to become Pharmacists, Respiratory Therapists, or Nurses. Those who choose not pursue higher education are able to be employed in these tech or assistant positions.
 - b. We are involved with high school students from the Columbia Montour VoTech, Shamokin, and Danville high schools, for flex food service positions. Students work evenings and weekends throughout high school. Those who are pursuing some type of culinary, nutritional, or hospitality career in college work for us in the summers which help in their chosen profession.
 - c. We also hire peoples with disabilities to work in some of our food service areas.

2. Onsite Geisinger training programs offer diploma, certificate, or degree programs in the following areas.
 - a. Phlebotomy school
 - b. Cardiovascular Technology School
 - c. Radiology Tech school

3. College and Universities
 - a. We have strong Internship programs in Finance, IT, and Research. The interns are paid and/or receive college credit and we expose them to a variety of healthcare positions.

- b. We have developed strong relationships with IT professors at several regional universities. We work with the processors to keep them informed as to the type of training we need. Furthermore, our IT professionals offer lectures and will advise students on different career paths.
 - c. Bloomsburg University BSN students do their clinical rotation at Geisinger Medical Center. In addition, we house a joint nursing program with Bloomsburg University that is geared toward local residents.
 - d. We have our own CRNA school in conjunction with Bloomsburg University.
 - e. We are a clinical rotation for Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners.
 - f. We have a Pharmacy residency.
 - g. We also have 30+ Medical Residencies and Fellowships which train 100+ future physicians each year, many of whom remain in our area and provide needed healthcare to the region.
 - h. Our expansion into Research has led us to create a joint Autism Center with Bucknell. Here Bucknell students can receive hands on training in Neurological disorders.
4. We partner with local CareerLinks to put on job fairs for many of our entry level positions. We also work with the WATCH program to help income-eligible individuals to enter or move up in a high priority health care career. We are proud to work with this program and to provide employment opportunities to these individuals.
5. We have a concentrated focus on hiring Veterans. To help us achieve our goal of hiring veterans, we have developed a website and have a recruiter dedicated to helping returning veterans translate their military experience into job skills applicable to the civilian sector.
6. For our own employees who wish to advance at Geisinger, we provide training classes on how to write a resume, how to interview, and provide information on what they need to do to move to the next level.

In addition, we provide nursing fellowships with a clinical or research focus. We provide employees with tuition assistance, scholarships, and loan forgiveness programs so that they can further their education and careers.

Job Readiness:

Unfortunately, the above mentioned programs are not sufficient to meet all of our employment needs. We are always in need of qualified workers, particularly in the science, technology,

engineering, and math (“STEM”) categories. Our catchment area does not have enough students in science majors that are pursuing courses that could qualify them to be:

1. Physicians, specifically primary care.
2. Medical Technologists.
3. Science majors in applied Statistics, epidemiology, and public health.
4. Translational Researchers in math, applied statistics, and IT.
 - a. Very few have completed additional academics in Applied Statistics and/or computer languages (SAS, SQL) required by our translational research opportunities.
 - b. Very few have completed additional academics in Epidemiology, Public Health Outreach, Wellness, etc.
 - c. We need employees that have participated in supplemental learning or volunteer experiences in these areas.
5. Information Technology.
 - a. Candidates lack depth of experience in core/critical technology platforms and/or analytical skills.
 - b. Our IT employees need combined IT knowledge along with operational/business knowledge.
 - c. We can hire entry level IT individuals, but we also need those with leadership skills and analytical/critical thinking and problem solving skills.
 - i. There is a higher expectation that candidates not only be talented and trained in technology; but, that they also be effective at seeing the impact of their work in the bigger picture of an organization and are able to effectively communicate that with their counterparts outside of IT.
 - d. We need experienced IT Business Analysts for the Insurance side of our business.
 - i. IT trained people who are business minded and know the healthcare/health insurance industry.
6. Revenue Management Coders.
 - a. Many schools have programs, especially in prep for ICD-10, and we take interns from Penn College. However, because of the level of complex cases Geisinger also needs experienced coders. We have solved part of this problem by hiring coders throughout the United States and allow them to work remotely.

7. MISC.

Not everyone is aware that an institution the size of Geisinger also needs employees with non-healthcare related training and experience, such as listed below.

- a. Actuary
 - b. Engineers
 - c. IT
 - d. Marketing
 - e. Innovation
 - f. Math
 - g. Research
 - h. Finance
8. We also have great need for entry level positions in NONSTEM areas, such as listed below.
- a. Food Service workers
 - b. Environments Services workers
 - c. Administrative Assistants
 - d. Nursing Assistants
 - e. Phlebotomists
 - f. Plumbers
 - g. Painters
 - h. Maintenance workers
 - i. Security Guards
 - j. Patient Access Representatives
 - k. Patient schedulers

We do train employees for the specific skills required to do the job, but we need them to come to us with some proficiency in basic computer skills, life skills, and a positive work ethic. We need employees with the following:

1. Communication abilities: both written and verbal;
2. Flexibility;
3. Teamwork;
4. Presentation skills;
5. Commitment to work; and,
6. Commitment to coming to work and at their designated shift.

Employees who are willing to work hard and apply themselves are given opportunities to grow. We provide Career ladders in several different areas. If someone applies themselves we

encourage them and provide opportunities for them to succeed. We also provide very good benefits to our employees at a very affordable cost to them.

It is important to realize that Healthcare is no longer just doctors and nurses.

Challenges and Recommendations:

1. Clearance requirements before hiring. Currently a food service worker or an environmental service worker must pass the following screens before they can be hired:
 - a. Criminal Background check;
 - b. Urine drug screen;
 - c. Federal fingerprint clearance; and,
 - d. PA Child Abuse clearance.

We in no way want to hire anyone who would put our patients at risk but it often takes four weeks for all of these clearances to come through. At the same time, these potential employees can go to McDonalds and start the next day. We struggle finding entry level people willing to wait four weeks and also to do the hard work that is required of them.

2. We need the education system to emphasize the importance of attitude, attendance, communication skills, and the value of commitment. In support of this, we participate in the School Counts program which is run through the Columbia Montour foundation. Graduating High School seniors can receive a certificate which indicates that they have met certain academic, attendance, and behavior standards. This certificate indicates to employers that they have the life skills and work motivation that employers would want.
3. I am on the Central PA Workforce Development Board and therefore am aware of many of the federal and state grants that are offered to help individuals get back to work. I have noticed that many of the grants are spread out over several years and sometimes geared toward a four year degree. I would like to see grants with a higher dollar amount given over a shorter period of time to enable people to afford to go to a one year trade school or complete a two year Associate Degree. People without resources cannot afford to front the costs of school and then have to wait for the reimbursement.
4. The United States is facing a shortage of physicians, specifically Primary Care physicians. The problem is exacerbated in rural parts of the country. Geisinger is no exception. We have many foreign trained physicians who would be interested in working with us, but cannot due to their Visa status (J-1). In order to stay in the US, they must work in a

Health Professional Shortage Area. Each state is allowed 30 waivers per year, plus PA can participate in the ARC waiver program. Geisinger is rural, but not sufficiently rural to take advantage of these waivers. We need help in getting waivers to hire physicians into some of these hard to recruit, medically underserved areas. There are also times when we need to hire a specialist who will be at the Danville location, but takes care of people from all over our catchment area. Visa waivers for these individuals are next to impossible. This is also a problem for other institutions that are situated outside of the metropolitan areas of Pennsylvania.

Closing:

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to speak with you today. Geisinger Health System has grown tremendously over the past few years and we strive to be a lifelong partner in the communities we serve, including our employees. We are pleased to have been able to provide so many people with quality jobs and bright futures, and for those who want to grow in their careers, we are committed to providing opportunities to assist them as best we can.