

MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board has received \$218,750 to run certified nursing assistant (CNA) training programs for the next two years. This project is funded by a grant through the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and is administered statewide by the Commonwealth Corporation, and locally administered by the Berkshire Workforce Board. Through a comprehensive partnership of Berkshire County's healthcare employers, educators, workforce professionals, social service agencies, and career development agencies, the Berkshire Nursing Assistant program proposes to directly address the needs of the region's healthcare industry via outreach, recruitment, education and training efforts to develop 70 certified nursing assistants throughout the two-year grant. The partnership looks to establish a daytime CNA program, as well as online CNA program (pending Department of Public Health approval) with weekly support services to address a growing and persistent problem of nursing assistant shortages. The training and services will be free-of-charge for participants and geared towards unemployed or under-employed Massachusetts residents, beginning in February 2020. With DPH approval, the online program will be the first of its kind in the state and will provide opportunities to those in the largely rural county who cannot participate in current evening offerings due to lack of transportation options. "With DPH approval, we are looking forward to offering a unique, blended training program that provides flexibility, quality education and convenience," said Debbie Richardson, vice president of talent management at **Berkshire Healthcare Systems**. "We are addressing the CNA workforce shortages by blending professional instructors with technology and accessibility to make becoming a CNA easier than before. This program is a pilot that we hope to carry throughout all of our affiliates in the commonwealth."