



# Annual Progress Report

May 2024

## Overview

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Like many states, significant workforce shortages across health and human services and a lack of diversity among health professionals are limiting access to quality care and services for all Rhode Islanders. In response, the Executive Office of Health & Human Services (EOHHS), the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (RIOPC), and the Department of Labor and Training (DLT) – in partnership with the Rhode Island Foundation (RIF) – co-hosted a Healthcare Workforce Summit, on April 1, 2022 that brought together healthcare and education providers, policymakers, and labor and community partners for a data-driven, collaborative, facilitated process to identify solutions to these workforce challenges.

Just six weeks later, a public/private, dynamic, action-oriented health workforce planning and implementation process was launched to identify and pursue short-term and longer-term solutions to ensure that there is a highly skilled, diverse health professional workforce to deliver high-quality care to all Rhode Islanders.

During the first year, 429 public and private stakeholders from 160 partner organizations came together to integrate their expertise with available data to address our state’s workforce challenges producing a “Rhode Map” of strategies to “attract, train, and retain” the future healthcare workforce through further collaboration, investment, and innovation. The roadmap was vetted by stakeholders and rolled out at the 2nd Annual Health & Human Services Workforce Summit in June 2023.

Since then, public and private partners have been working together to advance the Rhode Ahead pillars and strategies as well as other related and aligned work. More details on the initiative’s progress can be found below.

## The Rhode Ahead

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The Rhode Ahead outlines a plan for addressing RI’s significant workforce shortages across health and human services. The plan seeks to attract, train, and retain a diverse, skilled, sustainable health & human services workforce through partnership, incentives, and innovation.

# The Rhode Ahead

Strategies to create a diverse, skilled sustainable health and human service workforce



To accomplish the plan identifies three critical pillars and supporting strategies including:

**PILLAR #1 – PARTNERSHIP:** The first pillar, partnership, emphasizes the critical need for the entire public and private health and human services ecosystem - from healthcare providers, higher education, secondary education, government, workforce development, and other training providers - to collaborate to solve the workforce crisis.

Since our last progress report in June 2023, the number of individuals involved in the initiative grew from 429 to more than 600, and the number of involved organizations has grown from 160 to 211. The initiative has included stakeholders from many areas including:

Secondary Schools	Advocates	Behavioral health providers	Community-based providers
Higher education	Home care	Hospitals	Labor
Long-term care	Insurers	Philanthropy	Professional associations
Social service agencies	State agency leaders	Trade associations	Training providers

Each partner has unique roles to play as follows:

Public Sector Role	Private Sector Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Convene cross-sector stakeholders</li> <li>● Identify and leverage non-governmental grant opportunities to support priorities.</li> <li>● Develop legislative and budget proposals for state investment; advocate for inclusion in Governor’s budget</li> <li>● Develop statewide data analytic capacity to inform workforce planning</li> <li>● Collect and share information and data</li> <li>● Facilitate regulatory changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Participate in decision-making around priorities and solutions</li> <li>● Share information and data</li> <li>● Collaborate where possible around non-governmental grant opportunities to support priorities</li> <li>● Participate in statewide stakeholder convenings</li> <li>● Lead and/or engage in private advocacy to support priorities</li> </ul>

Please refer to the section at the end concerning how to get involved in future initiative activities and see the Appendices for a full list of participating organizations.

### **Private Sector Advocacy**

During the past year, a broad cross-section of private sector partners organized a collaborative advocacy effort in support of a package of four bills and identified sponsors to introduce the following bills during the 2024 legislative session.

- **Tuition Assistance for Students to Obtain Health and Human Services Professional Degrees:** Medical Primary Care Scholarship Program (S 2717 and H 7903)
- **Increased Faculty and Clinical Placements:** Primary Care Training Sites (S 2716 and H 7902)
- **Health Loan Repayment:** Loan Repayment (H 8079)
- **Career Ladders:** Ladders to Licensure (H 8078 and S 2867)

More detail about the bills is included in the progress section below:

### **Project Management**

The initiative is guided by the Rhode Ahead plan and steered by a public/private Project Team that includes representatives from across government, the healthcare sector, and philanthropy. Some of the work is centrally coordinated by the Project Team and some of the work includes related or aligned projects being led by other partners. Through the collaboration that has been built by this initiative, partners are able to work together on various projects as well as take independent leadership on others.

**PILLAR #2 – INCENTIVIZE:** The second pillar, incentivize, speaks to the importance of incentives to encourage people to enter into and remain in health and human service professions. Stakeholders identified several critical ways that Rhode Island can encourage entry into health and human services professions and incentivize them to remain and progress within the field including:

- Attract students and job seekers to health and human service careers through career awareness events, outreach and marketing, and strengthening Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs.
- Increase the diversity of RI's health and human services workforce by supporting working paraprofessionals to become licensed health professionals with financial, academic, and other support.
- Attract more people to the health and human service field through tuition support for students to obtain degrees leading to licensed health and human service occupations.
- Retain nursing and behavioral health professionals in the state by providing loan repayment support after a period of service in Rhode Island.
- Grow the health and human service paraprofessional workforce with expanded pre-employment training.
- Expand the capacity of higher education programs to graduate health and human service professionals by increasing the number of faculty and expanding the number of quality clinical placements.
- Pursue strategic changes to health professional licensure requirements and processes that could help increase the number and diversity of licensed health professionals.

**PILLAR #3 – INNOVATE:** The third pillar, innovate, stresses the importance of thinking out of the box and moving away from the status quo, especially when it comes to career ladders and pathways into health and human services professions. It is critical that Rhode Island inspire and fund career ladder pilot programs that reimagine and create pathways to careers within health and human services. These investments must support collaboration across groups of employers and education partners to develop connected and streamlined academic pathways and workplace-based career ladders that:

- Attract new workers to the field.
- Increase access for underrepresented populations.
- Create strong linkages with CTE and higher education.
- Remove barriers to education for working adults.
- Incorporate anti-racist and culturally responsive practices.
- Use apprenticeship models to create education and training pathways tied to wage increases.

# Funding for Health Workforce Planning and Initiatives

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Rhode Island's efforts to advance the Rhode Ahead priorities have been supported by numerous state and federal sources, philanthropic contributions, and private sector resources. These funds have supported statewide workforce planning and policy development, as well as career awareness and outreach, job training, career & technical education, adult education, higher education, continuing education, career pathways, apprenticeships, wraparound services, equity initiatives, and direct workforce recruitment and retention incentives to support and grow the health & human services workforce. Advocacy to continue to fund and advance the Rhode Ahead objectives is ongoing.

## The Rhode Ahead Progress

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The section below highlights some of the work being done by both public and private partners that aligns with the Rhode Ahead pillars and strategies. Some of the work is centrally coordinated by the Project Team and some of the work includes related projects led by other partners. To date, all of the work has been made possible through partner collaboration, and braiding and leveraging existing funding streams.



### Career Awareness and Outreach Efforts

#### Rationale

Early career awareness building and outreach activities are a first step towards inspiring young people and job seekers to consider a career in healthcare. At the beginning of the initiative, stakeholders identified a common concern that there was lack of awareness among RI students and job seekers of employment and career opportunities within the health and human services sector. They also noted that interest in the sector was falling, especially after COVID, and stressed the importance of coming together to promote careers in health and human services to students and job seekers. The Health and Human Service Workforce Planning Initiative is working to attract students and job seekers to health and human service careers.

#### First Year Progress

- EOHHS identified funds that could be used to host a statewide career exploration event inclusive of hands-on experiences to provide students with exposure to health and human service-related careers. Led by Skills for Rhode Island's Future, the Health and Human Services Career Day was held on Saturday, April 1, 2023, from 9am-4pm at the RI Nursing Education Center. The day featured exhibits and presentations by more than 35 employers, institutions of higher education, training programs, State agencies, and community partners. Almost 140 attendees learned about health and human services careers by speaking directly to industry experts, connecting with employers, and participating in hands-on health scenarios created in simulation and skills labs. Skills for Rhode Island's Future followed-up with all participants to encourage enrollment in training and education and/or employment and evaluate the event to determine how to structure future efforts to promote employment in the sector.
- EOHHS used dedicated American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to develop and launch a public-private marketing campaign, called Caring Careers, promoting health and human service careers in home and community-based settings. The Caring Careers campaign used social media and radio ads to promote health-related job and training opportunities, and further build out the [CaringCareers.ri.gov](https://www.caringcareers.ri.gov) website to include additional information, resources, and videos about occupations across all health and human services settings.

Use this QR code to link to the Caring Careers website:



## Second Year Progress

- In March 2024, EOHHS relaunched Caring Careers 2.0 in collaboration with DLT, RI Department of Education (RIDE), RIOPC, and other state agencies, as well as Rhode Island’s institutions of higher education. The goal is to continue to promote careers in health and human services with a new, refreshed creative look. The project includes direct grassroots outreach in English and Spanish as well as the development of an online Interactive Pathways Tool. The campaign will be delivered across multiple channels, including Meta [Facebook/Instagram], LinkedIn, Google paid search, online banners, video, and streaming audio.



## Promoting and Strengthening CTE Programs

### Rationale

Current workforce shortages have created an urgent need to prepare high school students and young adults for college and careers in high-demand health and human services occupations. Health and human service Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs can meet community needs by strengthening the classroom-to-clinic pipeline. These programs encourage students to enter the field, boost the local economy with filled roles, and close the skills gap with industry certificates. The Rhode Ahead is working to align the State’s CTE system to better meet industry needs and orient and prepare young workers for health and human services careers.

### First Year Progress

- In April 2023, EOHHS convened employer, higher education, and CTE partners to learn about how they could partner with the CTE system to help address worker shortages in Rhode Island. The meeting affirmed CTE partners’ desire to separate the current grouping of careers in the nursing field with careers in the animal sciences and plant sciences. As a result, members of the relevant CTE Industry Advisory Committees realigned standards and added CTE Program Standard categories to better address industry identified needs. Specifically, the following areas are being added to the Health Science Cluster: Direct Nursing Care, Behavioral Sciences, Healthcare Laboratory, and Data Science & Healthcare Analytics. These program standards will join existing health science standards in the Health Science Cluster including Bioscience, Certified Patient Care Technician, Community Health Worker, Dental Hygienist, and Emergency Medical Responder. The new alignment of standards took effect with the 2023-2024 school year.
- A small project team inclusive of CTE program leaders, RIDE staff, and CTE industry co-chairs began meeting to determine the best ways to facilitate new partnerships between health & human service providers, institutions of higher education, and CTE high schools. The ideas explored included:
  - Hosting a CTE program showcase to promote CTE programs to employers and help employers understand the various ways that they can engage with CTE programs.
  - Creating and sharing a playbook for employers that are interested in engaging with CTE programs with helpful resources such as MOUs, an inventory of relevant legal/regulatory requirements, and ways to offer experiential learning opportunities, job shadowing, and internships for students.
  - Facilitating development of systemwide articulation agreements between CTE programs and higher education institutions.

### Second Year Progress

- On April 3, 2024, EOHHS and RIDE, with the generous support of the Hospital Association of Rhode Island (HARI), hosted a Health and Human Services Industry Employer and CTE Health Educator “Meet-Up” Event at the RI Nursing Education Center. The goal of the event was to connect health and human services employers with health and human services educators from RI’s public high schools that are interested in developing partnerships with employers. Specifically, the event was designed to:
  - Help employers learn about the state’s current CTE programs and the role they play in preparing students to pursue careers in health and human service.
  - Share ways that employers can engage with CTE programs.
  - Encourage mutually beneficial relationship building, which can lead to development of new, lasting partnerships between schools and employers, especially in the area of behavioral health.
  - Cultivate spaces for employers to talk about what they need, and for schools and educators to learn from industry and talk about their needs and emerging trends, in a casual but informational setting.

- Introduce a CTE “playbook” designed to help employers understand the many ways they can get involved, such as providing speakers, tours, job shadowing opportunities, internships, serving on local partnership teams or as an advisor on a local CTE club, etc.

Forty-one people attended the event and feedback on the event was outstanding. Results will help shape future event planning, and OHHS and RIDE are looking forward to hosting additional events next year. Here are a couple quotes from participants who completed the post-event survey:

*“This was the first time I've felt that progress was made (in) developing relationships with employers. Thank you so much for organizing this. I appreciate this more than you know.”*

*“...We made some really valuable connections with the high schools and we look forward to seeing how we can benefit the schools.”*

- A playbook for employers was created with helpful resources such as MOUs, an inventory of relevant legal/regulatory requirements, and ways to offer experiential learning opportunities, job shadowing, and internships for students. Below are links to these resources:
  - [CTE Employer Engagement Handbook](#)
  - [Template for Memorandum of Understanding for High School/CTE Program and Agency](#)
  - [Template for a Work-Based Learning Internship Program Agreement](#)



## Tuition Assistance and Supports for Working Paraprofessionals to Become Licensed Health Professionals

### Rationale

Removing barriers for working paraprofessionals to become licensed professionals is an important strategy for increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of RI’s health and human service workforce. Supports like tuition assistance reduces financial barriers to obtaining education, promotes career advancement, and increases the racial and ethnic diversity of health and human services professionals. In addition, wrap-around supports help workers to complete educational and clinical requirements for certification and licensure. The Health and Human Service Workforce Planning Initiative is working to increase the diversity of RI’s health and human service workforce by supporting paraprofessionals to become licensed health professionals.

### First Year Progress

- EOHHS partnered with RIOPC to leverage RIOPC’s RI Reconnect program and invest ARPA funds to establish the Health Professional Equity Initiative (HPEI), which provides financial, academic, and wraparound support to eligible paraprofessionals to pursue a higher education degree and health professional license. In Year 1, HPEI provided support to 125 paraprofessional healthcare workers.



Use this QR code to link to the RI ReConnect website

### Second Year Progress

- EOHHS is continuing to partner with RIOPC to leverage RI Reconnect and dedicate ARPA funds to support HPEI.

- The HPEI initiative is continuing to support over 100 people in this program; 9 students have already graduated, and another 15 individuals are anticipated to graduate from their program by June 2024. Additional recruitment for HPEI is currently underway.
- The ARPA funding for the program will end in March 2025 and will support student tuition through the Spring 2025 semester; however, RI Reconnect will continue to provide guidance and support (other than tuition) to HPEI participants when ARPA funding is no longer available.



## Tuition Assistance for Students To Obtain Health and Human Services Professional Degrees

### Rationale

Tuition assistance reduces financial barriers to obtaining higher education and makes it possible for students from all backgrounds to pursue and obtain a health-related postsecondary degree and licensure in occupations and settings experiencing worker shortages. The Health and Human Service Workforce Planning Initiative is working to attract more students to obtain degrees leading to licensed health and human service occupations.

### Second Year Progress

- Private sector partners proposed legislation (Bill Numbers [S2717](#) & [H7903](#)) that was introduced during the 2024 legislative season for state funding to create a Medical Primary Care Scholarship Program for students entering medical school, or a graduate nurse practitioner or physician assistant program. The proposed scholarship would provide up to \$70,000 per year for 4 years for 5 students entering medical school or up to \$47,000 per year for 2 years for 5 students entering Nurse Practitioner programs and 5 students entering Physician Assistant programs. Scholarship recipients must commit to practice primary care in Rhode Island for 8 years after graduation/completion of residency.



## Health Professional Loan Repayment

### Rationale

Loan repayment is an effective tool for recruiting and retaining highly qualified health care professionals. Loan repayment decreases the financial stress of student loan debt on incumbent workers and supports worker retention in the health and human services field, particularly in underserved areas. The Health and Human Service Workforce Planning Initiative is working to retain primary care providers, nursing and behavioral health professionals in the state by providing loan repayment support after a period of service in Rhode Island.

### First Year Progress

- With leadership from the RIF, a small working group was formed to expand partnerships and increase the dissemination of information about loan repayment opportunities to health and human services workers. Project team members worked to better align different loan repayment programs, including the RIDOH Health Professional Loan Repayment Program and the Commerce Department's Wavemaker Fellowship, which was expanded to provide tax credits to offset educational debt for health professionals working in eligible occupations and settings. EOHS provided guidance to Commerce to help establish eligibility criteria and maximize the impact of the new Wavemaker-Healthcare program. Team members also advocated for direct state investment in the Health Professional Loan Repayment Program and worked with RIDOH and EOHS to develop and make available a new online loan repayment navigation tool to help professionals and employers navigate the complicated world of loan repayment programs. Please use the QR code below to access the new tool.



Health Professional Loan Repayment Navigation Tool



Wavemaker Fellowship

### Second Year Progress

- Private sector partners proposed legislation (Bill [H 8079](#)) that was introduced during the 2024 legislative season to add \$1,000,000 to existing Health Professional Loan Repayment Program.



## Pre-Employment Training and Supports for Entry-Level Health and Human Services Jobs

### Rationale

Pre-employment training creates pipelines of talent into high-demand paraprofessional occupations including but not limited to nursing assistants, medical assistants, direct support professionals, and community health workers. The Health Workforce Planning Initiative is working to promote Real Jobs RI/DLT funding for pre-employment training for paraprofessional roles.

### First Year Progress

- DLT invested ARPA funds to support pre-employment training, as well as incumbent worker training, contextualized adult education programs, and wrap-around supports for people seeking paraprofessional roles through Real Jobs partnerships. EOHHS co-invested with DLT to expand pre-employment training for in-demand jobs in health & human services.

### Second Year Progress

- DLT has continued to support pre-employment training, as well as incumbent worker training, contextualized adult education programs, and wrap-around supports for jobs such as nursing assistants, medical assistants, direct support professionals, community health workers, medication technician, patient support specialist, pharmacy technician, surgical technician, and medical interpreters. The programs were delivered in partnership with higher education, community-based organizations, schools, and providers. EOHHS also continued to co-invest with DLT to expand pre-employment training for in-demand jobs in health & human services.
- Contextualized adult education programs for health and human services are promoted via the Caring Careers website which links to the adult education portal.



Real Jobs Rhode Island





## Building Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

### Rationale

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed and accelerated, long-term workforce challenges and shortages across diverse care settings, both clinical and community-based. Building and sustaining a workforce that can provide high-quality care and services to all Rhode Islanders necessitates addressing a number of interrelated issues, including ensuring that the health sector workforce better reflects the growing communities it serves.

### First Year and Second Year Progress

- As one example of alignment between the public and private sector partners, the Rhode Island Foundation issued \$1.4 million multi-year grants in 2023 focused on retaining a racially, culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse health care workforce in an effort to help reduce health disparities by addressing obstacles to the equitable delivery of health care. The RFP was developed in collaboration with the Health and Human Services Workforce Planning Initiative. Awardees included:
  - **Project Weber/RENEW** to improve the support system for its peer-health workforce by providing additional mental health supports, offering retirement accounts, improving staff's ability to navigate technology and keep track of their work with clients, and offering innovative supports to minimize burnout and promote career development.
  - **Tides Family Services** to create innovative career ladders in its existing apprenticeship program to administer paid on-the-job learning opportunities and to create new entry points into the behavioral health field for workers of color.
  - **BAYADA Home Health Care** to launch a new program, Clinician Learning toward Equitable Advancement and Progression (Clinician LEAP) Program. The Clinician LEAP Program will establish an intermediate clinical career step between Certified Nursing Assistants and Licensed Practical Nurses for the organization's staff.
  - **Centro de Inovacion Mujer Latina** to develop and strengthen its community care staff, which provides culturally competent behavioral health and substance recovery treatment, referral, and peer support to Spanish-speaking patients.
  - **Clinica Esperanza/Hope Clinic** to improve clinical workflows, policies and procedures; will enhance employee policies and practices and will implement progressive and supportive policies in order to create a more supportive workplace that prioritizes employee wellbeing and mental health.
  - **The Community Provider Network of Rhode Island** to work with its member developmental disability service provider agencies to advance equity and diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging practices by increasing retention of existing staff and focusing on pathways to diversifying executive teams.
  - **PACE Organization of Rhode Island** to introduce a program to retain and advance its staff, particularly into the management levels of the organization; and to implement an explicit framework and process for infusing awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion into organizational decisions and processes.
  - **Care New England Health System** to design and implement an executive training program for mid-level staff from diverse, under-served and marginalized populations.



## Increased Faculty and Clinical Placements

### Rationale:

Health professional faculty shortages resulting from an aging workforce and uncompetitive salaries are limiting the capacity of our higher education institutions to train our future health professional workforce. It is necessary to expand the capacity of higher education programs to graduate health and human service professionals and to increase opportunities for students to gain clinical experience, particularly in community-based settings that have fewer resources to support students. Degree

programs that require clinical placements have difficulty recruiting placement sites and preceptors (supervisors) for students working to become health professionals, while simultaneously clinical settings face challenges providing clinical placements for students. The Health and Human Service Workforce Planning Initiative has been working to collect data to better understand the drivers of these shortages.

### First Year Progress

- A team was formed to identify challenges associated with increasing the number of clinical placement sites and preceptors for health and human services roles. The team developed and delivered a survey that was distributed to 174 individuals who coordinate clinical programs at eight institutions of higher education in Rhode Island, and successfully received survey submissions from over 40 different academic programs. Survey results showed that in addition to making it more financially feasible for employers to take on students/host placements, other potential policy/organizational/budgetary strategies to address clinical placement barriers include:
  - Formal affiliations/relationships with employers who have an internship program in place
  - Centralized repository of preceptors willing to precept students/placement system
  - Designated slots at key agencies/health systems for placements semester to semester
  - More sites/opportunities outside of hospitals/long-term care
  - Creating company or facility culture in which clinical education is the norm, not the exception (need more support from clinicians/employers)
  - Increased contact hours for clinical instructors
  - Non-financial incentives to employers/clinicians to supervise/train preceptors

### Second Year Progress

- The project team developed and disseminated a companion survey to the initial instrument to collect data from clinical supervisors / “preceptors” to identify the unique issues and barriers experienced by those who directly supervise clinical students. The survey received 51 complete responses, almost half of which were from Pharmacists and notably fewer responses from those in Nursing and Behavioral Healthcare, which is reflective of the reality that time is a limited commodity, especially for those engaged in direct clinical care. The results are being used to support the development of actionable solutions to clinical placement barriers, and to ultimately increase clinical placement opportunities for students.
- Private sector partners proposed legislation (Bill Numbers [S2716](#) & [H7902](#)) that was introduced during the 2024 legislative season to compensate primary care practices to serve as enhanced interdisciplinary clinical training sites. The goal is to recruit 30 primary care training sites to participate and increase training slots by 50% for family nurse practitioner and physician assistant students and physician residents (trainees).
- The group will next focus on assessing operations-based barriers from the employer-based administrator perspective, as well as developing a formal Clinical Placements Solutions Workgroup Recommendations write-up, combining lessons learned from the first two years of data and research.



## Troubleshooting Licensure Barriers

### Rationale

Licensure policies and regulations can indirectly limit the number and diversity of licensed health professionals.

### First Year Progress

EOHHS and RIDOH Professional Licensure Board leadership started working together to identify and address workflows, regulations, or licensing requirements that were creating unneeded barriers to licensure. During the first year, the team eliminated testing delays encountered by aspiring Nursing Assistants during the licensure process. RIDOH staff worked with the current vendor to increase accountability, improve vendor staffing, increase testing capacity and exam locations, and make scheduling protocols more efficient and responsive. RIDOH staff also amended regulations to allow additional vendors to provide CNA testing services and are working to increase training programs’ support for students during test registration. In addition, RIDOH staff facilitated the vendor’s use of Registered Nurses from other states to work as CNA examiners; provided weekly updates of all available test slots to the RI Health Care Association (RIHCA), HARI, and LeadingAgeRI to share with their members; and applied for a waiver from CMS to allow CNA applicants additional time to complete their testing due to lack of

available test slots.

## Second Year Progress

- EOHHS and RIDOH continue to meet monthly to address regulatory licensing barriers. As a result, RIDOH is pursuing regulation revisions to:
  - Permit medication aide training to be offered online.
  - Authorize medication aides to administer certain medications in home care settings.
  - Revise faculty education requirements for LPN and Associate Degree RN programs.
  - Clarify rules permitting second year nursing students to take the medication aide exam without taking the medication aide training.
- RIDOH operationalized the newly enacted Nursing Licensure Compact (NLC). The NLC is an agreement between states that allows nurses to have one compact state nursing license that gives them the ability to practice in other states that are part of the agreement.
- EOHHS brought together Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), EOHHS, Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals (BHDDH), and industry representatives to review the educational requirements for Case Managers in facilities operating under BHDDH authority. Currently, Case Managers are required to have an Associate Degree to provide services even if that Associate Degree is in an unrelated field. The team is currently reviewing CCRI's Case Manager certificate program with the goal of implementing a blanket waiver for graduates of this program to provide services.



## Career Ladder Programs and Pilots

### Rationale

Investments in career pathways for working adults as well as cross-sector, multi-agency partnerships and pilot projects to build career ladders will help Rhode Island build stronger pathways and pipelines for working adults, unemployed adults, out-of-school youth, and students. The Health Workforce Planning Initiative is working to pilot innovative pathway programs that can be replicated and scaled up to grow and sustain the health and human service workforce.

### First Year Progress

- Since there is no single comprehensive source of up-to-date health and human services education and training program information available for healthcare workforce system planners and industry stakeholders to assess gaps in training and education and to support sharing and promotion of available programs, the project team inventoried all of the health and human services training and education programs available to Rhode Islanders and created an online tool with information on various programs for prospective students and workers to find and assess different educational opportunities. A career ladder visual was also developed for behavioral health and direct care.



*Healthcare Training & Education Inventory*



*Behavioral Health  
Career Ladder*



*Direct Care-Nursing  
Career Ladder*

- The Project team convened two Career Ladder Advisory Committees to focus on enhancing Behavioral Health and Direct Care/Nursing career ladders composed of industry, education, and other stakeholders. The Committees were charged with identifying and addressing system barriers that limit access to education, employment, and career advancement. Both

workgroups examined best practices to support working adults, mapped relevant career ladders including key occupations and related educational and training programs, and through group consensus building, identified and validated key barriers and strategies. The groups prioritized activities to support skill development and career advancement that help working adults, and especially workers of color, progress through career pathways towards licensed behavioral health and nursing professions.

## Second Year Progress

- Private partners proposed legislation (Bill Numbers [H8078](#) and [S2867](#)) to fund a “Ladders to Licensure” pilot program to create pathways for working paraprofessionals to advance to licensed positions. The pilot projects would be led by collaborations of employers, higher education, labor, CTE programs, and community partners and would prioritize: attracting new workers, increasing access for underrepresented populations, incorporating anti-racist and culturally responsive practices, creating strong linkages with CTE and higher education, removing barriers to education for working adults, using apprenticeship models, and engaging multi-employer and/or multi-higher education partners. There would be funding for three or four grantee partnerships with at least one focused on behavioral health and one on nursing. Employers would be required to contribute a twenty-five percent (25%) in-kind match and ten percent (10%) cash match. The request includes \$1,000,000 for fiscal year 2025 to support the first year of this three-year initiative.
- There are several career ladder initiatives being led by partner agencies, including but not limited to:
  - BAYADA Home Health Care is continuing to implement a **Nurse Residency Apprenticeship Program** for recent graduates from nursing school. This is a nationally accredited program that is 5-7 weeks long that includes classroom instruction, time in the simulation lab with our Clinical Director in addition to precepting in the field with experienced nurses. BAYADA also offers a **Aide to Nurse Scholarship** of \$5,000-\$10,000 to CNA’s who are enrolled or want to enroll in nursing school with a one year commitment to the Nurse Residency Apprenticeship Program upon graduation.
  - The Providence Center is continuing to implement its **Case Manager Apprenticeship Program** it created in partnership with RI College to improve staff retention. There are three Case Manager levels. Each level is associated with the completion of a training curriculum and the achievement of specific skills and competencies, and is attached to wage increases.
  - The Community College of Rhode Island is continuing to implement a **Case Manager Certificate** in partnership with the Community Care Alliance and Newport County Mental Health Center to address the critical shortage of Case Managers in Rhode Island. It is a free hybrid program that includes two 10-week semesters and a 20-30 hour/week paid internship (\$15/hour). Graduates earn 21-credits and a Certificate in Case Management (an industry-recognized credential) and are able to access employment as entry-level Case Managers (with BHDDH approval). As mentioned above, BHDDH is reviewing this program and considering eliminating the need for a special waiver to employ graduates of the program.
  - TIDES Family Services continues to implement its **Case Worker and Behavioral Assistant Apprenticeship Program** to address its workforce needs. The apprenticeship includes 4,000-4,500 hours of on-the-job learning supplemented by 478 hours of related instruction. Apprentices are paid for hours spent attending the required instruction classes, and classes are offered during regular work hours. Apprentices are paid a progressively increasing schedule of wages as they reach milestones.
  - The Parent Support Network (PSN) has implemented a registered apprenticeship program for **dual-certified Peer Recovery Specialists and Community Health Workers**.
  - The Community Health Worker Association of RI has implemented a new **CHW Training and Apprenticeship Program**. This program takes 12-18 months to complete and includes 2,100 - 2,400 hours of on-the-job learning. Stipends between \$5-9K (on top of salary) are available for completing program milestones.
  - Rhode Island College is continuing to implement its 30-hour **Behavioral Health Certification Program** for paraprofessionals on the front-lines to develop behavioral health knowledge and skills with orientation to behavioral health challenges, concepts, and workplace application. This program is provided at no cost to home care workers and is associated with a rate and wage increase when home care agencies reach the required percentage of BH-certified staff.

- The Community College of Rhode Island has created a **Patient Support Specialist pathway to Medical Insurance Billing and Coding Certificate** training program that will be delivered at Woonsocket Education Center. Starting this year, graduates of this program are eligible to receive 7 academic credits toward an 18-credit academic certificate in Medical Insurance Billing & Coding. Students who complete the academic certificate are eligible to become certified Medical Insurance Billing and Coding Specialists. The certificate is stackable to an associate's degree.
- Thundermist Health Center is currently in the initial phases of developing a **Medical Assistant Apprenticeship** program, aimed at establishing a robust training pathway for aspiring Medical Assistants. This program will serve as a platform for individuals, both internal and external candidates, to pursue career opportunities in the medical field.



## Recredentialing of Foreign-Educated Health Professionals

### Rationale

Internationally trained healthcare professionals face significant barriers to securing licensure in Rhode Island while healthcare sector employers struggle to address worker shortages and diversify their workforces. Health and Human Service Workforce Planning partners are collaborating to support foreign trained health and human services workers living in Rhode Island to secure licensure and/or certification in RI, so they can work in health and human service roles at the top of their licensure.

### First Year Progress (July 22 - June 23)

- RIDOH Academic Institute staff worked closely with the RI Welcome Back Center to secure funding from Real Jobs Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Foundation. The RI Welcome Back Center works to meet participants' needs by providing solutions to the barriers that prevent internationally-educated health professionals from reentering the healthcare workforce in RI. The grant funded a one-year pilot initiative in collaboration with Thundermist, Lifespan, RIDE, Genesis Center, and others to provide a range of services including intensive case management, English Language Instruction, resources and guidance concerning licensing and alternative pathways, and assistance with exams and licensing fees. The first cohort started in July 2023.

### Second Year Progress (July 23 - present)

- During the last year, there were 21 participants in the Welcome Back program: 1 dentist, 2 lab professionals, 3 psychologists, 7 RNs, 8 Physicians. Participants came from Argentina, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, Syria, Venezuela, and Haiti. Another 14 participants have been recruited so far for the second cohort including 1 dentist, 1 lab professional, 3 RNs, and 8 physicians. The Cohort II participants to date come from Puerto Rico, Haiti, India, Dominican Republic, Cuba, and China.
- The RIOPC partnered with the National Association of Higher Education Systems (NASH) Refugee Resettlement Initiative to establish a Community of Practice (CoP) around the critical importance of education and workforce integration for the state's refugees and immigrants. Stakeholders were engaged at a national, state and local level to participate in in-depth discussions and needs assessment between June and December 2023. The insights gleaned from the CoP will form the basis for a set of recommendations for the state and a comprehensive action plan to support refugee and immigrant access to higher education and job markets.



## Workforce Data Collection and Analytics Projects and Progress

### Rationale

Robust and responsive data systems are needed for state leaders to answer their most pressing questions about health and human services workforce needs and how to address them. Yet historically, in Rhode Island, state, industry and educational leaders have been unable to determine the employment status, career trajectory, retention, demographics, and other important characteristics of RI's licensed health and human service professionals. More generally, public and private sector

leaders lack the sector-wide data required to equitably assess and grow the state's current and future health and human services workforce. Health and Human Service Workforce Planning partners are working to invest in, leverage, and expand the capacity of RI state data systems to improve the state's ability to identify needs and make data-driven decisions around needed investments to address workforce shortages.

## First Year Progress

- RIDOH and EOHHS successfully executed an agreement to share data collected during the licensure process for health and human services occupations and incorporate the data set within the RI Data Ecosystem's data warehouse to enable cross-matching with other state data sets and provide preliminary healthcare workforce analysis. The data being shared includes information on multiple occupations including nurses, nursing assistants, social workers, mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists, dentists, and dental hygienists. The RI Data Ecosystem has the capacity to link individual data across 20+ previously siloed public data sets. This allows data to be broken out by race/ethnicity, gender, and location and supports a cross-discipline analysis that spans many settings. At the end of the year, the RI Ecosystem released the first version of an interactive PowerBI Health Workforce Data tool to support analysis of the data for testing.
- EOHHS worked with RIDOH to explore adding additional data fields that can be collected during the licensure process and to collect updated data sets annually to determine trends and monitor change over time.
- DLT developed an interactive dashboard that is filterable by healthcare occupation, with data points related to graduates produced in RI, active and inactive licensees, demographics, current wages, and 2030 projected employment by occupational dashboard to present health and human services labor market information in a concise and easy to understand format. When the dashboards are published, the data will help state and industry stakeholders better understand the labor market supply and demand information available through DLT and other public sources.

## Second Year Progress

- The interactive PowerBI Health Workforce Data Dashboard was vetted by stakeholders through the Fall of 2023. Stakeholder feedback was incorporated into the dashboard during spring 2024 and version 2.0 has recently been approved by Ecosystem data stewards. The Health Workforce Data Dashboard will be made available to the general public immediately following the Third Annual Health & Human Services Summit on May 29, 2024.
- The Governor's Office introduced legislation to expand the collection of standardized information on licensed healthcare professionals to help the state plan and address workforce shortages, enhance access to care, reduce health disparities, and address key healthcare workforce policy questions. Such information could include demographics, languages spoken, employment status, employer, job title, and/or retirement plans.



## Health System Planning

On February 23, 2024, Governor Dan McKee signed an Executive Order establishing a Health Care System Planning (HCSP) Cabinet that will take a unified, interdepartmental approach to evaluating and proposing recommendations for Rhode Island's health care system. The HCSP Cabinet will make recommendations focused on improving quality, affordability, and equity across the continuum of care to ensure Rhode Islanders have access to a health care system aligned with current and future needs. The Cabinet will integrate oversight and accountability of the health care system using data and make recommendations for establishing a framework for regulating and overseeing the entire system of care. The planning effort will be led by the state and will include and align closely with existing efforts, including the Health and Human Services Workforce Planning Initiative.

## Opportunities to Get Involved

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Over the next 12 months, the initiative will continue to accelerate its efforts to implement strategies to **attract, train, and retain a diverse workforce**. Building off of the collaborative infrastructure and public-private partnerships built over the past 2 years, initiative partners will continue to collaborate to pursue a shared policy agenda that will promote the strategies outlined above. Various forums will also be created to support the necessary and highly valued engagement of initiative partners in the further development and realization of the Rhode Ahead agenda. Forums for partner engagement and participation will include:

**Ad Hoc Project Teams:** The initiative regularly forms ad hoc project teams to advance the Rhode Ahead priorities as needed. We anticipate that there will be workgroups convened to work on a variety of ongoing and new initiatives related to new budgetary and policy initiatives, workforce data, career ladders, career awareness and outreach, and clinical placement.

- **Regularly Scheduled Online Stakeholder Update Meetings:** Throughout the year, the initiative staff will host concise, online update meetings where staff and partners working to advance key projects, share progress, vet ideas, take feedback from interested stakeholders from across the initiative and showcase related projects being led by other stakeholders.
- **Health Workforce Data Dashboard training sessions:** To assist individuals and organizations that are interested in using the new Dashboard, we will be conducting one-hour training sessions on Wednesday, June 12 at 10 AM and Wednesday, June 19 at 3 PM. Use the following QR codes to register for either session:



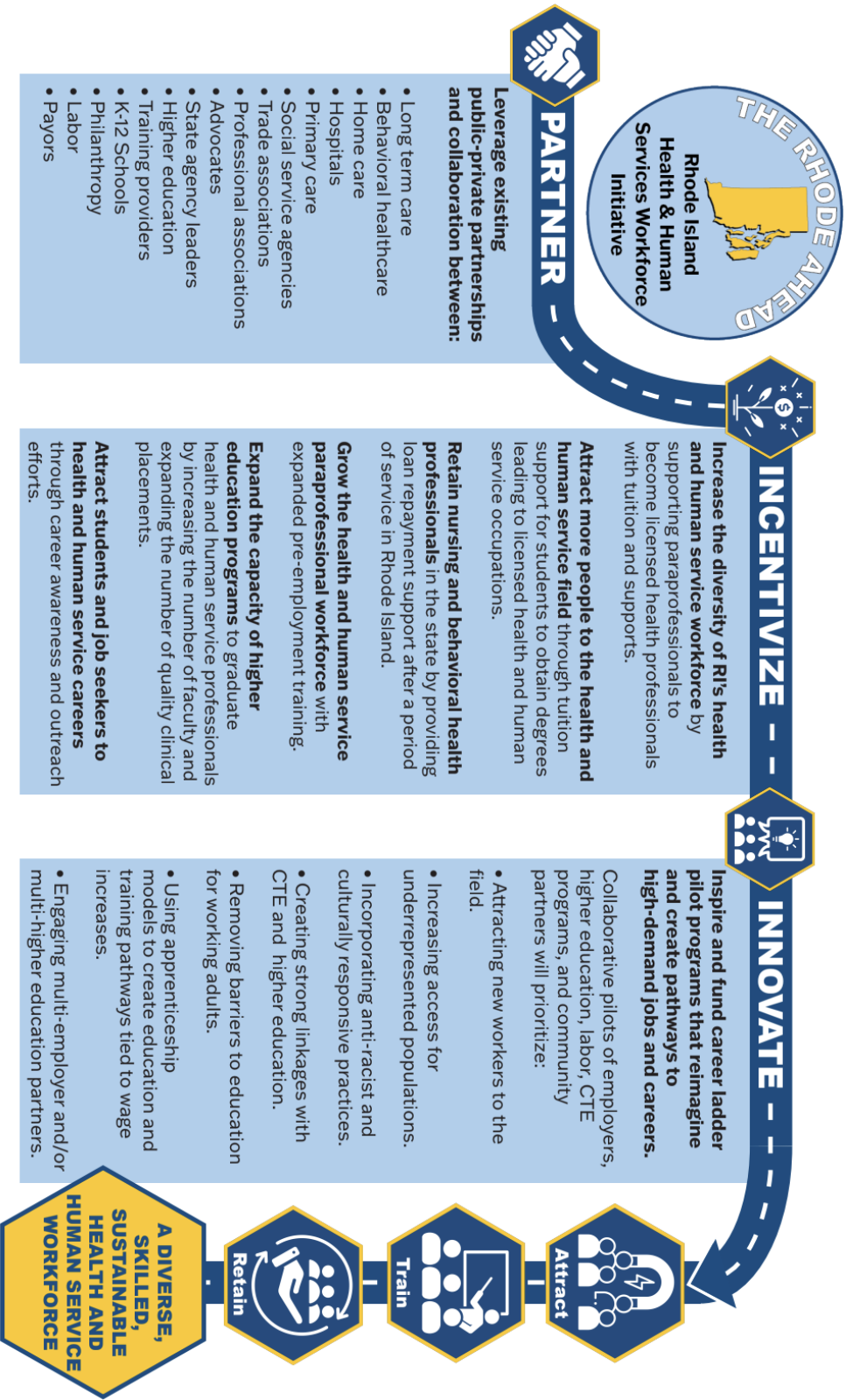
Wednesday, June 12  
10 - 11 AM



Wednesday, June 19  
3 - 4 PM

If you wish to get involved in any of the activities above, please contact Rick Brooks at [Rick.Brooks@ohhs.ri.gov](mailto:Rick.Brooks@ohhs.ri.gov) or Aryana Huskey at [Aryana.Huskey.CTR@ohhs.ri.gov](mailto:Aryana.Huskey.CTR@ohhs.ri.gov). Thank you for your continued interest and support of the Health & Human Services Workforce Planning Initiative.

# Appendix I: The Rhode Ahead





## **Appendix II: Executive Leadership and Project Management Team Members**

The initiative receives support and guidance from the following interagency team of executive leaders:

*Richard Charest, Secretary, RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services*

*Ana Novais, Assistant Secretary, RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services*

*Shannon Gilkey, Commissioner, RI Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner*

*Matt Weldon, Director, RI Department of Labor and Training*

The initiative is guided by its public/private Project Management Team that includes representatives from across government, the healthcare sector, and philanthropy. Team members include:

*Alyssa Alvarado, Executive Director, Governor's Workforce Board*

*Aryana Huskey, LCSW, Health Workforce Transformation Project Manager, RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services*

*Bonnie Rayta, CHSOS, Manager of Simulation & Technology - RI Nursing Education Center, RI Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner*

*Charon Rose, Director of Workforce Strategy and Operations, RI Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner*

*Dr. Larry Warner, Chief Impact and Equity Officer, United Way of Rhode Island*

*Howard Dulude, Director of Finance, Hospital Association of Rhode Island*

*Keith Murray, Real Jobs Rhode Island Coordinator, RI Department of Labor and Training*

*Laurie Leonard, Director of Academic Affairs and Accreditation, RI Department of Health*

*Marti Rosenberg, Health Policy and Planning Director, RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services*

*Michael Hobin, Director, Office of College and Career Readiness, RI Department of Education*

*Rick Brooks, Director, Health Workforce Transformation, RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services*

*Sandra Powell, Deputy Director, RI Department of Health*

*Sandra Victorino, LMHC, Director of Workforce Development, Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations, Care New England and Chairperson, Commission for Health Advocacy and Equity*

*Zachary Nieder, Senior Strategic Initiative Officer, Rhode Island Foundation*

EOHHS and the Project Management Team are provided project management and consulting services by Kristin Lehoullier of Elevated Results, Inc.

## Appendix III: Public and Private Sector Participating Organizations (2022-2024)

### Public Sector

Burrillville School District  
Central Falls School District  
Charles E. Shea High School  
Commerce RI  
Community College of RI  
Coventry Public School District  
Cranston Public School District  
Cumberland Public School District  
DataSpark  
Davies Tech  
Department of Administration  
Department of Business Regulation  
Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals  
Department of Children Youth & Families  
Department of Corrections  
Department of Education  
Department of Health  
Department of Human Services  
Department of Labor & Training  
East Providence High School  
Executive Office of Health & Human Services  
Exeter-West Greenwich High School  
Governor's Workforce Board  
Juanita Sanchez Educational Complex  
North Kingstown High School  
North Providence High School  
Office of the Governor  
Office of Healthy Aging  
Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner  
Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner  
Office of Veterans Services  
Paul Cuffee Upper School  
Pilgrim High School  
Ponaganset High School  
Providence Public Schools  
RI Nursing Education Center  
RI Nursing Institute Middle College  
RI Senate  
Rhode Island College  
Scituate Public Schools  
South Kingstown School District  
Student Loan Authority  
University of Rhode Island  
West Warwick High School  
Woonsocket High School

### Private/Non-Profit/Philanthropic

AARP-RI  
Acadia Healthcare  
Accesspoint RI  
Addiction Recovery Institute  
Adoption RI  
Advocates for Better Care in RI  
Aldersbridge  
Alee Behavioral Health  
Alliance for Better Long-Term Care  
Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education  
Alpert Medical School Brown University  
Amos House  
Anchor Bay East Providence  
Association of Independent Colleges & Universities - RI  
Avatar Residential  
BAYADA Home Health Care  
Becket Academy  
Blackstone Valley Community Health Care  
Blue Cross Blue Shield RI  
Boston Behavior Learning Centers  
Bradley Hospital  
Brain Injury Association of RI  
Bridgemark  
Brown Physicians, Inc.  
Butler Hospital  
CareLink RI  
Care Transformation Collaborative-RI  
CB Homecare  
Center for Health & Justice Transformation  
Center for Southeast Asians  
Care New England  
Charlesgate  
CharterCARE  
Child & Family Services of RI  
Community Care Alliance  
Community Health Network of RI  
Community Health Worker Association RI  
Community Provider Network of RI  
Cornell University  
CODAC  
Comprehensive Community Action Program  
East Bay Community Action Program  
Economic Progress Institute  
Eleanor Slater Hospital  
Elevated Results  
Exeter Job Corps  
Family Behavior Solutions  
Family Services of RI  
Faulkner Consulting Group  
Federal Hill House  
Fogarty Center  
Franklin Court Assisted Living

Gateway Healthcare  
Genesis Center  
Goodwill of Southern New England  
Governor's Behavioral Health Council  
Harmony Hill School  
Hasbro Children's Hospital  
Healthcentric Advisors  
Home Care Advantage  
Home Care Services of RI  
Homecare Networks RI  
Hope Health Hospice & Palliative Care  
Hope Nursing Home Care  
Horizon Healthcare Partners  
Hospital Association of RI  
Integra  
Johnson & Wales University  
Landmark Medical Center  
Latino Policy Institute  
Leadership RI  
LeadingAge RI  
Lifespan  
Lifespan ClinTECH Center  
Lincoln Technical Institute  
Living Innovations  
Livingwell Adult Day Care  
Looking Upwards  
Marquis Health Consulting Services  
MAS Homecare  
Maxim Staffing  
McAuley Village  
Meaningful Outcomes  
Mental Health Association of RI  
Momentum, Inc.  
National Association of Social Workers-RI  
New England Institute of Technology  
New England Medical Innovation Center  
Neighborhood Health Plan of RI  
NeuroRestorative  
Newport Hospital  
Newport Mental Health  
Ocean State Center for Independent Living  
ONE Neighborhood Builders  
Onward We Learn  
OpenDoors  
Open Door Health  
Opportunities Unlimited  
PACE  
Parent Support Network of RI  
Partnership RI  
Perspectives Corporation  
Phenix Home Care  
PLAN RI  
Progreso Latino  
Protect Our Healthcare Coalition  
Project Weber-Renew  
Providence College  
Providence Community Health Center  
Raising Hope Home Care

Refugee Dream Center  
Renaissance Adult Day Health  
Rhode Island Hospital  
RI Assisted Living Association  
RI Coalition for Children & Families  
RI Council 94 AFSCME  
RI Dental Association  
RI Elder Info  
RI Foundation  
Right at Home  
RI Health Care Association  
RI Health Center Association  
RI Medical Society  
RI Oral Surgery  
RI Partnership in Home Care  
RI Parent Information Network  
RI Prevention Resource Center  
RI State Nurses Association  
RIDDC  
Roger Williams University  
Sage Squirrel Consulting  
Salve Regina University  
Senior Agenda Coalition  
SEIU 1199 NE  
SEIU Local 580  
Sherlock Center  
SHP Management  
Sista Fire  
Skills for RI's Future  
South County Health  
St. Elizabeth Community  
SUMHLC - RI  
Systems Change Strategies  
The Friendly Home  
The Opening, LLC  
The Providence Center  
The Robert Grey Center  
The Seasons  
The Wilson Organization  
Thrive Behavioral Health  
Thundermist Health Center  
Tides Family Services  
Tockwotton  
Tri-County Community Action Agency  
Trudeau Center  
United HealthCare  
United Nurses & Allied Professionals  
United Way of Rhode Island  
Urban Perinatal Educational Center  
VBC Foundation  
VICTA  
Visiting Angels of Rhode Island  
Welcome Back Center - RI  
West Bay RI  
Western Governors University  
Your Choice of Home Care