

BUILDING A STRONG DIRECT CARE WORKFORCE



STEP 1

Modernization of Iowa's Direct Care Worker (DCW) Registry and Greater Community Inclusion Will Provide Vital Workforce Infrastructure

Direct care workforce includes home care, hospice, medication, and nurse aides; psychiatric aides, direct support professionals; personal care aides; consumer directed attendant care workers, patient care technicians, resident assistants, and others.

- make up one of the largest segments of Iowa's workforce (estimated 45-60K);
- are in high demand;
- experience high annual turnover rates (over 60% in nursing homes);
- earn a median hourly wage of \$13.80 (2019)
- are predominantly female (95%)

CURRENT STATUS AND PROGRESS MADE:

- HF692 called for expansion of the DCW Registry and a voluntary public portal of caregivers. In 2021 it passed out of the House Human Resource Committee with unanimous support but did not advance further.
- Existing registry is housed at Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA) and website/technology upgrades were made using Cares Act funding but did not include registry expansion.
- HF692 was included in the Iowa's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) spending plan submitted by Departments of Human Services/Public Health and Iowa Medicaid Enterprise to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for approval.

WHY IS MODERNIZATION OF THE DIRECT CARE WORKER REGISTRY NEEDED?

The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1987 (OBRA'87) OBRA '87 is the federal law that required nurse aides in nursing homes to be certified by completing 75 clock hours of training. The same law required all states to create a Nurse Aide/DCW Registry to maintain a list of nurse aides who were eligible to work in nursing homes, meaning they completed the certification training and were free of criminal history. The old system did not anticipate the many options for care and support that now exist ... 35 years later. The modernized system will reduce burden and provide for a more inclusive system that will benefit all key stakeholders including consumers and family caregivers.

- **Win-Win For Stakeholders** - Direct Care Workers (DCWs), Iowans of all ages and abilities who need DCWs, employers, family caregivers, the business community, and the Iowa overall stand to benefit.
- **Portability of Workforce and Training** - A central and secure place to store a permanent record of trainings, certifications, credentials, continuing education and experience of those who work in the field of direct care/support to ensure the workforce and their trainings are portable; i.e. follow workers from one workplace or population served to another.
- **Consumer Access** - Create an opportunity to link consumers and family caregivers with direct care workers with specific training, skills, and availability through a public portal.
- **Public Protection** - Streamline and complete timely background checks required under laws and regulations.
- **Data-driven Decision Making** - Collection of data to inform Iowa Workforce Development's analysis of emerging trends relating to Iowa's direct care workforce in all settings; identify, at a minimum, the number of DCWs in Iowa, diversity in the workforce, and their employment settings to aid in planning how Iowa will meet the growing demand for the workforce; how many transition to a path to other health professions; and those who leave the field completely. There is currently no system to accurately know the total number of those working in direct care.
- **Decrease Repetitive Training** - Reduce costs/time for DCW and employers associated with repetitive training due to the lack of training and portability.
- **Improve Onboarding** - Expedite onboarding of direct care/support workers so they can start work more quickly.
- **Broaden the Pool of Caregivers** - A voluntary public portal of caregivers can broaden the pool of qualified workers to help fill serious workforce gaps and respond to emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The public portal could attract older and seasonal workers, college students, people with disabilities, immigrants, and others.

HOW THIS BECAME A PRIORITY

- 13 Statewide Solutions-Focused Regional Listening Sessions With Employers & Community Colleges
- Survey of Health and Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) Employers
- 2019 Direct Care Worker Wage and Benefit Survey
- 2019 Multi-stakeholder Forum: Building a Strong Direct Care Workforce Participant Ballot Recommendations
- Survey Monkey Regarding the Central Direct Care Workforce Data Base
- Personal Stories

A network of excellence in caregiving and support for all Iowans.

Mission: To enhance the care and support of Iowans by providing education, research, recognition, and advocacy for those who provide direct care.

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