

MARCH 2015

LONG-TERM CARE WORKFORCE

ISSUE:

Survival Coalition supports policies that strengthen the direct care workforce while maintaining quality, affordable care for individuals with disabilities.

BACKGROUND:

Many people with disabilities, as well as the elderly, rely on direct care workers, such as Certified Nursing Assistants, Personal Care Workers and Home Health Aides, to live independently and in the setting of their choice. Every day, direct care workers assist thousands of people with activities of daily living such as getting out of bed, eating, and bathing, among other important functions.

Unfortunately, people with disabilities struggle to find and retain quality direct care workers due to the high turnover rate within the profession, which is largely the result of low wages and a lack of benefits. The Medicaid Personal Care Rate, which is used to reimburse personal care agencies and pay the salaries of direct care workers, has only increased by \$0.24 over the last 10 years, which makes it difficult for agencies to increase wages and attract or retain employees. Some agencies report turnover rates as high as 67%. This direct care workforce crisis is becoming even more concerning as the demand for personal care workers is projected to increase by 26% between 2012 and 2022.

Wisconsin's booming demand for direct-care workers cannot be met without making these jobs more competitive and attractive to potential direct care workers, especially at a time when the state has set goals to offer more long-term supports and services options to elders, their families, and persons living with disabilities.

SURVIVAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Increase Medicaid Personal Care (MAPC) reimbursement rates by 8% to specifically address direct-care worker salaries and benefits and provider costs associated with the Affordable Care Act's employer mandate.
- Oppose efforts to transition personal care determinations to a third-party vendor. It is estimated that this change will result in a \$19 million cut to personal care services over two years. The transition to a third-party determination raises serious concerns regarding administrative costs and increased waiting time for individuals with disabilities who need these services to remain independent.
- Increase investments in the community-based direct care workforce through the Department of Workforce Development's employment and training initiatives. Support continued investment in the Fast Forward Grant initiative.
- Support legislative initiatives that address the growing workforce shortage in personal care.

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