

The Health Care Workforce Transformation Fund supports training programs that address workforce skill needs identified by health care providers as they work to improve patient care and reduce costs. Commonwealth Corporation administers this fund on behalf of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.

Southcoast Health is a non-profit, community-based health system serving more than 719,000 residents in 33 communities, offering an integrated continuum of health services throughout southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Their system includes three hospitals, physician practices, urgent care centers, a visiting nurse association, centers for cancer care, outpatient surgery centers, and numerous ancillary facilities.



## Workforce Challenge:

Southcoast is one of 500 certified Accountable Care Organizations in the nation. In recent years, Southcoast acquired new provider groups and services resulting in discordance in hiring requirements for Medical Assistants, disparate skill sets across the practices, inconsistent practice workflows, and varying supervisory expectations of medical assistant performance. Furthermore, the incorporation of electronic medical records and increasing focus on preventative care added additional challenges and highlighted skill gaps among Southcoast's workforce.

“ Since I've been taking this course I feel more professional and closer to patients. I've been able to help my provider with more information before she goes in the room.”

-Helena Desousa, Medical Assistant

## Training Strategy and Expected Outcomes:

In partnership with Bristol Community College, Southcoast trained its Medical Assistants on crucial skills aligned with Southcoast's scope of practice for Medical Assistants, national certification standards, current office practices, skill gaps, and Patient Centered Medical Home guidelines. Additionally, Southcoast provided training in coaching skills to Practice Managers to support the growth and new roles of their Medical Assistants. Over 2 years, Southcoast's Medical Assistants participated in 47 hours of training which was designed to prepare them for national certification and award them CEUs. Ninety-eight percent who completed the training passed the certification exam. Subsequently, Southcoast's patient satisfaction has improved significantly in domains such as Medical Assistant friendliness and awareness of patient needs. In addition, Medical Assistants now take on additional tasks such as administration of patient self-screenings for depression. The completion rate for screenings has increased from 10.96% to 35%.