The Supply of Direct Caregivers Is Worsening as Advocates Call for More Training

BY ROB DILLARD • DEC 28, 2017

A new report is praising Iowa as one of three states developing solutions to the problem of a shortage of direct care workers. Advocates for caregivers in the state say they need legislative support to enact them.

An organization called PHI National that lobbies on behalf of the direct care workforce says Iowa is taking steps toward improving conditions for direct caregivers. But, it also reports the state is falling behind in implementing solutions. The executive director of Iowa Caregivers, Di Findley, says elected officials need to support better education for one of Iowa's largest workforces.

"Those who work in direct care or direct service need to have a state recognized, competency based training or credentials that will follow them from one place to another, to make it portable," she says.

Findley says based on a recent survey conducted by Iowa Workforce Development, the shortage of direct care workers is growing.

"We heard from those employers, they simply can't fill vacancies," she says. "They can't find or keep people in the field, and it's taking them much longer to fill vacancies than in the past."

Findley says legislators need to throw their support behind a training program called Prepare to Care developed by the University of Iowa College of Nursing. With more than 500,000 Iowans aged 65 years or older, the demand for direct caregivers is increasing.