




Empowering Rural Students Through Health Career Pathways

High School Home Care Aide Programs






Welcome & Purpose

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- Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.
 - We are here to share how a rural school—Toppenish High School—is preparing students for healthcare careers through our Home Care Aide (HCA) program.
 - This program has opened doors for our students, especially those who wish to remain and serve in their community.



Our Rural Community

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- Located in the Yakima Valley, Toppenish is a predominantly agricultural town with a high percentage of first-generation and low-income students.
 - Over 90% of our student body identifies as Hispanic/Latino.
 - Many students face barriers such as transportation, financial hardship, and limited access to career training.
 - Despite these challenges, our students are resilient and eager to pursue meaningful careers.



Meeting a Community Need



- There is a growing demand for bilingual, culturally competent caregivers in our region.
- The HCA program prepares students for immediate employment or further healthcare education.
- Students receive hands-on training, DOH certification prep, and CPR/First Aid.
- It's a stackable credential that can lead to nursing or allied health fields.




Structure of the HCA Program

- One semester course: theory and hands-on skills.
- Students complete:
 - 75-hour HCA training
 - CPR/First Aid certification
 - DOH application process
 - Exam preparation
 - Clinical simulations and labs
 - Emphasis on professionalism, patient rights, communication, and safety



Empowering Students

- Students have expressed pride in earning a real credential before graduation.
 - Many are now employed as HCAs or have moved on to nursing assistant programs.
 - The program builds confidence, soft skills, and career direction.
 - Several students plan to stay in the Yakima Valley to give back to their community.
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Barriers in Rural Implementation

- Limited access to clinical sites due to transportation and rural location.
- While we have grant funding to cover state exam vouchers for this year, funding will be limited or uncertain next year, which may impact students' ability to complete certification in a timely manner.
- Need for storage space, updated equipment, and instructor support.
- **Competing responsibilities**—many students in rural communities work part-time or care for family members, limiting their availability for extended training hours.
- Small class sizes – not enough students to launch and maintain the program.




Keys to Our Success



- Supportive school leadership and flexible scheduling.
- Student engagement through culturally relevant teaching and bilingual support.
- Community buy-in: Families see the value in healthcare training at the high school level. We will have two classes running simultaneously this fall.



Building a Sustainable Rural Health Workforce: Key Recommendations

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- Programs like ours are a direct pipeline to address rural healthcare staffing shortages.
 - Ensure continued support for critical needs such as program funding, instructional supplies, professional development, transportation, and bilingual workforce development.
 - Bilingual HCAs are essential in our region, where many patients speak Spanish.
 - Investing in high school healthcare pathways helps cultivate homegrown talent.
 - With sustained support, this model can be successfully replicated in other rural communities.

Gratitude & Contact

Thank you for your time and for supporting rural education and healthcare access.

We welcome your questions and look forward to collaborating on future solutions.

Contact:

- Brenda Barragan
Toppenish High School Health Science Teacher
Email: bbarragan@toppenish.wednet.edu
- Carly Seagren (she/her)
DSHS Workforce Development High School Liaison
Email: carly.seagren@dshs.wa.gov