

Patient Care Associate (PCA) Pathway Program

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the PCA Pathway Program?

The PCA Pathway Program is a career advancement opportunity for UMass Memorial Health caregivers and their friends and family members to become a Patient Care Associate (PCA). The program is offered in partnership with JVS Boston and Quinsigamond Community College (QCC). This free six-week training gives selected participants the skills and knowledge they need to deliver bedside care. They will receive coaching and support during the training and as they transition to their new position.

2. Will participants earn a salary if they enroll in the PCA Pathway Program?

Yes, PCA Pathway is an "earn and learn" program that allows caregivers and their friends and family members to earn a salary while learning new skills. Selected participants will receive the starting pay of a PCA I and all related benefits while attending the six-week training. UMass Memorial will also cover all tuition and fees related to the program.

3. How does the program work?

After attending an information session, interested caregivers/friends and family members will undergo a basic English and math assessment. Based on the assessment results, caregivers will meet with JVS and then interview with nurse managers who will select individuals to be hired or transfer into the PCA position. JVS Boston and QCC will provide six-weeks of training and then participants will begin using their new skills as a PCA I at either the Medical Center's Memorial or University campus. Once caregivers are selected by a nurse manager for an open PCA position, they will leave their current position. Friends and family members will be hired directly into an available PCA I position.

4. When does the program start?

Recruiting has started for the June 2024 cohort. Dates for the next cohort are to be determined.

5. How many caregivers and friends/family members can participate?

The June cohort can accommodate 15 people total.

6. Who are the education and technical skill providers?

Quinsigamond Community College will provide the program's technical skills training, and JVS Boston will provide job readiness instruction and coaching throughout the program.

7. How long is the program?

Program hours are from Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm for six weeks.

8. Is it mandatory to attend an information session?

Yes. Whether you are a caregiver or a friend/family member, you must attend an information session. We offer virtual and in-person information sessions. If you are having trouble scheduling an information session, please email mydevelopment@umassmemorial.org.

9. What will I learn from the information sessions?

The information session will provide you with all the details about the PCA Pathway Program. You will learn about the eligibility requirements and what to expect from our partners at Quinsigamond Community College and JVS Boston. You will also learn about the daily tasks of PCA I and how they contribute to UMass Memorial.

10. How do I apply to the PCA Pathway program?

1. Complete an interest form.
2. Attend an information session with JVS-Boston.
3. Complete the assessment (English and math) with JVS-Boston.
4. Participate in an intake meeting with JVS-Boston.
5. Participate in interview prep/resume training with JVS-Boston.
6. Interview with a Nurse Manager.
7. Complete a job application.

11. How do I know if I'm eligible for the program?

To be eligible for the PCA Pathway program caregivers and friends/family must meet the following criteria:

Caregiver Eligibility	Friends and Family Eligibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be in good standing with UMass Memorial Health. • High school diploma/GED/HiSET and has the document to confirm • Employed by UMass Memorial Health for 6+ months. Per diems and contractors are eligible. • Able to work day, evening or overnight shift with rotating weekends and holidays • No physical restrictions (able to lift, pull, bend, etc. without assistance) • Complete an interest form, attend an informational session, undergo assessment, and participate in a job shadow experience. • Have intermediate English language proficiency • Be selected by a nurse hiring manager for a specific position. • Complete training satisfactorily according to quality and safety standards • Willingness to make a work commitment to UMass Memorial Health for one year following placement into PCA I position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school diploma/GED/HiSET and has the document to confirm • Able to pass a background check • Able to pass a drug test • 18+ years of age • Family or friend of a UMass Memorial Health employee • Able to work day, evening or overnight shifts with rotating weekends and holidays • At least an intermediate level of English • No physical restrictions (able to lift, pull, bend, etc. without assistance) • Complete an interest form, attend an informational session, undergo assessment, and participate in a job shadow experience. • Be selected by a nurse hiring manager for a specific position • Complete training satisfactorily according to quality and safety standards • Willingness to make a work commitment to UMass Memorial Health for one year following placement into PCA I position

12. Are caregivers eligible for a referral bonus if they recommend a friend or family member?

Yes, caregivers are eligible to receive a \$3,000 referral bonus. To receive the bonus, a current caregiver must refer an external candidate (which means that can't be employed or on a temporary/contract assignment at any entity in the UMass Memorial Health system) to the PCA Pathway Program and the candidate must be hired into a PCA I position before starting the training. The Workforce Development Team will work with Talent Acquisition to validate the friend/family relationship. Referral bonuses will be paid 90 days after the referred caregiver's first day of employment at UMass Memorial Health and will be subject to taxes. Note: former caregivers need to be separated from the organization for a period of at least three years to be considered an eligible candidate to

refer. For every referral that is hired, the referring caregiver will be entered into a drawing for a \$10,000 prize. The next prize drawing will take place in June and will consider referrals of caregivers hired from December 1, 2023 to May 31, 2024.

13. Can caregivers recommend a friend or family member to work in their department?

UMass Memorial Health allows the employment of family members or others in relationships within UMass Memorial, except when either the current caregiver or the friend/family has direct or immediate indirect supervisory authority over the other, has influence over the other's conditions of employment (e.g., hours worked or shifts); or is involved in a relationship which interferes with work performance. See [Relationships in the Workplace Policy](#) for details.

14. How does UMass Memorial support participants in this program?

UMass Memorial offers a range of support including:

1. Paying tuition and fees for the training program.
2. Offering a \$3,000 workforce development stipend.
3. Providing benefits during training.
4. Providing interview preparation with JVS.
5. Help from the JVS and workforce development teams for any challenges.
6. Assigning a PCA preceptor to work one to one and provide support during the transition to practice as a PCA I
7. If the PCA I role is not deemed a good fit, with help from workforce development and talent acquisition, participants will learn about other career options that may be suitable.

15. How is the workforce development stipend distributed?

Caregivers and friends/family members selected for the PCA Pathway Program and successfully meet the payout criteria will receive a \$3000 workforce development stipend. Participants will be paid \$1500 upon successful completion of training and \$1500 after six months on the job.

16. What happens if a caregiver decides that the PCA I role is not the right fit?

The goal is to retain every UMass Memorial caregiver. Current caregivers who decide to leave the program after being selected and participating in the program will receive support to either return to their previous position or securing another position. UMass Memorial Health's talent acquisition and workforce development teams, in partnership with union representatives and JVS Boston, will work together to identify opportunities. If a caregiver's previous job is not available, they will receive up to four weeks of pay while they engage in an active job search. Caregivers are permitted to use accrued but unused PTO if they still haven't found a position within four weeks. Caregivers will not receive the workforce development stipend.

17. What happens if a friend or family member decides that the PCA I role is not the right fit?

The goal is to retain every UMass Memorial caregiver, including friends and family members who are considered a good fit for the organization. Friends and family members who decide to leave the program after being selected and participating in the program will receive support to secure another position at UMass Memorial if appropriate. Otherwise, the individual will be terminated from employment and will not receive the workforce development stipend.

18. What happens if a hiring manager decides that the PCA I role is not the right fit?

Our goal is to help you grow your career and to retain you as a caregiver at UMass Memorial. JVS Boston, talent acquisition, and workforce development will work with you to locate another opportunity if you must step out of the PCA program. See answers to questions 12 and 13 for more specifics.

19. Are there any commitments post training for caregivers and friends/family members?

Yes, all caregivers and friends and family members are expected to work as an in-patient PCA I for one year at UMass Memorial Health upon completion of the program. If they do not maintain employment in this role for at least 12 months, they will be asked to pay back the workforce development stipend.

20. Will caregivers who refer friends and family to the PCA Pathway Program receive a referral bonus?

Yes, caregivers who refer a friend or family member to the PCA Pathway Program are eligible for a referral bonus of \$3000. The referred friend/family member must be selected for the program and hired into a PCA I position to receive the bonus. Both the referring and referred caregiver must be in good standing and an active employee at the time of payout. Please review the Caregiver Referral Program on the HUB for more details: [Caregiver Referral Program | The Hub \(umassmemorialhub.org\)](https://umassmemorialhub.org) Payout occurs 90 days after the first day of hire and will be reflected in Workday. Caregivers must communicate directly with their friend or family member directly to receive status updates on hiring decisions.

21. What is the starting salary for PCA I at UMass Memorial?

The starting salary for a PCA I is \$17.59/hour. You may receive a higher starting wage based on your tenure and experience with UMass Memorial. The differentials are \$2/hour evening shifts, \$4/hour night shifts, and \$2.50/hour for weekend shifts.

22. How does a PCA I move up to a PCA II?

The PCA II position requires at least one year of experience as a PCA I and demonstration of all unit-based competencies. Basic Life Support or Heart Saver certification must be current.

23. Is English proficiency a requirement for becoming a PCA?

English proficiency is a requirement for the PCA position. JVS will conduct an assessment to determine English proficiency levels. If you do not qualify due to English language proficiency concerns, you are not able to continue the screening process. You may, however, be eligible to participate in the new UMass Memorial Workplace English course. For additional information on Workplace English visit the [Hub](https://umassmemorialhub.org).

24. Will accommodation be made for individuals with disabilities?

If an individual requests accommodation in the context of a workforce development program, we will work with our education partners to provide reasonable accommodation, if available, so the individual may participate in the program.

25. What union represents the PCA job title?

The SHARE Union represents PCAs. If you would like to know more about the SHARE Union, please visit their website at <https://www.theshareunion.org/> or speak with a SHARE organizer.

26. Are PCAs eligible for rate increases?

PCAs in the SHARE union currently receive annual increases around October 1 each year per their union contract. The next increase will be in October 2024 and will be either 4.5% or \$1.00/hour, whichever is greater.

27. How is the PCA Pathway Program different from the PCA Extended Onboarding Program offered by Nursing Professional Development?

- This is a new and improved program that is more comprehensive and includes new partnerships with JVS Boston and QCC.

As of 03.01.24

- JVS Boston will provide pre-hire assessments to help identify the caregivers and friends/family members who will be most successful.
- The PCA Pathway program is a longer program that includes focused classroom education, a full week of clinical instruction and extra 1:1 support from educators.
- The PCA Program also includes extended time in the simulation lab with instructors, so caregivers fully understand all the content and have a solid mastery of skill before going into the live clinical environment.

28. If a caregiver is coming from a job title outside of the SHARE union, will they lose their seniority by becoming a PCA in the SHARE union?

Except in limited circumstances, the SHARE union recognizes time served by caregivers at UMass Memorial in positions outside of the SHARE union for purposes of seniority.