Highlights of An Employer's WorkKeys Success Story

(The following information was taken from the ACT case study informational web site link at:
http://www.act.org/workkeys/case/index.html*)*

WorkKeys® Helps Inova Health System Measure Vital Signs of Entry-Level Care Assistants and Technicians

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The Organization - Inova Health System

The Challenge - Recruit and select Care Team Assistants and Clinical Technicians for a comprehensive health care system serving three counties of northern Virginia with a total population of 1.7 million

The Solution - WorkKeys job profiling and skills assessments, along with an innovative apprenticeship program to provide one-to-one mentoring

The Results - Greater efficiency in processing more than 300 applications per day for two entry-level care team positions, reduction in turnover from 49% to 13%, savings of approximately $1.3 million for each 25% improvement in turnover reduction, and improved patient care due to greater continuity of personnel, increased trust, and improved communication among staff, resulting in more stability for patients.

Inova Health System is a not-for-profit health care system of hospitals, nursing homes, and urgent care centers throughout northern Virginia. One of the most comprehensive health care providers in the Washington, D.C., metro region, Inova employs more than 16,000 people. Among the system's staff are about 200 Care Team Assistants and 300 Care Team Clinical Technicians. Both are entry-level, unlicensed positions and very important to Inova's mission to serve patients with excellence. Both positions involve basic procedures including taking vital signs—temperature, pulse, blood pressure, and respiratory rate. Clinical Technicians also collect blood samples. A Clinical Technician's responsibilities are very similar to those required of an Emergency Medical Technician.

More than 300 applications per day flow to Inova's human resources recruiters for these two positions. Selecting the right people with the right skills from such a vast pool of applicants and hiring those who are most likely to stay on the job were ongoing challenges. Turnover exceeded 50 percent when Patti DeiTos, MSN, RN-BC, PWD, and lead education coordinator for orientation with the Inova Learning Network, was asked to address the problem. DeiTos knew that the solution needed to include pre-employment testing. She was familiar with ACT's WorkKeys assessment system from a previous position at Northern Virginia Community College. The Virginia Community College System (VCCS) has used WorkKeys assessments for several years and provides training and other services to help individuals and employers benefit from the system. ACT-trained job profilers are stationed at each of their 22 workforce centers across the state. DeiTos began working with Gloria Westerman, director of educational career transitional programs for VCCS, to explore solutions to the Inova hiring and turnover challenge.

The two entry-level health care positions became part of an innovative health care apprenticeship program with grant funding from the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. The apprenticeships emerged from a three-way partnership involving Inova, VCCS, and the Virginia Department of Labor. The health care apprenticeship is the first of its kind in the state. "The apprenticeship concept traditionally has applied to the skilled trades, such as electrician or plumber. But apprenticeships can be used for any job. They offer workers the opportunity to earn while they

learn, and that's very attractive in today's economy," Westerman stated. The grant covered the cost of completing job profiles for the two care team positions. Job analysis studies determined that the appropriate WorkKeys assessments and score criteria were the same for both positions—Level 3 for Applied Mathematics, Level 4 for Locating Information, and Level 4 for Reading for Information. Once accepted, the apprentice works under the supervision of a registered nurse.

Westerman says, "It's a true mentoring system. The mentor reviews everything the apprentice does on the job on a regular basis. With an apprenticeship, trainees see the relevance of what they are learning—they understand why they need to do something." The WorkKeys solution is embedded in the selection process Inova uses for the two care team positions. Here's how the process works: candidates submit an online application, recruiters review applications and refer applicants who meet the job criteria to Northern Virginia Community College or an area workforce development office to complete WorkKeys assessments. Applicants unable to achieve the minimum scores required are able to access training programs to help improve their skills, the interview process begins once the required WorkKeys scores are confirmed, Inova administers additional tests and completes background checks for those applicants recommended by hiring managers, new employees complete a week of general orientation and 40 hours of formal training.

The program requires apprentices to complete at least 144 hours of instruction and a year of full-time work under the guidance of their mentors. Once they successfully complete their apprenticeships, they are credentialed by the U.S. Department of Labor as nationally certified clinical technicians or assistants. Offering the Internet version of WorkKeys helps Inova determine whether applicants can use a computer. Computer skills are essential since all patient charting resides on a computer system and data must be entered promptly and accurately. Inova is currently using WorkKeys for the two care team positions as well as its emergency technician positions. The company's human resources department is evaluating the benefits of applying WorkKeys assessments and job profiling methodology to as many as 20 additional entry-level occupations, said Daniel Nichols, CHC, MA, MDiv, MBA, and Inova's director of system recruitment/Human Resources Information System. He also plans to embed WorkKeys assessments as the cornerstone of an innovative military talent development program known as "Military to Medicine" for U.S. Army Reserve soldiers and their spouses.

Nichols challenges the notion that soliciting and reviewing resumes is an effective hiring tool. He was seeking a better, faster approach to match applicants' skills to job requirements when he joined Inova. Each year, the company's recruiters handle 85,000 resumes, hire about 3,800 people, and process another 1,200 internal transfers. Additional responsibilities also consume the time and attention of Inova's 25 recruiters, so sifting through thousands of resumes became grueling. Nichols is pleased with how WorkKeys helps recruiters identify candidates whose skills best match specific jobs. In the positions for which Inova has aligned job tasks to WorkKeys assessments, "turnover is down to nil," said Nichols. "Hiring really comes down to a skill match," he added. "There is some risk in taking the easy way out—making the quick hire rather than the quality hire. With WorkKeys, you can make the quality hire more quickly."

DeiTos agrees that the WorkKeys system has contributed to Inova's hiring process. "WorkKeys provides a realistic view of how a potential employee will be able to function in a job. It has helped us improve the selection of employees for each position and has provided employees with confidence and a new awareness that they can develop into something more." She finds it personally rewarding to "see applicants for these entry-level positions score well on their WorkKeys assessments and get excited about their future for perhaps the first time in their lives."

Nichols points out that entry-level positions are critically important to patient care throughout the Inova system. "All too often, we spend our time and resources recruiting the more advanced-level positions instead of building our own talent pool from within. If we can find the right entry-level people who can be successful and grow, then we're building a pipeline of professionals to meet tomorrow's challenges." "What's more," Nichols continues, "people in clinical support positions like these spend significant time with our patients. It's critically important that they are skilled and capable. The margins for error are narrow; the consequences are severe. If we can reduce errors and improve safety, then better patient care will be the result."

Other success stories about companies who relied on the ACT's WorkKeys Assessment System to help improve their business are highlighted at the following link: *http://www.act.org/workkeys/case/index.html*

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