



Date: August 27, 2026

Time: 9:00 AM

Northern Illinois University, Naperville

9 a.m.-4 p.m. CT

*A joint educational activity provided by IHA, Exigent Medical Education and Medical Solutions*

This program is complimentary for IHA members.

Behind every workforce metric are leadership choices about how care teams are built, supported and sustained. Hospitals and health systems continue to navigate staffing pressures, burnout, rising labor costs and changing expectations for care delivery. Workforce strategy now shapes nearly every measure of organizational performance, including access, patient flow, financial stability and staff retention.

This leadership forum will bring together healthcare executives, HR leaders, clinical leaders and other senior decision-makers to examine how workforce strategy can better support people, operations, and organizational performance. Participants will explore how to move beyond reactive staffing responses to build more cohesive, strategy-driven solutions that connect people, operations, culture and financial performance.

**8–9 a.m.**

**Registration and Networking Breakfast**

Check in, enjoy a light breakfast, and connect with healthcare leaders from across Illinois facing similar workforce challenges.

**9–9:05 a.m.**

**Welcome Remarks**

IHA and Medical Solutions will open the event with an overview of the day's goals: collaboration, innovation, and practical solutions for workforce advancement.

**9:05–10:30 a.m.**

**Keynote: Trust Is the Strategy: Building Cohesion to Drive Collective Performance**

**Kathleen Bartholomew, National Speaker**

As hospitals across Illinois confront workforce shortages, burnout, shrinking margins, and evolving care models, leaders face unprecedented pressure. This interactive session will re-examine workplace culture—the driver of behavior, performance, and retention—and identify actionable recruitment and retention strategies. You'll leave with a clear understanding that the culture you create today will determine the workforce you have tomorrow.

**10:30–10:45 a.m.**

**Morning Break**

**10:45–11:45 a.m.**

**Stabilizing the Healthcare Workforce: From Crisis Response to Long-Term Strategy**

**Erin MacKenzie, Vice President, Solution Engineering, Medical Solutions**

Healthcare workforce challenges are no longer temporary disruptions; they represent a permanent shift in how labor must be structured, managed, and optimized. This session will explore how healthcare organizations can move beyond reactive staffing decisions and toward a sustainable, system-based workforce strategy.

**11:45 a.m.–1 p.m.**

**Networking Lunch**

Build connections with peers and partners to strengthen collaboration across hospital functions.

**1–2 p.m.**

**Beyond Nursing: Why Allied Staffing Is Now an Operational Imperative**

**Matthew Neal, Vice President, Allied Health, Medical Solutions**

Allied workforce shortages are no longer isolated staffing challenges. They're becoming major drivers of operational disruption across healthcare systems. This session will center on why allied staffing has become one of the most critical, yet often overlooked, constraints within healthcare operations and how organizations can build more effective workforce strategies to improve speed, flexibility, and operational stability.

**2–2:15 p.m.**

**Afternoon Refreshment Break**

**2:15–3:15 p.m.**

**Illinois-Specific Workforce Discussion and Q&A**

IHA's policy team has brought workforce issues to the forefront in Springfield, advocating for policies that support healthcare leaders in addressing staffing shortages and workplace violence impacting frontline healthcare professionals. This session will outline Illinois workforce issues, provide an update on the Illinois Health Care Workforce Task Force, and showcase the efforts of Illinois hospital leaders to protect workers from violence.

**3:15–4 p.m.**

**Closing Roundtable and Action Planning**

This session will provide time to reflect on the day, identify common themes, and outline steps to apply what was covered in hospitals and health systems. We'll conclude with shared commitments and suggestions for continued peer collaboration.

**4 p.m.**

**Closing Remarks and Adjournment**

IHA and Medical Solutions will summarize key takeaways and highlight partnership opportunities in workforce development efforts.

Through expert-led sessions, peer discussions and Illinois-specific insights, you'll leave with practical strategies to support workforce planning, strengthen team performance, and align workforce decisions with broader organizational priorities.

By the end of this program, you'll be able to:

- Connect workforce pressures to key organizational outcomes, including access, patient flow, financial stability, retention and care delivery performance.

- Assess how leadership, trust and collaboration shape workforce culture, team performance and the organization's ability to recruit and retain staff.
- Identify opportunities to move from reactive staffing responses toward a more coordinated workforce strategy that connects people, operations, culture and financial performance.
- Examine how data, technology, governance and targeted workforce strategies, including approaches to allied health staffing, can support workforce planning, decision-making and operational flexibility.

- Hospital and health system executives
- Human resources leaders
- Physician and medical staff leaders
- Nursing leaders
- Operations leaders

**Kathleen Bartholomew, RN, MN, National Speaker**

Before turning to healthcare as a career in 1994, Kathleen Bartholomew held positions in marketing, business, communications and teaching. These experiences allowed her to look at the culture of healthcare from a unique perspective and speak poignantly to the issues affecting providers and the challenges facing healthcare organizations today.

Bartholomew has been a national speaker for the past 13 years. In 2010, she was nominated by Health Leaders Media as one of the top 20 people changing healthcare in America for calling attention to the impact of disruptive behavior on patient care and the need for better physician-nurse communication.

As a guest opinion writer for The Seattle Times, Bartholomew is an outspoken consumer advocate; and as a guest on NPR's "The People's Pharmacy" she calls for rapid improvement in hospital safety. She co-authored Charting the Course: Launching Patient-Centric Healthcare in 2012, the sequel to Why Hospitals Should Fly in 2008. In 2006, she authored Ending Nurse to Nurse Hostility.

**Erin McKenzie, Vice President, Solution Engineering, Medical Solutions**

Erin MacKenzie is Vice President of Solution Engineering at Medical Solutions, where she leads strategic workforce and technology initiatives focused on helping healthcare organizations build more adaptive, sustainable workforce models. With more than 20 years of experience across workforce solutions, staffing technology, operations, and client services, MacKenzie brings a unique blend of industry expertise and operational insight to healthcare workforce transformation efforts.

Prior to joining Medical Solutions, she held leadership roles with organizations including Bullhorn, eRecruit, Newbury Partners, ADP, and Paychex, where she specialized in workforce optimization, staffing best practices, client strategy, and enterprise technology solutions. She is also the co-host of Highly Adaptive, a podcast focused on helping leaders and organizations respond to change with a more proactive and adaptive mindset. MacKenzie is recognized for her ability to connect workforce strategy, technology, and operational execution to drive meaningful business outcomes and long-term organizational resilience.

**Matthew Neal, Vice President, Allied Health, Medical Solutions**

Matthew Neal is Vice President of Allied Health at Medical Solutions, where he leads a team of more than 100 recruiters and

operational leaders across multiple Allied Health divisions. With more than two decades of experience in healthcare workforce solutions, Neel specializes in allied workforce strategy, operational performance, recruiting optimization, and organizational scalability. He partners closely with executive leadership to align workforce strategy, operational execution, and market realities in an increasingly constrained talent environment.

Prior to his current position, Neel spent more than 17 years with Aureus Medical Group in progressive leadership roles overseeing allied sales, recruiting, and operations. Throughout his career, he has led initiatives focused on workforce specialization, placement efficiency, margin improvement, and operational consistency across allied healthcare staffing. Known for his practical operational insight and deep understanding of the allied labor market, Neel brings a strategic perspective on how healthcare organizations can better navigate workforce shortages, improve throughput, and strengthen long-term staffing stability.

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