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USDOL: PT Aide Occupation Granted Nat'l Apprenticeship Status Green Lights NJ Healthcare Employers' Occupation Petition

- **First ever national Physical Therapy Aide apprenticeship designation;**
- **Employer consortium recruits, mentors, trains, places PT Aides;**
- **Apprenticeships implemented nationally to further training efforts.**

Newark, N.J. 8/2/12 – The U.S. Department of Labor - Office of Apprenticeship (USDOL) recently announced it has approved the occupation of *Physical Therapy Aide* as a nationally recognized apprenticeship occupation, allowing development of Physical Therapy Aide apprenticeship programs on a national level.

The apprenticeship designation is the first of its kind within the field of physical therapy in the United States.

The benchmark approval comes after almost two years of exhaustive research into the employment growth of physical therapy (PT) and the corresponding urgent need for effective PT Aide training by the petitioner, New Jersey Healthcare Employers District 1199J's Training and Development Fund, which petitioned the U.S. Department of Labor – Office of Apprenticeship to recognize the occupation as an occupation in which apprenticeship opportunities may be created. With its approval, the occupation has now been added to nearly 1,000 apprenticeship occupations in the U.S. Upon completion, participants receive a nationally recognized certificate of completion from the U.S. Department of Labor.

The USDOL's apprenticeship designation clears the way for further training development among physical therapy aides in the U.S., and comes on the heels of a successful partnership between the apprenticeship petitioner, New Jersey Healthcare Employers Training and Development Fund (Fund), the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, District 1199J AFSCME/AFL-CIO and the New Jersey Department of Labor Workforce Development. All three entities partnered over the last two years to develop a training grant entitled Youth Transitions to Work (YTTW) Physical Therapy Aide Apprenticeship aimed at recruiting, mentoring, training and placing area high school juniors and seniors into registered apprenticeship programs as Physical Therapy Aides.

“With Physical Therapy careers expected to balloon by over 30 percent in the next ten years, District 1199J is excited to have the opportunity to sponsor a registered apprenticeship program and mentor and train area high school students in physical therapy careers. We value the opportunity to make a difference in a young person's life,” said Susan Cleary, District 1199J's President.

The YTTW program trains area high school juniors and seniors, equipping them with both work readiness skills and the academic training needed to be successful in the healthcare industry. Interested students are screened by a professional placement counselor, administered a basic skills test to gauge academic

achievement and then offered the chance to participate as a registered apprentice. Participants also experience 40 hours of job shadowing as a PT Aide at a hospital and/or nursing home.

The students are given a series of hospital and nursing home visits, and academic tutoring sessions, allowing apprentices the opportunity to observe healthcare workers in a professional setting. *Work-readiness workshops* are also offered to prepare them for a career in healthcare. Topics include: Career exploration; Resume writing; Interview skills; Financial literacy; and, Workplace conflict resolution.

As the students make their way through the Program, they establish valuable contacts within the healthcare industry. It's an exciting way to launch a career in healthcare as they gain valuable on the job training.

Did you know?

- Physical Therapist employment is expected to grow by 30 percent between 2010 and 2018, a much faster average than for all other occupations, with some 24,000 PT Aide jobs created by 2018.
- The national median wage for PT Aides in 2009 was \$11.49/hour or \$23,900 annually. Physical therapist assistants earned a median hourly salary of \$48,290 and median hourly wages of \$22.22 in 2009. (The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- Changes to restrictions on reimbursement for physical therapy services by third-party payers will increase patient access to services and increase demand for physical therapy services.
- Preparing physical therapist aides for the demands of patient care is vital for the effective management of a PT practice. For example, marketplace concerns about support personnel being over utilized or performing skilled activities without adequate training and not being adequately supervised loom large in the effective management of today's physical therapy practice. The proposed YTTW Program will have apprentices working under and supervised by Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and Speech Therapists.

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