

# Dept. of Workforce Development: First Wisconsin registered nurse apprenticeship fills workforce need

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MADISON – As the demand for skilled nurses continues to grow, the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) has launched a pilot Registered Nurse (RN) apprenticeship pathway to address the nursing demand in Wisconsin. The pilot, an innovative partnership with UW Health and Madison College, welcomes its first cohort this spring.

Projections show a critical need for nurses with demand growing in Wisconsin over the next 20 years. There's an expected deficit of 20,000 nurses in Wisconsin by 2040, according to data in the [Wisconsin Registered Nurse Supply and Demand Forecast Results 2020-2040 report](#). Between 2020-2030, the healthcare industry will see nearly 32,000 annual openings across all occupations in the state, according to the [2020-2030 Wisconsin Long-Term Occupation Projections](#) report.

“A healthy nursing workforce is fundamental to our health and our health care system,” said Amy Pechacek, DWD Secretary-designee. “This new apprenticeship pathway expands opportunities to bring more people into the field. DWD remains committed to working with its partners to build and strengthen the pipeline of nurses and the entire healthcare workforce in the 21st century and beyond.”

The new RN Apprenticeship is the first to incorporate an associate degree as well as compliance with rigorous nursing industry certification standards, according to David Polk, director of the DWD's Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards. The four-year program supports a racially, ethnically and socio-economically diverse healthcare workforce in the pursuit of a nursing degree and establishes their eligibility for the board examination to become registered nurses.

“Wisconsin continues to break ground in expanding apprenticeships that serve leading state industries,” said Polk. “We owe our creativity to the engagement of our partners, the insights of our staff, and our extensive history of leadership in Wisconsin. We look forward to further expansion in collaboration with our partners and stakeholders.”

The RN apprenticeship follows other successful healthcare pathways, including medical assistant and pharmacy technician, which continue to grow. This earn-while-you-learn model is attractive to both job seekers and employers, thanks to the opportunities to train and recruit with well-defined outcomes.

UW Health will provide its employees the first opportunity to apply for the new apprenticeship and will establish a broader application process for future cohorts. The RN apprenticeship is supported by a donation from Epic to Wisconsin Medicine.

Visit [WisconsinApprenticeship.com](https://www.wisconsinapprenticeship.com) to learn more about DWD’s apprenticeship offerings.