

# Berkshires receive \$235k to battle shortage of nursing assistants

By Tony Dobrowolski, The Berkshire Eagle Sep 8, 2021



Berkshire Health Systems is the county's largest employer. The MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board has received a \$235,000 grant to establish a program to help remedy the county's chronic shortage of nursing assistants.

PITTSFIELD — The state agency that oversees workforce development in the Berkshires has received a \$235,000 grant to provide additional training opportunities in the county's largest job sector.

The [MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board](#) plans to use the funding to support the development and management of health care training programs in Berkshire County over the next two years. Health care/social assistance is the Berkshire's largest job sector, with 11,500 employees, according to the workforce board's website. [Berkshire Health Systems](#) is the county's largest employer.

The funding through the [state Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development](#) will be used for the Berkshire Healthcare Hub, a comprehensive partnership that involves the county's health care employers, educators, workforce professionals, social service agencies and career development agencies. The hub's goal is to increase opportunities within the health care job sector for training and workforce development by aligning job opportunities with the needs of area employers.

Plans call for the establishment of a North County-based certified nursing assistant program, and the continuation of a blended online CNA program, which are intended to address the county's shortage of nursing assistants, an issue that the MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board refers to as a "growing and persistent problem" in a news release. [In 2018](#), the Workforce Board had received a two-year \$218,000 state grant to address the same shortage

All trainings are free and are scheduled to begin in October. The sessions are geared toward unemployed and underemployed state residents. Funding will also be used to support the pipeline of medical assistants through the support of state training opportunities. For information on programs that are currently accepting applications, go to [tinyurl.com/t4akerfh](http://tinyurl.com/t4akerfh).

The project is funded by a Senator Kenneth J. Donnelly Workforce Success Grant, a fiscal 2020 workforce competitiveness appropriation. It is run through the state Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, administered statewide by the Commonwealth Corporation, and locally administered by the MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board.

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