



Wisconsin Long Term Care Advisory Council

Meeting Date: September 13, 2016

Meeting Topic: Long-Term Care Workforce Development

At the Long Term Care Advisory Council on September 13, 2016, economist Dennis Winters shared his insight into long-term care workforce trends with data from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD). Due to an aging workforce population, the DWD's data shows a decreasing overall long-term care labor force despite a continued increase in general population and also the population of those we serve. Jobs in community care and home health industries together grew 50% between 2005-2015, and that trend continues for community care and home health employment projections for the next ten years from 2014-2024 with 54% and 40% job growth, respectively. An aging workforce of registered nurses coupled with an increasing need for long-term care is causing significant challenge to our industry.

The council broke into three workgroups to discuss long-term care workforce development. Each work group of advocates, providers, and public agencies reported their findings and ideas for the top workforce challenges, potential solutions, and barriers to workforce success.

The public agencies workgroup reported that the top long-term care workforce challenges are the quality of work, the quantity of workers, and the compensation of the workforce. The group's solutions to the challenges include:

- creating or utilizing technology for tasks, such as matching clients with services, offering transportation, allowing remote care, and providing medical advice,
- researching businesses and their technologies for potential partnerships that would improve care and serve needs,
- reviewing benefits under long-term care programs to allow group care incentives,
- offering workforce apprenticeships and training opportunities,
- replacing traditional tasks with creative solutions from the community, such as involving our retired workforce and offering meal and grocery delivery from the marketplace,
- creating a professional caregiving organization and creating industry advancement models to retain employees and improve quality of workforce,
- creating a job corps that would encourage young workers to start in the system by offering health and education benefits, on-site training, management opportunities, and other incentives, much like the military,
- improving programs to empower natural care networks, and
- encouraging workers to share their solution ideas.

The perceived barriers to workforce success are regulations of the industry, lack of public system agility, lack of technology infrastructure, and motivating employees.

The providers work group found the following top three challenges to be workforce wages, skills and motivation in the workforce, and job difficulty related to pay. Additionally, increasing costs of business, stagnant pay for care, regulations, and silos for regulation are causing some of the challenges. Potential solutions for the workforce are:

- using incentives in reimbursement to improve quality of care,
- better correlating rates and costs in order to improve careworker pay,
- using media campaigns to attract careworkers,
- offering careworking apprenticeships, and
- bringing together a summit to break down silos.

The group's barriers to success are improving collaboration and instilling change, the costs of workforce expansion, the immediate need for workers, and the difficulty of care work.

The work group of advocates presented their top workforce challenges as low wages and lack of benefits, provider rate caps preventing wages from increasing like other industries, and recruiting and retaining talent that seeks a career path. Other challenges are transportation to and from work sites, lack of appropriate skill development and job coaching, worker screening requirements such as bonding requirements and background checks, work impediments for persons with disabilities, the difficult and intimate care needs of the job, and a lack of affordable child care in some communities to allow individuals to enter workforce. There are many potential solutions, including:

- increasing provider rates to allow wage growth,
- exploring employee-owned business models to incentivize tenure and improve engagement,
- building creative employee benefit packages and incentives,
- lessening criminal past restrictions,
- creating workforce transportation networks,
- creating a database that matches labor force with clients and providers,
- building partnerships with tech colleges and universities to develop career paths,
- building partnerships with health care systems to share and develop the workforce, and
- exploring exemptions to the IRIS 40 hour rule for certain tasks/services, and
- retaining and building natural support.

Barriers to success include a lack of adequate long-term care funding, lack of promotion about careworking, and lack of a professional direct-care workers organization.

The council shared many compelling ways we can positively influence the workforce by strategizing and employing creative solutions. Council members have expressed their enthusiasm for the format of the workgroup discussion, and they are passionate about improving the workforce outlook. The council members appreciated being engaged and sharing their solutions to this critical industry problem.

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