

Legislators Have Gone Home: How Did They Do On Direct Care Worker Issues?

So... the 2011 Policy Brochure on this page was printed late in 2010. It talked about what the Iowa CareGivers Association **HOPED** to do and what we hoped would happen in 2011.

The obvious question in July of 2011 is: So, **how are we doing?**

Here's a brief report with the key points being:

- 1. All things considered, we're doing pretty well.** It's an incredibly difficult time to be working with the Iowa legislature in Des Moines or the United States Congress in Washington DC. There are huge ongoing debates about how to spend taxpayer dollars. And that includes spending money to grow or improve the direct care workforce.
- 2. Direct care workforce funding was approved by the Iowa legislature.** After months of debate and real doubts as to whether there would be **ANY** funding this year for direct care workforce activities, the Iowa legislature **DID** approve funding for both the work of the Direct Care Worker Task Force/Advisory Council **AND** of the work of the Iowa CareGivers Association.

That means that work will continue to increase and improve the training of direct care workers in all care settings, that work will continue to create the Board of Direct Care Workers in Iowa, and that the ICA will continue to deliver services and provide support to direct care workers throughout the state.
- 3. Other good things happened during this year's legislative session in Iowa.** The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for Iowans was increased from 7 to 10% — meaning that direct care workers will be able to keep more money in their pocket.

The mental health service delivery system is being re-thought and major changes are in the works. While much of the work will address what services are provided to whom and who pays for all this, there is also going to be an important focus on the mental health workforce — the size of the workforce, the training workers receive, and the ability to both recruit and retain workers.

Alzheimer's Disease will be getting more attention, and a Task Force will be looking at many aspects of the disease, including the workforce that exists to help support those with the disease and their families.

More people learned more about the direct care workforce. A public forum was held in February with special guest speaker Iowa Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds. Expanded awareness of direct care workers and their value also came via two special **Come Care With Me** events (with videos available on the homepage of this website) featuring Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds and State Senator Jeff Danielson of Waterloo.

- 4. There's lots left to do and your help is needed.** Those who care about direct care workers and those you serve know that there is lots of work left to do. **All of us** have to continue to work to educate Iowans and your elected representatives about who direct care workers are, and the importance of the work you do.

We also need to continue to talk about the importance of the Iowa CareGivers Association, how it stands alone as the sole organization in Iowa that supports direct care workers in every care setting, and the leadership role it plays in Iowa — and in the nation — on keeping the focus on the important people who care for and serve our aging friends and family as well as people of all ages with disabilities.

Everyone reading this can help advocate for the direct care workforce and those they serve. Maybe you can do that through the work you do day-in and day-out as a **direct care worker**. Maybe you're an **employer** with the ability and desire to compensate, treat and train your direct care staff particularly well. Maybe you're **someone whose life has been touched** in some way by a direct care worker and you now want to support them — through your own advocacy efforts or through your financial support of the Iowa CareGivers Association.

Regardless of your role—we appreciate it and urge you to keep doing it!

If you truly care about the work that direct care workers do, then we need you and those you know to stay informed and get involved! You can start by signing up for the ICA Resource and Outreach Center (ROC)!

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