

# WSU Health Sciences Mentorship Program

---

Formerly Stevens County Mentorship Program

The **WSU Health Sciences Mentorship Program** is a dynamic career awareness and preparation initiative that inspires rural youth to explore healthcare professions. Launched in 2019 through a partnership with community leaders in Stevens County, the program has grown to serve nearly **1000+ students yearly across 11 school districts**.

Also known by its guiding philosophy, **"You Can't Be What You Can't See,"** the program offers **career-connected learning opportunities for students in grades 7–11**. It helps youth and their families understand local health needs, explore diverse healthcare careers, and build the skills and confidence to pursue their goals. Success means students become more self-aware, informed, and empowered to shape their future.



## MENTORSHIP & CURRICULUM DESIGN

Three core components anchor the program:

- **Mentorship** from trained volunteers
- **Age-appropriate** health curriculum
- **Longitudinal** contact

Mentors—known as **Health Career Navigators**—introduce students to the full spectrum of healthcare careers while fostering personal growth and leadership. Between **60 and 100 volunteers** from WSU's health sciences colleges and regional health organizations support students through a curriculum written by faculty experts.

Highlights include:

- A **10th-grade anatomy and physiology module** authored by a faculty member from the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine
- A **healthy relationships unit** developed by a College of Nursing faculty member
- Support for launching and sustaining **HOSA clubs** in middle and high schools to build youth leadership
- **Peer-to-peer behavioral health mentorship**, where students are trained as leaders to draw in other younger students highlighted by adults, that may need extra support.

Beyond the classroom, students engage in **hands-on learning at WSU Spokane labs**, interacting directly with faculty and college students. The **9th-grade Foundations of Health Careers course** culminates in a spring **capstone research event**, where students present their work to families, educators, and community leaders over dinner.

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

**The program is currently active in 11 school districts, including:**

- Stevens County: Wellpinit, Mary Walker, Valley, Chewelah
- Additional districts: Freeman, Sprague, Pasco including Orion, Vancouver, Elma, and Plummer, ID

With resources supporting school district staff and program coordination, nearly \$1 million in grant funding has been received. We also addresses **workforce development challenges** in healthcare and emergency services, including:

- Partnering with Stevens County Fire District 1 to train volunteers for paid emergency response roles
- Collaborating with Providence to identify pathways from high school into paid healthcare employment



## INSTITUTIONAL VALUE

The WSU Health Sciences Mentorship Program offers a meaningful platform for faculty to share their expertise with rural youth. This program aligns with WSU's land-grant mission to improve lives through practical education and community engagement.

**50+ faculty members** have contributed to curriculum development and mentorship, enhancing educational outcomes and expanding awareness of healthcare careers.

For WSU students, participation in the program may count toward:

- Clinical rotations
- Service-learning hours
- Scholarly projects

These experiences support degree completion, strengthen students' professional readiness for post-graduation careers and foster success in all areas of life, including mental and emotional well-being.

## CONTACT

For further information, to volunteer, or to support this program, contact:

Jessica Gerdes

509-230-0896

[jessica.l.gerdes@wsu.edu](mailto:jessica.l.gerdes@wsu.edu)

