



WHO WE ARE

Iowa is part of *Better Jobs, Better Care*, a national long-term care research and demonstration program funded in part by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Better Jobs, Better Care is focused on:

1. implementing changes in both service delivery and public policy designed to improve the quality of jobs for direct care workers; and
2. promoting research to determine the best strategies for attracting a prepared, committed and sustainable workforce.

The lead organization of the **Iowa Better Jobs, Better Care** program is the Iowa CareGivers Association. The mission of the Iowa CareGivers Association is to provide education, recognition, advocacy and research in support of direct care workers, thereby enhancing quality of care.

LOCAL PARTNERS

The **Iowa Better Jobs, Better Care** Coalition is made up of 21 organizations and individuals that have some stake in stabilizing the pool of direct care workers: state departments, provider associations, consumer groups, advocates, community colleges, policymakers and others. The **Iowa Better Jobs, Better Care** Coalition is also advised by a Direct Care Workers Advisory Council, comprised of active direct care workers.

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To obtain more information about Better Jobs, Better Care and other Robert Wood Johnson Foundation projects focused on innovative change in long-term care, go to www.rwjf.org

THE CHALLENGE

A current shortage of direct care workers threatens to compromise the ability of our nation's long-term care system to respond to the growing needs of our aging and disabled population. In Iowa, the average annual direct care staff turnover rate in nursing facilities is 60 percent and reported as high as 200 percent in some facilities. Effects of this high turnover can include poor quality care for residents/ clients, higher levels of stress for workers who remain in understaffed workplaces, and increased pressures on family members who often must fill in care gaps. These staffing problems also cost health care providers millions of dollars in recruitment, training and lost productivity.

More than 46 million Americans are without health insurance coverage; many direct care workers fall into this category. In Iowa, wage and benefit surveys reveal that 25 percent of certified nursing assistants working in Iowa's nursing homes have no health care coverage from any source, and another 12 percent rely on public assistance for their health care.

THE PROJECT

Working directly with 13 long-term care providers (nine nursing homes and four home care agencies) **Iowa Better Jobs, Better Care** has addressed some extremely challenging but crucial issues associated with workplace dynamics, including enhancing staff communication and creating a team-based operating environment. Key outcomes of the project include the creation of a long-term care staff peer mentoring and information exchange program, career advancement opportunities, and an emphasis on a "person-centered" approach to caregiving. Direct care workers also participate in a competitive mini-grant process that rewards innovative care delivery ideas.

From a public policy perspective, **Iowa Better Jobs, Better Care** was instrumental in the installation of a Governor-appointed Direct Care Worker Education Task Force, which is tasked with developing educational standards for direct care workers. **Iowa Better Jobs, Better Care** has been working to expand the Iowa Nurse Aide Registry to include more categories of workers and to make it a more useful tool for consumers, direct care workers, and employers. They have also focused on educating and assisting direct care workers with health care coverage options, while simultaneously working to secure expansions of these options for both direct care workers and the broader uninsured population in the state.

SUCCESES

- **Iowa Better Jobs, Better Care** had three direct care workers appointed by Governor Vilsack to the Direct Care Worker Education Task Force.
- A provider participant in Le Mars, Iowa reported that following implementation of the peer mentoring program, the annual staff turnover rate dropped from 100 percent to 13 percent.
- A majority of the direct care workers who have completed the leadership/mentor programs implemented by **Iowa Better Jobs, Better Care** indicate that, as a result of participation in such programs, they are more likely to remain in the field of direct care.
- The **Iowa Better Jobs, Better Care** mini-grant program has sparked innovative ideas from direct care staff: one grantee--a certified nursing assistant--developed a tri-colored seating pad for residents in wheelchairs, which helped staff determine appropriate times for repositioning residents, thereby reducing the likelihood of pressure sores.

LOOKING FORWARD

Iowa Better Jobs, Better Care is exploring collaborative opportunities on both the state and national levels to expand and build upon their successful programs and services.