

Scaling Up Iowa CareGivers (IC) Programs That Support Essential Direct Care/Support Workers

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



Iowa CareGivers (IC) is an independent, nonpartisan, 501(c)(3) founded in 1992. IC exists to support the direct care workforce. We recognize direct care as a viable and chosen career for many or as a steppingstone to another health or human service profession. The programs and services referenced in this document have been proven to keep DCWs in the field, enhance their knowledge and skills, and improve job satisfaction. IC provides them a statewide ongoing external support system ... a Go-to Place for personal and professional development, and resources that are tailored to their needs.

Sources of funding include private foundation grants, individual contributions, conference fees, sponsorships, and a state contract. Federal grants were awarded in the past. State support of the efforts would allow IC to restore and bring to scale a year-long schedule of statewide programs, events, and services for all DCWs. Employers could also choose to enroll their staff in specific programs. These value added initiatives could strengthen existing DCW training programs at community colleges, universities, as well as Registered Apprenticeship programs. IC is the only organization of its kind in the country, and has received national recognition, and provided technical assistance for other states interested in establishing similar organizations.

STRATEGIES & ACTIVITIES

OUTCOMES

Bring to Scale the following Iowa CareGivers (IC) well-established, direct care worker-tailored, value-added supports for the entirety of the direct care workforce across settings and populations served:

- Statewide education and networking conference
- Regional 3Ps conferences that focus on **P**ersonal and **P**rofessional development and **P**eer networking
- Direct Care Worker Leadership Training (leadership within their profession - changing the way we think and talk about direct care)
- Ongoing live virtual one-hour sessions to supplement and enhance knowledge

IC programs keep DCWs in the field.

A Focus On Retention: Program attendee evaluation ranges over many years:

90-100% rate program excellent or very good

90-100% can use the information learned

80-85% said their participation increases the likelihood they will remain in the field of direct care

75-82% said their participation increases the likelihood they will remain with their current employer

Statewide Network of Ongoing Programs and Support for All Direct Care Workers (DCWs)

- Increased knowledge
- Enhanced skills
- Break from physically/mentally demanding work
- DCWs take pride in their profession and experience ownership in helping to plan the programs and events offered
- DCWs receive the support needed to prevent burn-out and, thereby remain in the field

2022 "Winners at Caregiving" Conference Evaluations

99% said they can use the information learned.

97% rated conference excellent or very good.

85% said their participation increases the likelihood they will stay in the field of direct care.

82% said their participation increases the likelihood they will remain with their current employer.

Develop and disseminate newsletters, and other resources that contain pertinent information to those in direct care. Newsletters include articles written about and by DCWs, human interest stories, educational columns, program and event calendars or highlights, and partner resources or programs. IC needs to extend reach to more DCWs including those on the DCW Registry. Every DCW needs to have access to these helpful resources.

DCW-Tailored Resources & Newsletters

- Well-informed direct care workforce
- Venue for DCWs to share their voices

Administer the evidence-based Mouth Care Matters (MCM) program, an oral health specialty for DCWs and other health care professionals. DCWs receive little training about the importance of oral health to one's overall health and well-being. For example poor oral hygiene can lead to aspiration pneumonia, a leading cause of death among nursing home residents and a contributor to costly hospital readmissions. The University of Iowa College of Dentistry conducted a pilot project in which MCM training for CNAs in a nursing home was used as an intervention. The oral health of the nursing home residents showed marked improvement. The study was published in a professional journal. A significant investment has been made by Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation, RRF Foundation for Aging, IHHS, and others to develop, test, and evaluate the program. Currently efforts are underway to integrate MCM into community colleges. To sustain the program, we must maintain and update the curriculum, training materials, and maintain a cadre of MCM instructors who are dental hygienists.

Mouth Care Matters (MCM) Program Administration and Integration

- Elevate this successful program as the program of choice
- Permanent and portable record of MCM training participants
- Enhanced knowledge in oral health results in DCWs placing a higher priority on ensuring persons served receive good oral care
- Reduced risk of aspiration pneumonia and other chronic health conditions caused by poor oral care
- Potential to reduce costly hospital readmissions
- DCWs improve their personal oral hygiene habits

Coordinate a statewide recognition and self-care campaign for those in direct care. Burn-out at an all time high, and a major contributing factor to high turnover rates. Regional self-care events focus on the physical, mental, and emotional health of DCWs, and will include free health screenings. Event includes a recognition and an opportunity to pay tribute to all. Three years into the pandemic DCWs have stated they have reached the "Burn-out of No Return." They can't give when they are tapped out.

A Well Cared for and Respected Direct Care Workforce

- A mentally, physically, and emotionally strong direct care workforce
- Better informed public about how essential the direct care workforce is

Continue community and stakeholder outreach, and collaboration with the state, older Iowans, people with disabilities, family caregivers, employers, educators, advocates, and others who have a vested interest in and commitment to direct care workforce stability. IC can be helpful in facilitating some Strategies and Activities suggested in "A Comprehensive System to Build a Strong Direct Care Workforce." This includes activities that align with promotion of DCW recruitment, education including Registered Apprenticeship and other DCW training programs offered through local community colleges, high schools and other locations.

A Comprehensive System to Build a Strong Direct Care Workforce

- System that supports policies and practices that meets the needs of all stakeholders