HireReach initiative helps employers improve quality, diversity of hires

Philanthropic partnership makes proven, evidence-based selection strategy available to West Michigan employers

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN: Two local organizations aimed at improving the talent pipeline in West Michigan are offering employers access to a hiring strategy that has been proven to improve quality of hire, reduce first-year turnover and increase the diversity of new hires.

Talent 2025 and West Michigan Works! are combining forces to create HireReach, an initiative that will make an evidence-based selection process available to employers in a 13-county West Michigan region.

“Employers from every sector are looking for proven methods to hire high quality talent,” said Kevin Stotts, president of Talent 2025. “The evidence-based selection process can help employers add top-quality talent while diversifying their workforce in a tight labor market.”

The strategy was developed by Mercy Health West Michigan. Faced with filling 3,200 positions each year, including 2,100 external hires, executives in 2010 initiated a major process redesign to improve the hiring process and reduce turnover.

After an extensive review of best practices, the Mercy Health team implemented an evidence-based selection process that evaluated candidates holistically, targeting skills relevant to each job and reducing the potential for unconscious bias.

It worked – really well.
Over the past eight years, first-year turnover of those hired using the new strategy dropped 23 percent. The amount of time it took to hire a candidate dropped 16 percent, and, as an added benefit, the diversity of new hires more than doubled, from 18.4 percent to 38 percent.

“We are pleased our investment resulted in a higher quality workforce to serve our patients, both in job fit and in diversity,” said Shana Welch, executive director of talent acquisition for Mercy Health.

“We know that diversity in workforce can lead to higher colleague engagement and increased patient satisfaction.”

Gary Allore, president of Mercy Health in Muskegon, said the strategy has had a positive impact on the community.

“Being able to draw from a more richly diverse talent pool has created a unique impact on our community as we deliver health care services to an increasingly diverse population,” Allore said. “All employers should feel empowered to implement evidence-based hiring practices, and Mercy Health is pleased to lead the way to help make this a key part of every employer’s strategy.”

HireReach is a three-year program that will recruit, train and advise businesses as they make the changes necessary to successfully implement the evidence-based selection process. That includes a thorough examination of entry-level and middle-skill positions to identify relevant skills and revamping the assessment and evaluation process.

Jacob Maas, CEO of West Michigan Works!, said the strategy has great benefits for employers as well as job seekers.

“HireReach gives employers the tools they need to assess and select candidates on more than just resumes and first impressions,” Maas said. “The in-depth job analysis gives hiring managers a clearly defined set of skills and qualifications that results in a better hire for the employer and ensures a good fit for the employee.”

Awareness workshops about HireReach have already started and several companies have expressed interest, including Shape Corp. in Grand Haven.

“We’re always looking for ways to improve our hiring process and ultimately improve quality of hire,” said Julie Davidson, Shape Corp.’s talent acquisition director. “The metrics that Mercy Health has shared for improvements and the cost savings alone is enough to grab my attention and want to learn more.”
Stotts said the goal is for companies who adopt the evidence-based selection process to continue to share best practices and identify areas for improvement.

“We will create a Community of Practice where participating employers can share their experiences and learn from each other while implementing the strategy,” he said.

HireReach is holding four awareness workshops in the coming months to introduce employers to the initiative – Aug. 22, Sept 12, Oct. 3 and Oct. 31. For times and locations contact info@hirereach.org.

Mercy Health has been recognized for redesigning its hiring process. It received the Pillar Award from the Women’s Resource Center in Grand Rapids. The process is highlighted in a case study by the National Fund for Workforce Solutions and CareerSTAT. And it is included in the report of the Advisory Board Taskforce convened by the White House Economic Council-on career pathways to middle class jobs in health care.

HireReach is generously supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Doug and Maria DeVos Foundation.

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About Talent 2025
Talent 2025 is a catalyst for enhancing the integrated talent development system for West Michigan. Composed of more than 100 CEOs from the region’s 13 counties, the organization strives to be a driving force for an ongoing supply of world-class talent by convening leaders and organizations who will help shape a thriving economy. Counties served are Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola and Ottawa. Learn more at Talent2025.org.

About West Michigan Works!
West Michigan Works! partners with employers, educators, economic developers and community organizations to create a qualified workforce that meets West Michigan’s current and future talent needs. It serves the employers and job seekers of Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon and Ottawa counties. Learn more at WestMIWorks.org.
About Mercy Health

Mercy Health is a regional, multi-campus, Catholic health care system serving West Michigan and the lakeshore with four hospital campuses, more than 60 physician offices, more than 1,300 medical staff physicians, more than 800 hospital beds and 7,200 colleagues, and hospice, home health and long-term care service offerings. Mercy Health Physician Partners, our multi-specialty physician network, employs more than 500 physicians and advanced practice professionals in Grand Rapids, Muskegon, Holland and the lakeshore. Mercy Health has annual operating revenues of about $1.4 billion and returns about $80 million to its communities annually through charity care and community benefit programs. Mercy Health, a member of Trinity Health, is committed to being a trusted health partner for life, transforming the communities we serve, by providing high-quality care that is the most accessible, compassionate and personalized in West Michigan. Visit us at MercyHealth.com.