

## HCC accepting health worker program applications

HOLYOKE — Holyoke Community College is now accepting applications for its free Community Health Worker training and apprenticeship program.

The program begins in September and is tuition-free, thanks to a federal grant. The purpose of the four-year, \$1.89 million grant, awarded in 2020 from the Health Resources and Service Administration, is to increase the number of CHWs qualified to help children and families affected by opioid use.

The training involves college-level coursework during the first year, as well as supervised field work experience at Behavioral Health Network in Holyoke. Classes are in person at HCC and require basic computer proficiency and literacy skills. After the first year, students can apply for a full-time, paid apprenticeship placement — the first of its kind in Western

Massachusetts.

During the pre-apprenticeship training at HCC, students take two core Community Health Worker classes across two consecutive semesters.

“The HCC Community Health Worker Apprenticeship Program is an initiative that offers free training for people interested in pursuing community health and human services,” said Tina Tartaglia, CHW project coordinator. “There is a specific focus on teaching students how to support children and families affected by opioid use and substance use disorders. Students with lived experience are encouraged to apply.”

This is the third year of the four-year grant, which aims to train 25 individuals as CHWs each year.

The grant also provides stipends to students as incentives to complete the program and seek employment in the field. Students

who enter an apprenticeship after they finish training are eligible for an additional annual stipend of \$7,500.

“COVID-19 has made clear how essential community health workers are in addressing the wide range of physical, behavioral and mental health issues faced by members of our community,” HCC President Christina Royal said in 2020 after the HRSA grant was awarded. “Through this program and with our partners, we will not only have the ability to support more families struggling with substance use, but we will also be creating more jobs in a sector central to our region’s economic growth.”

HCC’s partners in the grant include Behavioral Health Network, Holyoke Health Center, and the MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board.

For more information or to apply, visit [hcc.edu/chw-free](http://hcc.edu/chw-free).