

A professional portrait of a Black female healthcare worker. She has short, dark hair styled in braids. She is wearing a blue V-neck scrub top over a white collared shirt. A silver stethoscope hangs around her neck. She is smiling warmly at the camera. Her right hand is holding a white clipboard or chart, and her left hand is partially visible, also holding a piece of paper.

A Guidebook: Building a CNA Talent Pipeline

**Through Partnerships
with Local Training
Providers and Using
Asynchronous Training
Platforms**

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MASSACHUSETTS
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ASSOCIATION



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Introduction

The shortage in Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) is more challenging than ever. With fewer available CNAs and increased demand, long term care facilities are feeling the pressure — especially when it comes to recruitment and retention of CNAs. This guidebook is intended to support the efforts of nursing facilities to build CNA talent pipelines through developing facility-based training programs that use asynchronous instruction platforms and/or partnering with local CNA training providers. These pipeline strategies will enable facilities to expand career opportunities through training Resident Care Assistants (RCAs), Hospitality Aides or other entry-level staff to become CNAs or can strengthen the partnership with local training providers to become an employer of choice for new CNA graduates from the community.

In this guidebook you will find resources on:

- Assessing your facility's CNA hiring needs and resources
- Adding asynchronous instruction to facility-based training programs:
 - Assessing asynchronous instructional tools
 - Template applications to the Department of Public Health for approval of an internal program using asynchronous online instruction in conjunction with internal skills training
- Partnering with a Local CNA Training Provider:
 - Identifying potential local training providers
 - Screening potential training providers to find the right partner
 - Structuring a relationship with a training partner

Section One: Assessing Your Facility's CNA Hiring Needs and Resources

Whether you are building out your facility-based CNA training capacity or seeking a partnership with a local training provider, it is helpful to have a clear understanding of your hiring needs and training resources to guide your decision-making and facilitate clear communication within your facility and with external partners. Here are five simple guiding questions to assist you in assessing your CNA hiring needs and resources. To download the Assessment, click [here](#).

Assessment: CNA Hiring Needs and Resources

- 1) How many CNAs does my facility hire each year? Each month?
- 2) How is my facility currently sourcing CNAs? Is that sourcing model effective in terms of number of hires, skill level of hires and retention? If not, what are the specific areas for improvement?
- 3) What does the local landscape of CNA training providers look like in my region? (See Section Three for tools to identify potential training providers)
- 4) Do we currently have an approved facility-based CNA training program? Is it meeting our needs? If not, what are the specific areas for improvement?
- 5) What resources do we have to commit to a CNA sourcing and training strategy? How are those resources best deployed? Resources include:
 - a. Staff (instructor, program coordinator, other)
 - b. Training budget
 - c. Other training resources/requirements: space, equipment and instructional materials, clinical supervision

Section Two: Adding Asynchronous Instruction to a Facility-based CNA Training Program

If your facility has a facility-based CNA training program approved by the Department of Public Health (or you are applying for approval of a program using asynchronous instruction) the Massachusetts Senior Care Association has developed a template application to DPH, with two frequently used asynchronous training providers, CNA Online/Academic Platforms and Relias Straightaway. These template applications are based on the experiences and applications of several nursing facilities that successfully completed the DPH application process.

CNA Online/Academic Platforms

- [CNA Online/Academic Platforms Template Application](#) (Word Document)
- [CNA Online/ Academic Platforms Website](#)
- [Facility FAQs](#)

Relias Straightaway

- [Relias Straightaway Template Application](#) (Word Document)
- [Relias Straightaway Website](#)

Please Note: there are other CNA asynchronous instruction providers and MSCA does not endorse CNA Online/Academic Platforms or Relias Straightaway. We encourage members to explore asynchronous providers' platforms and costs to identify the one that will work best for your organization.

Regardless of the platform and provider you select, if you choose to pursue DPH approval to incorporate asynchronous instruction into your facility-based CNA program, here are some tips developed by MSCA and COVID-19 Policy Alliance in their work with three nursing facilities that successfully pursued DPH approval for their programs:

Application: What information needs to be included in the training application?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instructor needs to be an RN• Use pre-filled materials for curriculum section of application (need to answer additional questions when filing for online program)• Emphasize clinical training will be hands-on, in person• Training space cannot be resident space, even if unused• Consider (and communicate!) regulatory guidance
Curriculum: What curriculum should be used for the CNA training program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Competency checklists are facility-specific• For theory: use the content from the asynchronous training provider (Relias Straightaway, CNA Online/Academic Platforms or other)• Week-by-week schedule will be facility-specific

Section Three: Developing a Partnership Strategy with an External Training Program to Find and Train CNAs

If you do not have a facility-based program, the Massachusetts Senior Care Association has developed tools to help you establish your objectives for an external program, identify and assess potential training partners, and structure a partnership.

Step One: Establishing Your Objectives

Click [here](#) for a tool to establish your facility's objectives for an external training program.

Step Two: Identifying Potential CNA Training Partners in Your Local Area

There are several resources that can help to identify potential training providers in your area.

- I. Most **community colleges** provide CNA training either through their for-credit division or their workforce development division. Below are links to the college websites and contact information for their workforce development programs. You may want to begin exploration with the community college by contacting the person responsible for their workforce development programming and asking about whether they offer CNA training and the contact person for that training.
 - Massachusetts Community Colleges: <https://masscc.org/colleges/>
 - Workforce Training in Community Colleges: <https://masscc.org/workforce-training/>

2. Most **career and technical schools** (vocational schools) provide CNA training. All train high school students and a few have programs in the afternoon and evening or weekends for adults. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has a [Vocational Technical Education Program Directory](#).
3. **DPH** maintains a [List of DPH approved CNA training providers](#). It includes program location and contact information.
4. The **MassHire** workforce system approves Nursing Assistant programs that are eligible for various programs that provide financial assistance to individuals who need training to find a job. Please note that while these programs have been approved for financial assistance, eligibility for the assistance depends on the income and work history of the individual seeking assistance. In addition, there are limited funds each year for the financial assistance programs. The best resource to understand financial assistance that may be available in your area is to contact your region's MassHire Workforce Board using this link, [MassHire Workforce Board listing](#). To identify other providers in your local area, search for job training programs that have been approved by MassHire, with location and contact information here: <https://jobquest.dcs.eol.mass.gov/jobquest/Training.aspx>

To search for CNA programs, type Nursing Assistant in the **Targeted Occupations** box and click on the Search button at the bottom right of the page.

The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD)

MASSHIRE JobQuest

Login / Register

Home Find Jobs Locate Training Search Events My JobQuest Help

Search and Find Jobs in Massachusetts with JobQuest » Locate Training

Locate Training

The job training programs available through the MassHire JobQuest system include training opportunities currently approved for ITA, Section 30, and Trade. Use the 'Approved Funding Regions' map to find training approved for funding by that region.

To search by the location where the training is being held use the 'Training Location' search box.

Keyword Example: Workshop	Provider Name	Course Name
Targeted Occupation Nursing Assistant	Approved Course Type Any Course Type	Training Location: Specify City or ZIP Code Massachusetts City or ZIP Code

Approved Funding Regions
Check region(s) manually or by clicking on the map:

No Geographic Preferences
 Berkshire County (Pittsfield)
 Boston
 Bristol (Attleboro, Fall River, Taunton)
 Brockton
 Cape & Islands (Hyannis)
 Central Mass (Southbridge, Worcester)
 Franklin/Hampshire (Greenfield)
 Greater Lowell
 Greater New Bedford
 Hampden (Springfield, Holyoke)
 Merrimack Valley (Lawrence, Haverhill)
 Metro North (Cambridge, Chelsea, Woburn)
 Metro South West (Framingham, Norwood)
 North Central (Leominster)
 North Shore (Gloucester, Lynn, Salem)
 Out of Area
 South Shore (Plymouth, Quincy)

Reset Criteria **Search**

The results pages will look like this:

The screenshot shows the MassHIRE JobQuest website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Home, Find Jobs, Locate Training, Search Events, My JobQuest, and Help. On the right, there are icons for users and a 'Login / Register' link. Below the navigation is a banner featuring five diverse individuals representing different career paths. The main content area is titled 'Training & Education Search Results'. A sidebar on the left titled 'You Searched For' shows a single result: 'Targeted Occupation' with 'Nursing Assistant' checked. Below this is a note: 'Click the [x] above to remove the criteria from your search' and a 'Modify Search' button. The main search results table has columns for 'Course Name', 'Address', and 'Provider Name'. It lists 34 items found, showing records 1 to 20 of 34. Each row provides details about a specific course, its address, and the provider college. For example, one entry is for 'Advance Nurse Assistant Remote Learning' at 1 Ferncroft Road, Danvers, MA 01923, offered by North Shore Community College.

Course Name	Address	Provider Name
Advance Nurse Assistant Remote Learning	1 Ferncroft Road Danvers, MA 01923	North Shore Community College
AS Foundations of Health	303 Homestead Avenue Holyoke, MA 01040	Holyoke Community College
Certified Nurse AideTraining	2 Galleria Mall Drive Taunton, MA 02780	Bristol Community College
Certified Nursing Assistant	70 Everett Ave Chelsea, MA 02150	Bunker Hill Community College
Certified Nursing Assistant	19 Flogg Street Framingham, MA 01702	Mass Bay Community College
CNA II - Certified Nurse Aide Plus Alzheimers and Home Health Aide Training	1 ARMORY SQUARE SPRINGFIELD, MA 01105	Springfield Technical Community College
CNA/HHA	270 Main Street Greenfield, MA 01301	Greenfield Community College
Community Healthworker	1 Ferncroft Rd. Danvers, MA 01923	North Shore Community College

Step Three: Screening the Potential Training Providers for the Right Partner

Click [here](#) for screening questions that can guide your conversation with a potential training provider.

Step Four: Structuring the Partnership

There are several ways in which your facility can structure your partnership with a local CNA training provider:

- Be a clinical placement site
- Be a source of referrals to their program of your current employees or applicants for positions at your facility who you may hire after training and certification
- Be a partner that hires new graduates from their program
- Be a customer for a customized training program they design and deliver for your employees

Nursing facilities which are partnering with local CNA training providers provide some examples of how these partnerships are helping to address their CNA pipeline needs.

- There are nursing facilities that are partnering with their local community college to enroll RCAs into a CNA training program that is grant-funded and provides credit toward a higher-level certification or associate's degree;
- In one region of the state, two facilities are partnering with the MassHIRE career center and workforce board to refer candidates to a facility-based training program and a hybrid training

- program (didactic training online and skills training in-person) being offered through a partnership of the nursing facility, local community college and MassHIRE;
- These same facilities partnered with the MassHIRE system to apply for a grant to support CNA training for unemployed individuals;
- Another facility is partnering with a local non-profit training provider to provide CNA training for RCAs and to hire other graduates from the CNA training program;
- Many nursing facilities serve as a clinical placement partner with a Career and Technical High School, a community college or a non-profit CNA training provider.

Perspective of the Partnering Organizations

Workforce development and education organizations that are partnering with nursing facilities offer their perspectives on best practices in building effective partnerships:

- The partnerships spell out the responsibilities and roles of each partner through a Memorandum of Agreement and/or a contract;
- There is tremendous benefit to building a relationship with the local workforce board, joining healthcare advisory committees and providing critical information about hiring needs and skill requirements;
- The MassHIRE system has the capability to reach large numbers of candidates for CNA training and can assist nursing facilities in screening those candidates to assess their fit with the nursing facilities' mission and culture and ability to benefit from training;
- Workforce boards, community colleges and community-based providers are often positioned to compete for grants that will cover the costs of training and supports such as transportation and childcare while in training;
- The most successful partnerships require the commitment of time, expertise and in some cases in-kind and cash resources from the nursing facility partner/s;
- Some workforce development and education partners can advise nursing facilities on their competitive position relative to wages, benefits and working conditions with other nursing facilities and industries that are hiring from the same pool of talent.

Resources

Mass Senior Care is here to support and guide you. If you have any questions or need additional assistance, please contact us at:

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