

AHEC Shadowing Programs

AHECs that administer shadowing programs
in their states or service areas



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February 9, 2011

AHEC Health Care Job Shadowing Programs

Job shadowing provides opportunities for those interested to experience firsthand the everyday experiences that a health care professional participates in, including patient and staff interaction, administrative duties and even some unexpected events that occur.

In order to obtain as much input from other AHECs throughout the country, each AHEC listed on the National AHEC Organization website that had a valid email address was contacted. Approximately 270 emails were sent, and more than 100 responded.

Several AHECs throughout the United States are either directly or indirectly involved with assisting students with shadowing opportunities. Though each AHEC may have its own unique situation for handling student shadowing, there still are commonalities, like addressing the issue of HIPAA confidentiality.

From the data acquired for this report, almost all AHEC shadowing programs are:

- a) Programs that are formally established between hospitals or hospital systems and the AHEC and may or may not be advertised as a formalized shadowing entity to students and others interested in shadowing.
- b) Programs that are formally advertised as being an entity that sets up shadowing opportunities. In other words, the AHEC advertises itself as an entity that will serve as a liaison between the shadower and the shadowing entity, but does not have any formal agreements with one or more shadowing sites.
- c) Programs that are not formally organized; however, if a shadower was to contact the AHEC, the AHEC would do what it could to help organize the experience.

Some AHECs are not interested in participating in shadowing opportunities. The most common reason was all of the confidentiality and liability issues that have become more prevalent in setting up shadowing opportunities. Because of this, some AHEC offices have decided that complexity and effort of the process outweighs the benefits and they would rather focus their resources on other projects.

Programs formally established between AHECs and hospitals

The North Central Kentucky AHEC assists the Greater Cincinnati Health Council (umbrella organization connecting all hospitals) with job shadowing at St. Elizabeth Healthcare within its territory of counties. Students are required to fill out emergency contact paperwork, obtain immunization certificates and take tuberculosis skin tests. Students meet with the AHEC representative one-on-one or in small groups to go over patient confidentiality, appropriate behavior, appropriate dress and more. Students who complete the orientation are given a password and are instructed to call the contact at the hospital to set up a department, day and time to shadow. Students are allowed to spend four hours on the clock in any department except surgery, anesthesia, coding/transcription and mental health. The AHEC maintains copies of all paperwork.

The Northwest Missouri AHEC is responsible for any shadowing requests in their host hospital, Heartland Health. The organization follows certain procedures like talking with the student first, making sure they complete some orientation guidelines prior and whatever other conditions the hospital requires. Students may contact a Northwest Missouri AHEC recruitment coordinator to learn more about shadowing opportunities in the region.

In Vermont, each center organizes and partners with health care practices and hospitals in its region and is the liaison for students to connect students with shadowing opportunities. 55 students participate in a one week program each summer, and this group is attended to in order to help them engage in whatever shadow or volunteer positions they are pursuing. AHEC centers find that the orientation that each student gets in the summer program to address confidentiality, hygiene, dress and attitude reflects well on the AHEC when the students are in a health care setting. By providing this orientation, the AHECs have more confidence that the student will bring a more serious attitude to the practice or hospital and reflect well on the AHEC.

Programs that are formally advertised as being able to provide assistance

The Central Iowa AHEC assists students with setting up job shadowing experiences. Students who are interested in a shadowing opportunity sign up using the Central Iowa AHEC High School Job Shadow Online Application. The application includes contact information, emergency contact information, availability and areas of interest, agreement to a tuberculosis test, MMR titer or proof of immunization, physical exam on file, a confidentiality form, a HIPAA form and a release of liability form. Once completed, a representative from the Central Iowa AHEC acts as the liaison between the student and the hospital and works with both to make sure the student completes any prerequisites to the experience.

The Arkansas Pine Bluff AHEC provides shadowing/mentoring opportunities for high school and college students that are interested in health careers. Students are asked to contact their local AHEC recruiter, and then they are normally interviewed and set up to shadow or connected with a health care professional as a mentee. College students are selected mostly for the mentor program. Students are selected for the program based on their area of interest, motivation, their desire to learn and level of commitment. Their GPA, community service and recommendation from their professor are also taken into consideration.

The South Carolina regional AHEC centers coordinate student observation opportunities, where available, for program participants. The observation opportunities are not publicized, but are a benefit of being an active participant in AHEC programming. While the guidelines are primarily in accordance with those of the hospital or facility which hosts the opportunity, the Health Careers Academy curriculum promotes soft skills development to assist in preparing students to enter the workplace.

The West AHEC of Kentucky oversees a shadowing program. Shadowing experiences are for 4-8 hours. The interested individual completes a fact sheet with contact information and immunization information. The AHEC staff introduces the shadowing experience and reviews any policies that participant should be aware of, including dress code, confidentiality and more.

Unless it is a special program (i.e. the groundhog shadow day program), participants need to be at least 14 years of age.

The Southeast Iowa AHEC office (affiliated with Genesis Health Systems) does facilitate all of the requested job shadows for juniors/seniors in high school as well as any other person that might want a glimpse into healthcare. Those interested can view the AHEC's website and find forms for HIPAA training, liability, dress code regulations and more. The program officially began in September 2010 with information going out to local high schools and 67 have completed shadows within Genesis Health Systems. Students have shadowed in nursing, radiology, lab science, physical therapy and the marketing, legal and maintenance departments as well. Some students aren't interested in healthcare, but they have the opportunity to list any department that they might be interested in, and, if it can be arranged, the coordinator sets up the experience. There are more than 40 departments that the students can shadow.

Programs that would help an interested shadower if contacted

The Northern New Hampshire AHEC occasionally gets a request to help a high school student get a shadowing experience. When this occurs, the AHEC will reach out to local facilities and see if a connection can be made for the student.

The Northern Rhode Island AHEC sets up shadowing opportunities on a case-by-case basis but does not have any formal program.