

The Iowa CareGivers Association (ICA) is the **independent** voice of direct care workers. Direct care workers are *individuals who provide services, care, supervision, and emotional support to people with chronic illnesses and disabilities*. They include certified nursing assistants, home care aides, direct support professionals, and others. Licensed nurses and other licensed health professionals are not included in this definition. Direct care workers serve lowans in nursing homes, assisted living, in-home care, group homes, hospice, and a variety of other settings.

ICA truly cares about these workers: ICA supports and honors them and the important work they do, and listens to and engages them in leadership roles and activities. ICA has the best interest of direct care workers and those they serve at heart.


ICA was founded in 1992 by a former nurse aide in response to the growing concerns about the shortage and high turnover rates of direct care workers. It is one of the very first organizations of its kind in the nation and is nationally known for its work and impact.

ICA's sole purpose is to enhance the quality of care for lowans by ensuring a well-educated, well-compensated, and well-respected direct care workforce.



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2011 Public Policy Agenda

2011 Iowa CareGivers Association's Public Policy Agenda:

Improve the Quality of Care Provided by Direct Care Workers:

- Encourage greater identification and use of best practices among providers of services and involve direct care workers in identifying those practices.
- Pursue expanded use and transparency of Civil Monetary Penalty (CMP) Fund dollars to enhance the quality of care in nursing facilities. Obtain CMP funds to increase ICA and others' efforts to recruit and **retain** well qualified direct care workers.

Improve the Knowledge and Skills Possessed by Direct Care Workers:

- Continue the work of the Direct Care Worker Advisory Council focused on the creation of the Board of Direct Care Workers in the Iowa Department of Public Health by 2014:
 - Establishing consistent educational standards and certifications across care settings
 - Providing career pathways and opportunities for specialized certifications (e.g. oral care, dementia, and others)
 - Collecting data about the size and make-up of the direct care workforce.
- Seek a change in federal law to allow direct care workers to maintain their certifications through continuing education.

Improve the Standard of Living of Direct Care Workers:

- Continue and assure appropriate use of the Nursing Home Quality Assurance (provider tax) dollars.
- Support strategies to improve wages and benefits for direct care workers (DCWs) including reconvening the legislatively directed DCW Compensation Committee.
- Work to expand the benefits afforded by programs such as the Earned Income Tax Credit.
- Support federal legislation that addresses the direct care workforce and long term care quality. Focus will be on the re-authorization of the Older Americans Act, the Workforce Investment Act, and passage of the Direct Care Worker Empowerment Act.

Improve the Health of Direct Care Workers and Their Access to Health Care Services:

- Continue assisting State Government to expand the Iowa Care and Medicaid programs and to create a Health Benefits Exchange.
- Support federal or state legislation that would create a minimum amount of paid sick leave for health and long term care workers.
- Support wellness and health promotion programs for direct care workers.

The Iowa CareGivers Association's mission is to enhance the quality of care by providing education, recognition, advocacy, and research in support of direct care workers.

