

PAVING NEW PATHWAYS FOR TOMORROW'S MEDICAL ASSISTANTS

ERTMER SHARES HER JOURNEY AS AN APPRENTICE

ALEX ERTMER, RT(R), CMA was ready for a change. And she found it at FHN.

In 2020, the Iowa-based x-ray technician moved back to her hometown of Lena and launched a new chapter in her life with FHN's Medical Assistant (MA) Registered Apprenticeship Program.

"I wanted to do more than x-ray, so I joined the program in August 2020," Alex says. Medical Assistants provide services ranging from administering vaccines, sutures, and casts to office work and general physician support. Their influence in the clinical setting is far-reaching.

This innovative approach featured advantages beyond a conventional MA education. Alex received on-the-job training at FHN, along with a paycheck, while attending college classes locally. She even obtained an FHN scholarship to pay for her education while securing a future job as a medical assistant at FHN.

"The confidence you gain by applying what you learn in the classroom to real-life situations sets you apart. By the time you graduate, you are comfortable in the healthcare setting."

By May 2021, Alex had graduated and began her externship. Today, she's part of FHN's Orthopaedics team,

serving both as a Certified Medical Assistant and an x-ray technician, though she loves floating to other departments as well.

INTRODUCING A GROUNDBREAKING CMA APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

FHN developed the Medical Assistant Registered Apprenticeship with the Department of Labor through a partnership with The Workforce Connection. Participants typically attend classes two days a week and work at FHN two days a week.

"FHN was incredibly supportive of my education," Alex says. "They adjusted my schedule to accommodate my classroom needs."

FHN hired Alex as an MA student. Her paid on-the-job training reinforced her education. At work, she was supported by preceptors who mentored her as she learned the ins and outs of the job.

"My preceptors were experienced and knowledgeable, as well as welcoming. They were phenomenal to work with, and even though I've graduated, I still check in with them," Alex says.

Alex is now one of more than 40 FHN Certified Medical Assistants (CMAs) who are filling a growing need in the healthcare industry by providing a diverse array of both office and medical services.

"Our CMAs are a key part of the care team here at FHN," says FHN Innovative Learning Team Leader Karen Kryder, MBA.

Once their education and training are completed, CMAs have more growth opportunities at FHN.



GROWING WITH MY CMA CAREER PATH PROGRAM

FHN's **MY CMA** Career Path Program is a professional development program that recognizes benchmarks in experience, performance, professional growth, and engagement. Through this program, CMAs can achieve Level II or III status and receive corresponding wage increases.

"This program opens the door for our CMAs to pursue career advancement and highlights the important work they're doing," Karen says. "Many of our CMAs were already going above and beyond to broaden their skills and serve as leaders in their field. We want to recognize and reward their achievements."

Alex is close to achieving Level III status and is excited for what the future holds for her at FHN.

"It wasn't always easy, but in the end, I am so thankful for these programs. I'd definitely recommend them to aspiring CMAs, and tell them to not be afraid of jumping in, because they're going to be better off in the end."

Visit www.fhn.org/careers for other career opportunities at FHN!