



College of Menominee Nation Tribal Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) Program—Overview and Preliminary Outcomes

This practice brief is one in a series being developed by the Tribal Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) evaluation team, comprised of NORC at the University of Chicago, Red Star Innovations and the National Indian Health Board. The briefs will be used to disseminate important findings and lessons learned from the Tribal HPOG program evaluation, which is funded by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation within the Administration for Children and Families. The HPOG program is funded by the Affordable Care Act to support 32 demonstration projects, including five Tribal Colleges and Organizations. The Tribal HPOG program aims to meet local healthcare demands by increasing the number of well-trained health professionals in tribal communities. This is achieved through the education and training of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and other low-income individuals to become healthcare professionals. The program design includes a career pathways approach where students advance through related trainings that build on each other to deepen students' healthcare knowledge and skills. This practice brief provides an overview of the College of Menominee Nation (CMN) Tribal HPOG program and key findings to date.

The College of Menominee Nation (CMN) is a tribally controlled and accredited community college serving the Menominee Nation, neighboring tribal nations, and surrounding communities. Chartered in 1993, CMN's vision is to serve as a center for lifelong learning, providing exemplary academic preparation and research. CMN offers a range of higher education opportunities, including baccalaureate and associate degrees, technical diplomas and certificates, and continuing education opportunities. CMN has two campuses; the main campus is located on the Menominee Indian Reservation in Keshena, Wisconsin, and the urban campus is located in Green Bay.

The CMN Tribal HPOG program offers a Nursing Career Ladder that allows students to progress from the Pre-Nursing Assistant (Pre-NA) level through to the Registered Nurse (RN) level. Whether a student is seeking immediate employment or a more advanced nursing certificate, licensure, or degree, the CMN Tribal HPOG program offers academic and social student services to support student success. Examples of academic support services include academic counseling, encouragement, and advising, supplemental lab instruction, tutoring, and career placement support. Social support services include case management, as well as financial assistance to help cover transportation, housing, and childcare costs.

KEY FINDINGS TO DATE¹

Program Structures

The CMN Tribal HPOG Nursing Career Ladder includes program structures designed to academically prepare students to complete a Nursing Assistant (NA) certificate and advance through multiple nursing programs starting with Pre-NA up to a RN. The program uses academic and skill assessments to gauge student readiness before they advance to the next level of the career ladder. Program staff provide students with individual case management to facilitate goal setting and identify needed academic and social supports. To

achieve its goals, the CMN Tribal HPOG program partners with tribal and local workforce programs and employers to recruit students to the program, provide on-site job training and clinical experience in healthcare settings, and facilitate job placement after program completion.

- **Student readiness assessments.** The CMN Tribal HPOG program uses academic and career interest assessments to determine student readiness for a career in nursing. Academic assessments include the ACCUPLACER, TABE and TEAS, and are used to determine whether students have necessary academic skill levels in reading, writing, and math, which are essential for college-level courses in nursing. If students need to build their academic skills, the program provides remedial education and tutoring. In addition to the academic assessments, CMN uses a suitability interview to assess a potential student's overall fit and readiness for working with patients in nursing. The suitability interview, a new component of the program application, includes questions that assess a student's soft skills, interpersonal communication, time management, and family support.
- **Multiple entry points to the Nursing Career Ladder.** HPOG participants can begin their nursing training in one of three programs, depending on their academic readiness. Students with some prior training can begin with the Practical Nursing (PN) program, while the eight week NA program provides an orientation for students to nursing careers and opportunities for advanced nursing education. In addition, prospective students are able to begin their nursing education with pre-requisite general education courses necessary for acceptance into the nursing program.

*"I'm hoping to get my LPN so I never have to worry about not being able to support myself again."
—CMN Program Participant*

¹ The findings to date section on program structures, program processes, and program outcomes are derived from three site visits to CMN which included 44 key informant interviews with administrative and program implementation staff and project

stakeholders, 6 focus groups with the CMN students, and 14 completer and non-completer phone interviews with CMN students. Information was pulled directly from the interviews and focus groups.

- **Academic and social support services.** Students and program administration staff report that the jump from NA to PN can be difficult for some students due to the change in academic rigor; therefore, CMN Tribal HPOG staff have created academic and social supports to help students advance to the next level of the career ladder. Students can access academic services and resources, including a skills lab for math and science, a simulation program for nursing skill development and practice, licensure exam preparation, and tutoring. For participants who face social and economic challenges, CMN Tribal HPOG provides case management and financial assistance to help with costs such as tuition, books, rent, transportation, utilities, and child care.
- **Employment Assistance.** HPOG students can utilize career services designed to help them transition into a career, including assistance with resume development, interview preparation, and job placement. Additionally, the CMN Tribal HPOG program formed an advisory board made up of partners representing local and tribal programs and employers. The Tribal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Program, the Tribal TANF Program, and the Wisconsin Works (W-2) Program help recruit students and provide job readiness and placement support. The HPOG Job Placement Specialist develops new and maintains existing relationships with employers to facilitate student employment opportunities.

Program Processes

Each year the CMN Tribal HPOG program has strengthened its processes to support student achievement. These processes have allowed the program to maintain high enrollment, retain and graduate students, and support student success as participants advance along the nursing career ladder.

- **Program Recruitment.** Program staff report that word of mouth continues to be the most cited method for how students learned about the CMN Tribal HPOG program. Students recruited through the WIA, W-2 and Tribal TANF programs continue to increase as program partnerships strengthen. Other recruitment activities include job fairs, flyers, and presentations.
- **Program Orientation.** Program staff note that the CMN Tribal HPOG Nursing Orientation/Boot Camp continues to be a cornerstone of the program. It has evolved from a one- to two-day orientation to nine days as program staff identified new topics to include and incorporated team building exercises and a cultural component. Students have the opportunity to meet faculty and staff and participate in workshops on program expectations, financial aid, math and writing skills, time management, test taking strategies, and study skills, among other topics. Program staff report that it has been beneficial for students to have a clear understanding of program expectations prior to beginning training.

“Currently, I’m working as a CNA in a nursing home and I really like it. But I would love to have the opportunity to work in a hospital someday.”

–CMN Program Participant

- **Student Success Plans (SSP).** Students develop their first SSP upon entry into the HPOG program, which they update each semester. The SSP informs case management activities by identifying student barriers and creating action plans for overcoming them. Staff use the SSP to advise

students on their academic expectations and address personal challenges. Staff then provide or refer students to academic or social support services that may be needed.

Program Outcomes²

The CMN Tribal HPOG program measures success based on student satisfaction, educational attainment, and employment. CMN administrators and CMN Tribal HPOG program staff greatly value the program and the effects they believe it has on student outcomes. They frequently report observing increased student confidence about their abilities to achieve their academic, career, and personal goals.

- **Progress towards achieving enrollment and completion goals.** As of May 2015, a total of 512 students have enrolled in the NA program; 395

have completed the program and 38 are still in training. In addition, 172 students have enrolled in the PN program, with 72 completers and 66 students still in training, and 77 students have enrolled in the RN program, with 42 completers and 21 students still in training.³ CMN is focused on getting all of their PN and RN students to complete their academic programs. To that end, CMN has offered additional study groups and tutoring opportunities and implemented weekly check-ins with PN students. With these efforts, CMN anticipates continued progress towards completion goals.

- **CMN Tribal HPOG staff and students report progress in finding employment and increased wage earnings.** As of May 2015, 173 out of 476 participants who completed a healthcare training activity gained employment.³ CMN expects employment numbers to increase as current students finish their academic programs and seek employment. In addition, 31% of NA completers were employed, and 8% enrolled in another training program; 55% of PN completers were employed and 18% enrolled in additional training; and 8% of RN completers were employed.³ Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) are earning an average of \$11.27 per hour; Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) earn an average of \$17.68 per hour; and RNs earn an average of \$26.48 per hour.⁴ CMN Tribal HPOG staff report that employers are eager to hire students who have completed the program because they are skilled and are often familiar with the employment site from their on-site clinical training.
- **High level of satisfaction among stakeholders.** Stakeholders continue to be overwhelmingly positive about the CMN Tribal HPOG program. Staff noted that the HPOG program is unlike other grant programs in that it can provide direct social support services to students. Staff feel that these services are key to effectively meeting student needs and ensuring academic success. Students reported being thankful for the program and feel that they have been provided with a life-changing opportunity.

“I want people to know about all the support and how great the HPOG program is. It changed my life!”

–CMN Program Participant

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² Although the evaluation describes preliminary outcomes for program participants, we do not know what the outcomes for participants would have been in the absence of the program.

³ Enrollment and completion data from the HPOG Performance Reporting System (PRS) as of May 2015. CMN notes that an update of the data is in process. For some HPOG participants, employment data is unavailable. CMN anticipates additional follow up with students to obtain information about their employment status.

⁴ Salary data from the CMN Performance Progress Report (PPR) as of April 2015.