WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA

The New Pathways to Health and Opportunity initiative is based in Sunflower County and the surrounding counties of Bolivar, Coahoma, Quitman, and Tallahatchie, in the heart of the Delta region of Mississippi. This northwest area of the state is mostly rural with a large agricultural economy.

While known for its many economic and health-related challenges, the Delta is also widely recognized for the development of innovative community-based initiatives.

Program participants reside in all five counties, and job shadowing and mentorship opportunities take place throughout this geographic area. Clarksdale in Coahoma County and Sunflower County serve as community hubs for activity due to the importance of their hospitals and clinics in the healthcare labor market. In Sunflower County, Ruleville and Indianola serve as hubs for job training, recruitment, and retention program activities based in local hospitals.

New Pathways programs offer health careers training and exposure to youth and young adults and emphasize connecting career exposure and workforce development programs to employers and job opportunities.
New Pathways to Health and Opportunity

is a collaborative partnership between Aaron E. Henry Community Health Services Center, Inc., The Rogosin Institute’s Dreyfus Health Foundation Division, Mississippi Hospital Association Foundation, Tri-County Workforce Alliance, and University of Mississippi Center for Population Studies, that is partially supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

In addition, over 30 community partners, including schools, community colleges, universities, hospitals, clinics, and community-based organizations, work with the core partners and engage in its programming.

All components draw from the practice-based experiences of the network members and are rooted in evaluative research. New Pathways participants have the opportunity to experience a variety of activities.

“Rapid job shadowing” allows participants condensed time with people working in their fields of interest in various health-related settings. University shadowing provides opportunities to see the work done by health researchers and practitioners.

Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), EKG Technician, Phlebotomy, and Community Health Worker training, and cross-training for parents of youth program participants, provide marketable skills in the health sector.

A professional development workshop series with content informed by potential employers ensures that it is practically applicable and valuable to employers while connecting with participants’ interests.

In the Problem Solving for Better Health® training and follow-up collective community engagement project, participants connect with existing community programs such as health fairs and school health councils. They gain hands-on experience working on a project from planning through evaluation stages using skills learned in the workshop series.