

Opening New Doors:

THE IMPACT OF CAREER PATHWAYS

Supporting career growth through education, guidance, and opportunity at Holy Cross Health.

At Holy Cross Health, innovation is measured not only in medical advancements but in the lives we uplift. The Career Pathways Program invests directly in colleagues seeking to advance their careers, build new skills, and create brighter futures for themselves and their families. Many participants are first-generation college students, English-language learners, or individuals balancing full-time work and family responsibilities on limited incomes. The program provides personalized advising, financial support, hands-on skill building, and guidance through coursework, language classes, clinical experience, exams, and job placement.

With donor support, Career Pathways ensures Holy Cross Health colleagues have the tools and opportunities they need to succeed.

ZAHRA'S JOURNEY

Zahra Ghulami began her career in Afghanistan as a registered nurse and midwife. She cared for patients in emergency departments, NICUs, and high-risk triage areas, supporting infants in respiratory distress, trauma patients, and families facing crisis. As violence in Afghanistan escalated and her hospital came under attack, Zahra made the difficult decision to leave for safety. She left behind her parents and two young children. Her journey to the United States lasted more than three months and took her across multiple countries by foot, bus, boat, and motorcycle.

In Silver Spring, an American family welcomed her and helped her start again. Zahra enrolled in English classes, earned her Certified Nursing Assistant credential, and joined Holy Cross Health as a nursing assistant. It was her first step back into the work she loves.



Zahra in
Afghanistan

Zahra in America

Today, through Career Pathways, Zahra is taking advanced English and academic preparation courses at Montgomery College while navigating the credentialing process to become a registered nurse in the United States. Her long-term goal is to return to emergency or NICU care. She also hopes to reunite with her children.

"I have had many difficult moments. But I want to be strong. I want to reach my goals. One day I will be an RN again. When that day comes, I can bring my children here and give them a safe and happy life."

Zahra's journey shows what is possible when colleagues have pathways to new opportunities.

Her story is possible because of people like you.

CAREER PATHWAYS KEY STATS



34 colleagues have participated in the program since its inception in late 2022, including 5 new participants joining in spring 2026.



13 participants have been successfully hired into their new field at Holy Cross Health.



Current pathways include:

- Certified Healthcare Access Associate (CHAA)
- Certified Medical Assistant (CMA)
- Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)
- Dialysis technician
- EKG technician
- Pharmacy technician
- Phlebotomy technician
- Sterile technician

What's Next

In the coming years, Holy Cross Health aims to expand Career Pathways by increasing program capacity, adding new credentialed training opportunities including imaging and nursing careers, and enhancing academic and social support. These efforts will allow more colleagues to move into high demand, better paying roles, and help us continue building a skilled, representative workforce that reflects and serves the needs of our community.

About the Holy Cross Health Foundation

A 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable organization, the Holy Cross Health Foundation exists to improve the health of our community through the generosity of our patients, colleagues, community members, foundations, and corporations. Your partnership enables us to continue providing equitable care to our most vulnerable patients and their families.

For more information, please visit HolyCrossHealth.org/Donate, call us at 301-557-GIVE (4483) or email Foundation@holycrosshealth.org

Thank you for your generosity!