**WorkforceGPS**

**Youth Voices**

**Navigating the Pandemic**

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Laycie Gwinn, SCWorks: COVID affected me right after I finished school. I was supposed to get 160 hours of an externship. I did my -- I was placed in an externship through Roper Hospital, which is just like a big hospital that's affiliated with Trident. I'd go to try to Trident Tech, I go to school, and then they put you into work related to but owned by Roper Hospital, basically. So I went to Low Country Hematology and Oncology. I did a lot of blood draw. I did like a lot of injections every single day and got a lot of practice. I fell in love with my -- I mean, I was like sold on being a medical assistant, which is what I went to school for.

And then I had about three days left to get my certification and Roper pulled all the students out because COVID had kind of gotten a little intense at that point. And we were dealing with really high-risk patients, and so all the students were pulled and I only needed three days left to get my certification. So I was kind of like, what do I do, you know? But my counselor stayed in contact with me literally weekly, just checking on me. What do I need to do? She kind of figured for me, gave me a call a day; was like, you know what, Lacey, why don't you just go take your certification test and get that out of the way and then you can get the hours done whenever you're allowed to?

So I did that. I went and I took my test, I passed my test. And the only thing I was waiting on for my certification was the rest of those hours. And COVID kind of got to where, you know, in health care you had to figure out a way to deal with it, so it was every day full PPE, very different from when I had started initially not wearing a mask. You're in direct contact with patients daily. And then it was it went to taking temps out the door and nobody could sit in the lobby, everybody sitting in the car, and your patient intake is really different.

You know, we did a lot of, like, intake online then and everything was really different. And so I finished my externship and then technically, I was a certified RMA, registered medical assistant, and I got hired on at Coastal Pediatrics and I loved it. It was the best thing ever. And for me, I guess in my legitimate career as an MA, I really only have seen post-COVID and work directly in post-COVID world. So that's masks every single day, wearing a mask every day. And, you know, you have a kid come in that has any sick symptoms at all, like a headache, a sore throat, a bellyache, diarrhea, you're doing a COVID swab and you're in full PPE. So that's what I'm used to at this point.