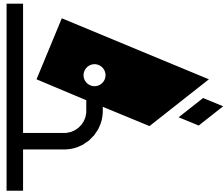


The Road Ahead: Policy, Trends and State Strategies to Strengthen the Direct Care Workforce

June 17, 2026



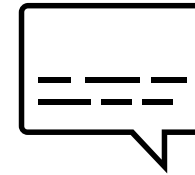
HOUSEKEEPING



Webinar is being recorded



Use the Q and A feature
to ask questions



Closed captioning is
available

A statewide coalition
formed to address the
health and well being of
older adults and their
families in New Hampshire

NH AHA works to promote
its shared vision to create
communities in New
Hampshire that advance
culture, policies and
services which support
older adults and their
families.



NH Alliance for Healthy Aging Direct Care Workforce Workgroup

Purpose

- Support the health, independence and dignity of older adults by raising awareness of the need for direct care workforce positions

Approach

- Bring together like-minded individuals and organizations
- Convener of ideas around improving conditions for direct care workers
- Proactively developing strategies to attract new workers to the field

NH Alliance for Healthy Aging Direct Care Workforce Workgroup

Strategies

1

Improve direct care
worker job quality and
increase numbers to
meet demand

2

Provide education and
awareness of the need
for direct care workers

NH Alliance for Healthy Aging Direct Care Workforce Workgroup

Thank you to the Workgroup members who helped to plan today's webinar!

Karen Schoch

Lily Wellington

Linda Minsinger

Margo Sullivan

Theresa Tanous

Tom Blonski

Today's Objectives:



LEARN HOW FEDERAL
POLICY IS EVOLVING
REGARDING THE
DIRECT CARE
WORKFORCE



UNDERSTAND POLICY
IMPLICATIONS FOR
NEW HAMPSHIRE'S
DIRECT CARE
WORKFORCE



HEAR HOW NH IS
INVESTING
RESOURCES TO
SUPPORT THIS
CRITICAL
WORKFORCE



EXPLORE
OPPORTUNITIES TO
ENGAGE

Moderator



Tom Blonski
President & CEO of Catholic Charities New Hampshire

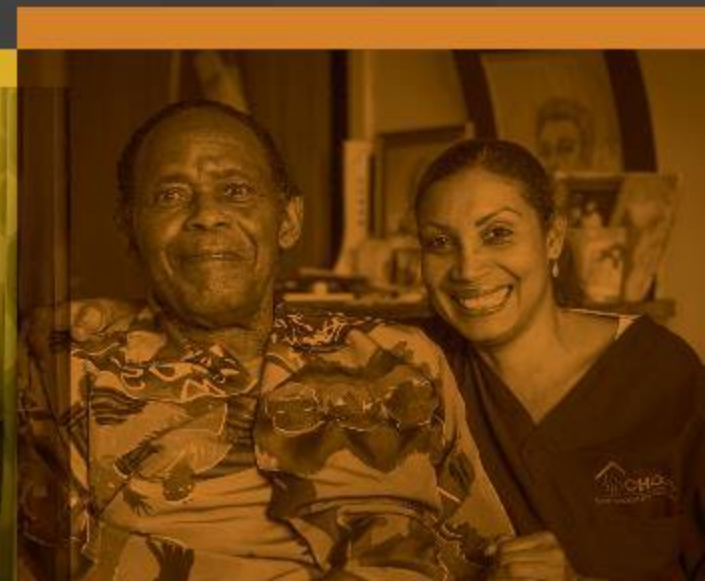
Federal Policy Changes Affecting New Hampshire's Direct Care Workforce

Jake McDonald

Senior Policy Advocacy Specialist, PHI

jmcdonald@PHInational.org

© 2026 PHI



PHI is a national, non-profit organization committed to strengthening the direct care workforce from a 360-degree perspective.

We believe that caring, committed relationships between direct care workers and their clients are at the heart of quality care. Those relationships work best when direct care workers receive high-quality training, living wages, and respect for the central role they play.



What Do I Mean By “Direct Care Workers”?



More than 5.4 million direct care workers assist older adults and people with disabilities with essential daily tasks across care settings.

3.2M+

Home Care Workers

Personal care aides and home health aides who support individuals in private homes and community settings

687K

Residential Care Aides

Workers who assist individuals in group homes, assisted living, and other residential care settings

492K

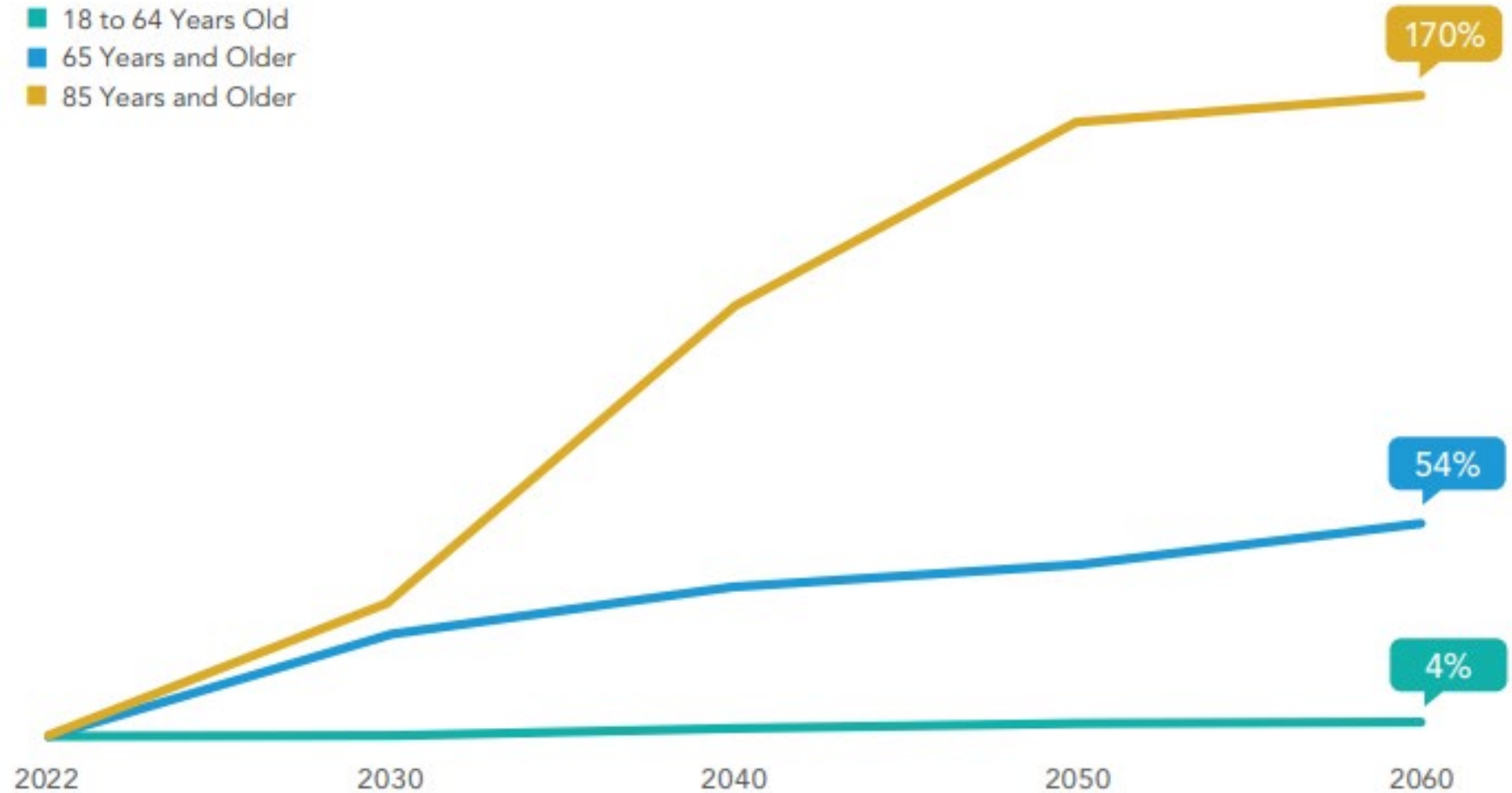
Nursing Assistants

Workers who provide services to individuals in skilled nursing homes

An Aging Population

PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH BY AGE GROUP, 2022 TO 2060

- 18 to 64 Years Old
- 65 Years and Older
- 85 Years and Older



A Direct Care Workforce Crisis



1.8 million jobs added over the last decade

More new jobs are expected this decade (772,000) than any other single occupation in the country

Expected to have **9.7 million total direct care openings** from 2024 to 2034



New Hampshire's Workforce & Challenges



- Lack of recognition and respect
- Low pay; uncompetitive wages
- Unstable scheduling and work hours
- Limited benefits
- Unsafe workplaces, high rates of injury, and poor access to care
- Few recognized career development opportunities
- Inconsistent or low-quality training and support

87%	Women
15%	People of Color
12%	Immigrants
\$19.72	Median hourly wage
\$26,220	Median annual earnings
22%	Live in or near poverty
33%	On public assistance
27%	Lack affordable housing
38%	No employer health insurance

Federal Threats to Direct Care Workers



Recent, sweeping federal policy changes have created unprecedented challenges for direct care workers, older adults, people with disabilities, and family caregivers.



Medicaid Cuts



HCBS “Fraud”



Immigration



Labor Rights



Agency Cuts

Medicaid Cuts



Medicaid is the nation's primary payer for long-term services and supports

- Home and community-based care for 7.8 million people and nursing home care for 1.5 million people
- Health coverage for nearly a third of all direct care workers

OBBBA's \$1 trillion in Medicaid cuts will:

- Exacerbate the recruitment and retention crisis
 - Loss of coverage will mean fewer hours for workers, providers closing, lower wages and benefits, removing access to health coverage
- Decimate state budgets and long-term care infrastructure
 - The federal government provides 70% of Medicaid funding nationally
- Eliminate health coverage for direct care workers
 - Part-time and variable schedules will make compliance with work requirements especially difficult

Weaponizing Fraud to Cut HCBS Services



A new angle in the debate

- Pretextual fraud allegations are being used to argue for reduced services/reimbursements and greater oversight

What has happened so far

- CMS deferred \$259.5M in Medicaid funds from Minnesota
- Letters to California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Maine, Nebraska, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Washington
- CMS' CRUSH initiative and DOJ's National Fraud Enforcement Division signal expanded targeting

Why this matters

- Heightened scrutiny creates compliance burdens and payment delays
- “HCBS fraud” narrative threatens political and public support

Immigration Restrictions and Deportations



Restrictive immigration policies worsen the direct care workforce crisis

- Direct care workers are being deported, prevented from entering the country, losing their authorization to work, and leaving the field
- Employers struggle to recruit and retain enough workers, leading to greater caseloads, higher burnout, and more people leaving the field

DHS' Public Charge rule threatens immigrant workers' benefits

- This proposed rule would make accessing public benefit programs detrimental to a worker's immigration and work status
- Most direct care workers rely on public benefit programs to make ends meet

Labor Protections Under Threat



DOL is proposing to roll back direct care workers' rights

- **Fair Labor Standards Act's Home Care Rule**
 - Ending federal minimum wage and overtime pay for home care workers
- **Misclassification Rule**
 - Making it easier to misclassify employees as independent contractors

A complete turnaround in valuing direct care work and direct care workers

- Protections still exist at the state level
- A disappearing “floor” of legal protections
- What does it say that direct care workers are singled out for losing access to labor rights that other workers enjoy?

Federal Agency Cuts

These actions eliminate or threaten:

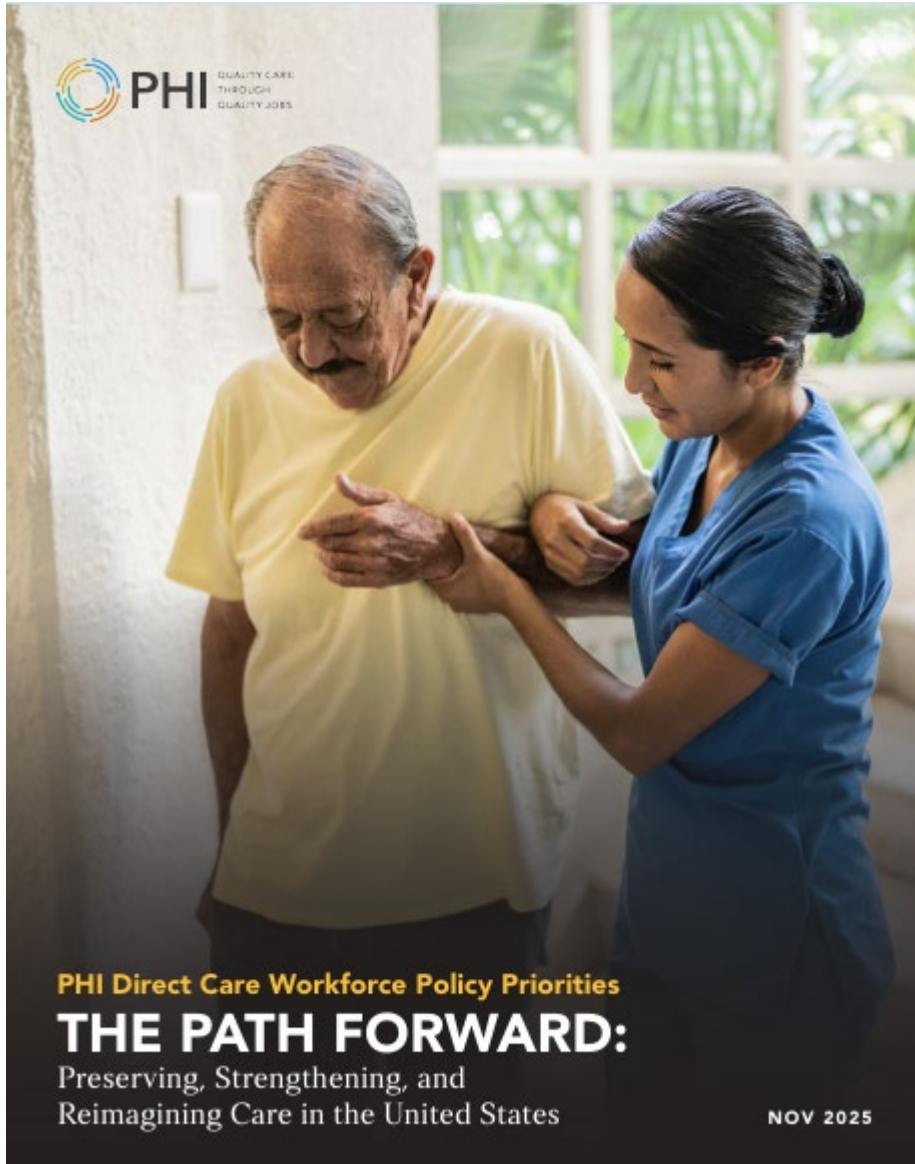
- Funding, capacity, and expertise
- Caregiver support programs
- Coordination of aging and disability services
- Data collection and evaluation
- Accessible and culturally competent communications and services
- Visibility for those who need care and the direct care workers who provide it

"This is not just a downsizing. It's a deliberate dismantling of the systems that safeguard the health, dignity, and independence of millions of Americans—especially older adults, people with disabilities, and the direct care workers who support them."

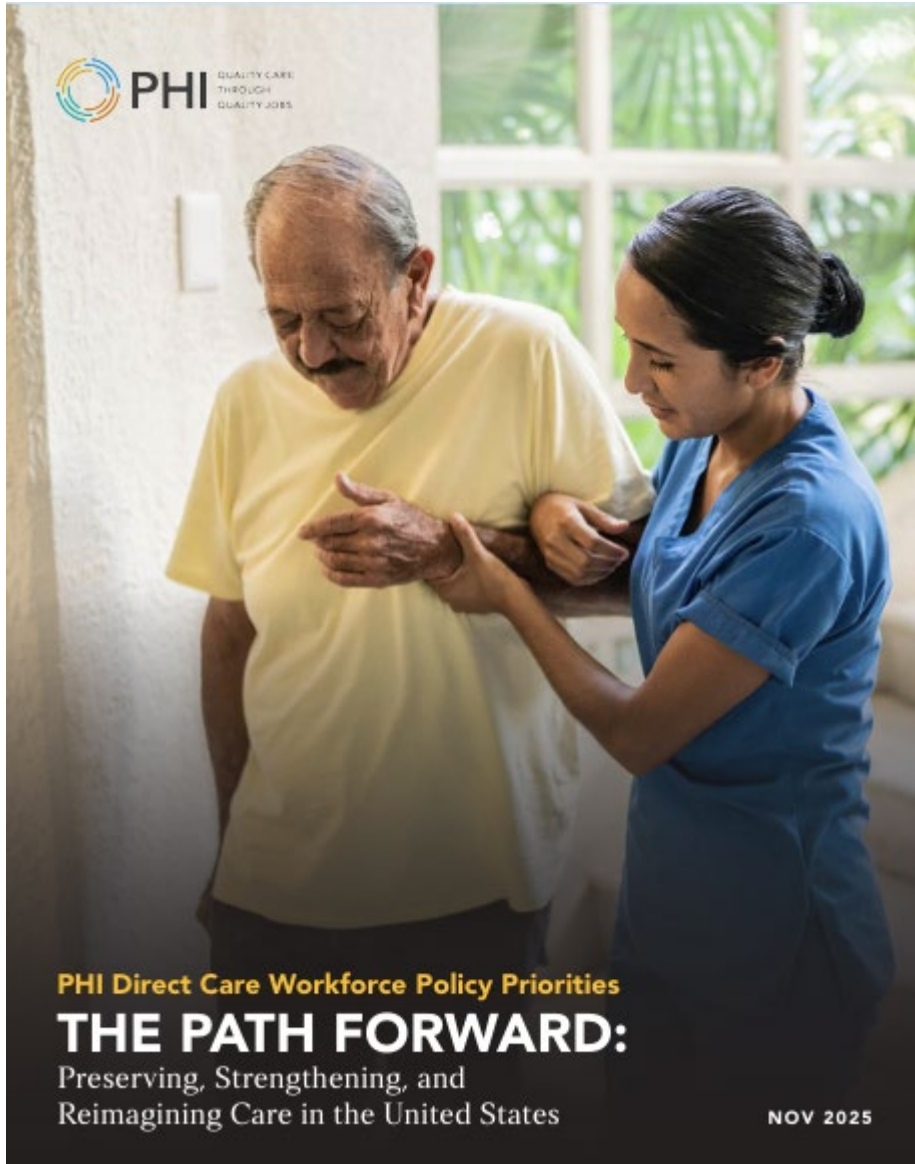
JODI M. STURGEON
PRESIDENT AND CEO, PHI



SOLUTIONS



- **Strengthen Medicaid**, ensuring adequate reimbursement rates for long-term care providers
- Ensure funds reach workers through **wage passthroughs** and transparency
- Support long-term care **social insurance programs**
- **Work authorization and pathways to citizenship**
 - Caregiver visa



- Develop a **national compensation strategy**
- Create national competency-based **training standards**
- Study and promote **recruitment and retention** best practices
- Fund and evaluate measures that improve direct care worker **job quality**

The Case for a Universal Approach

- **The Problem:** Fragmented, inconsistent training opportunities and requirements for direct care workers depending on state, setting, role, etc. — leading to inconsistencies in workers' preparedness and consumers' access to quality care.
- **The Alternative:** A training and credentialing landscape built around universal core competencies, consistent training standards, high-quality training programs, and opportunities for career development and wage progression.

1

Universal Entry-Level Competencies

equip all direct care workers with essential skills while enabling seamless mobility across homes; residential settings, and nursing facilities.

2

Stackable, Portable Credentials

travel across employers and state lines, tied to transparent wage progression and economic mobility.

3

Integrated Career Pathways

provide clear routes to specialization and advanced roles, focused on peer support, care coordination, and meeting other critical needs.

4

Accessible Training Infrastructure

rooted in flexible, language-accessible, evidence-based training designed for adult learners.



PHI

UNIVERSAL DIRECT CARE
WORKFORCE INITIATIVE™

ConnectedByCare.org

RESOURCES FROM PHI

THE 5 PILLARS OF DIRECT CARE JOB QUALITY



QUALITY
TRAINING



FAIR
COMPENSATION



QUALITY
SUPERVISION
& SUPPORT



RESPECT &
RECOGNITION



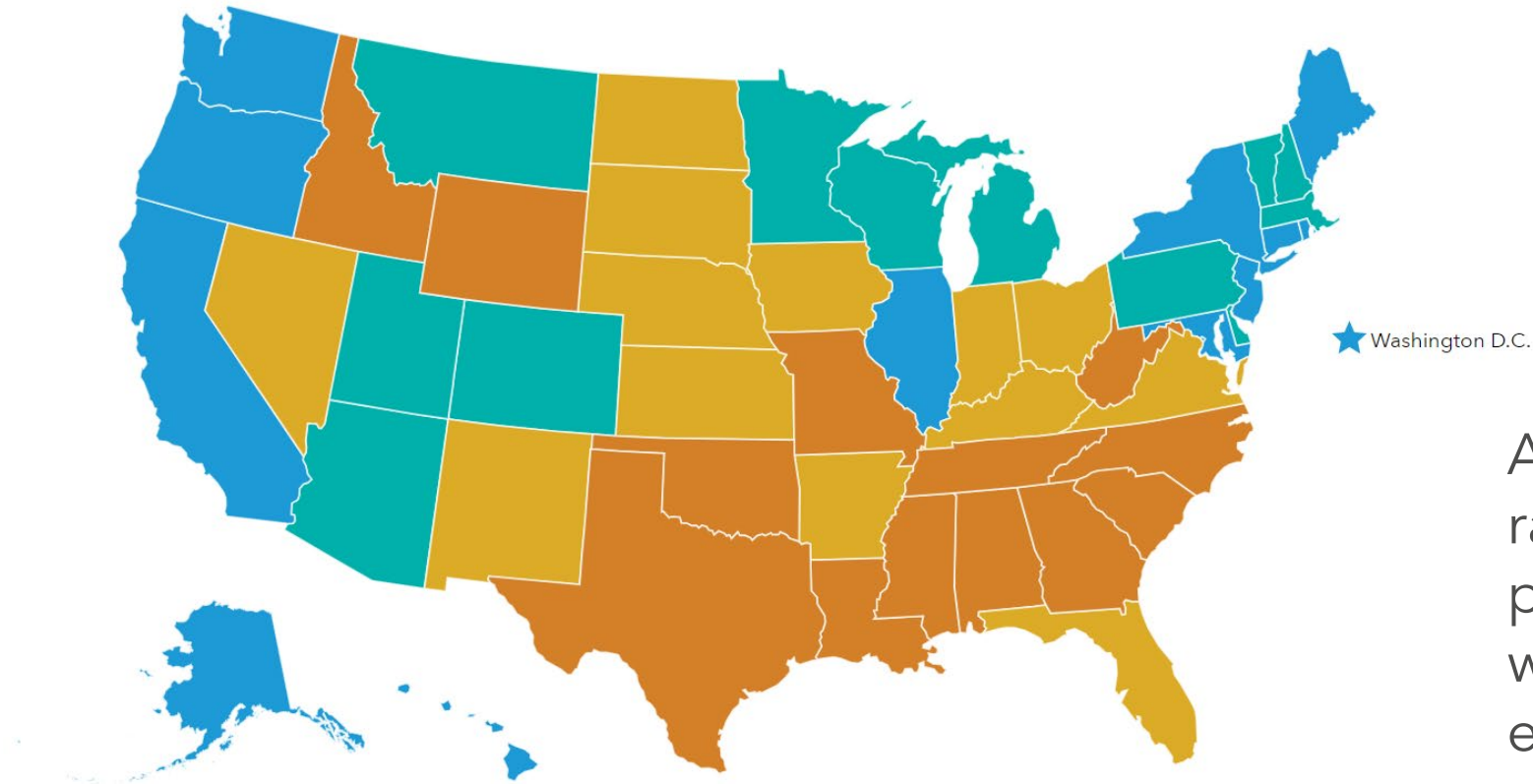
REAL
OPPORTUNITY

Direct Care Workforce Data Center



PHI produces regular and reliable data on the direct care workforce, including its demographics, occupational roles, job quality challenges, and projected job openings. Our online Workforce Data Center allows anyone to obtain this data for individual states and at the national level.

Direct Care Workforce State Index



An interactive, online tool that ranks states based on their public policies to support direct care workers and how workers fare economically.

■ Tier 1: 1-13 ■ Tier 2: 14-25 ■ Tier 3: 26-38 ■ Tier 4: 39-51

New Jersey's DCW Strategic Plan

Last December, an interagency workgroup led by the New Jersey Department of Human Services released a comprehensive strategic plan to strengthen the state's direct care workforce.

The plan is the product of a year-long collaboration facilitated by PHI through the Direct Care Workforce Strategies Center's technical assistance program.

Its over 40 recommendations serve as a blueprint for how the state can tackle the direct care workforce crisis.



CONNECT WITH US



- Visit connectedbycare.org to learn more about the Universal Direct Care Workforce Initiative.
- Visit phinational.org:
 - Learn about our consulting services, policy research, advocacy, and public education campaigns.
 - Scroll through our library of resources
 - Download state data on the direct care workforce
- Bookmark our newsroom for the latest news and opinions: phinational.org/news/
- Subscribe to our newsletter: phinational.org/sign-up/
- Join our online community on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn ([@phinational](https://twitter.com/phinational)).



Jake McDonald

Senior Policy Advocacy Specialist, PHI

jmcdonald@PHInational.org

261 Madison Avenue, Suite 913 • New York, New York 10016 • PHInational.org

© 2026 PHI





Advancing New Hampshire's HCBS Direct Care Workforce



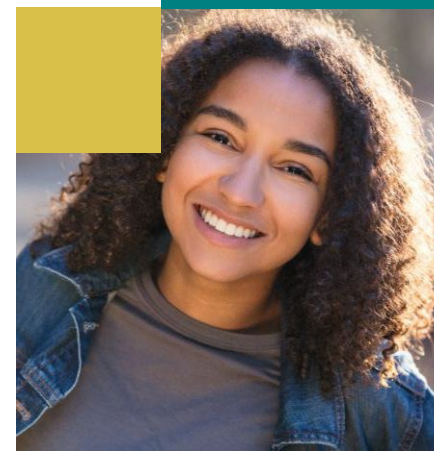
Department of
**HEALTH &
HUMAN SERVICES**

Division of
Long Term
Supports
and Services



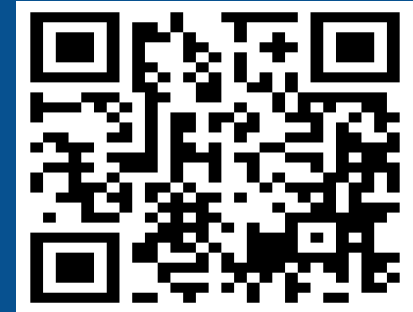
DIRECT CARE WORKFORCE
STRATEGIES CENTER

June 2026



Direct Care Workforce Strategies Center – Overview

Created by the Administration for Community Living in 2022, the Direct Care Workforce Strategies Center (DCW) provides technical assistance to states, service providers, and stakeholders to improve the recruitment, retention, training, and professional development of direct care workers providing home and community-based services (HCBS).



Resource Hub

A one-stop digital stop of informational resources highlighting state innovations and proven practices ready for broader adoption

Technical Assistance

Tiered opportunities for state cross-systems teams to receive technical support aimed at strengthening their HCBS Direct Care Workforce systems-change efforts

Advisory Committee

A national group of advisers to ensure the experiences of direct care workers, care recipients and family caregivers inform the Center's priorities and products

Self-led Training Opportunities Expert-led webinars, mini-labs, and workshops for states and stakeholders highlighting actionable tools and replicable models to strengthen the HCBS direct care workforce



Department of
**HEALTH &
HUMAN SERVICES**

New Hampshire's ARPA Investments in HCBS Workforce Recruitment, Retention and Training Programs (RRTPs)

Recruitment Retention and Training Programs (RRTP): Between 2023-2024, NH-DHHS distributed approximately \$22 million across NH's HCBS provider system to support the piloting of innovative workforce solutions, statewide, to increase recruitment and retention of the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) direct care workforce. These efforts focused on:

- Wages, Bonuses & Benefits
- Marketing/Recruitment
- Training & Professional Development
- Other workforce activities

**Wages, Bonuses
& Benefits**

**Recruitment, Marketing
& Onboarding**

**Training & Professional
Development**

Key Findings

Theme	Promising Practices	Future Opportunities
Wages, Bonuses & Benefits	• Tiered Bonus Program • Tuition assistance/ reimbursement • Specialized benefits for targeted populations • Benefits counseling	• Creative methods around scheduling/flexibility for workers • Revisiting of Community Supports rates • Customization of benefits packages
Recruitment, Marketing, Onboarding	• Partnerships with Local Media to Highlight DCW/DSP Stories • Career Fairs with High Schools, Colleges and other Community Orgs • Peer Mentors from Onboarding-on	• Streamlining of onboarding processes • Pooling of marketing/recruitment funds and efforts across local providers • Culturally Competent Marketing Staff
Training & Professional Development	• High-School Internships • Apprenticeship/Partnerships with Higher Ed • Ongoing Mentorship	• More training opportunities for family caregivers • Increased incentives for continuing education (micro-credentialing) • Career Pathway Investments with Workforce Development System

ARPA Investments: *Highlighting Innovative Strategies & Promising Practices*

Lynn Carpenter



Michelle Fichtner, Workforce Initiative Project Manager



Odun and Femi Owolabi



Sandy Pelletier, President/CEO



Susan Silsby, EVP, Programs



Department of
**HEALTH &
HUMAN SERVICES**

Division of
Long Term
Supports
and Services



**DIRECT CARE WORKFORCE
STRATEGIES CENTER**

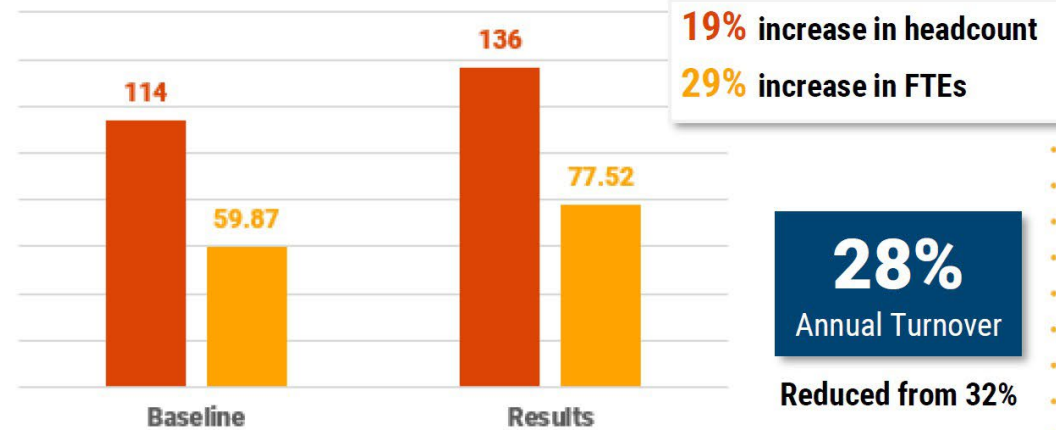
HCBS Workforce Grant Outcomes



MARKETING

contract with external agency
Improved collateral material
Focus on SEO
Creation of creative assets
Sponsored Social
Sticky notes on newspapers
Google targeting

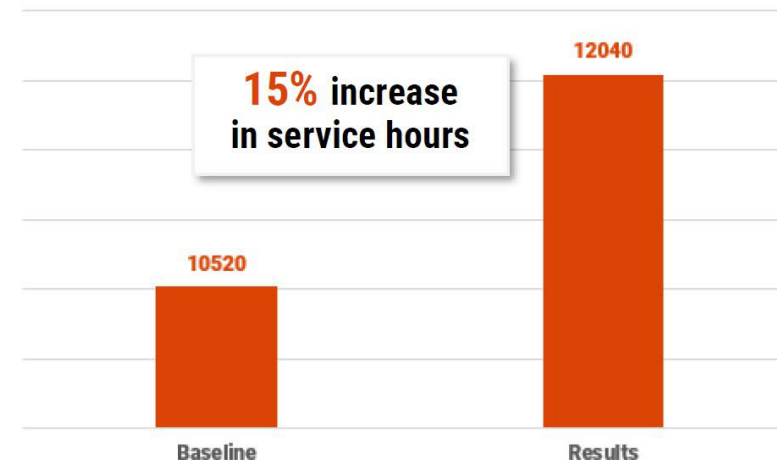
■ Headcount ■ FTEs



■ Candidates ■ Hires



15% increase
in service hours





Healthcare Heroes in the Making

17 month program (Feb 2022-June 2023)

- 246 applications received and approved
- 135 students completed licensed nursing assistant (LNA) course
- 126 students obtained LNA license

Barrier:

- Program ran one summer
- Second summer would have produced another 100 licensed nursing assistants

Program Update August 2024:

- 90% of participants had an active LNA license
- 80% of participants eligible had renewed their LNA license
- 13 participants are now pursuing nursing
- 1 participant obtained licensed practical nurse (LPN) license
- 2 participants in healthcare administration programs



2026 Workforce Strategies Series and Community of Practice



Audience: The CoP was open to all NH DHHS HCBS Provider Networks.



Convened monthly January – June (Third Wednesday of Every Month, 2-3:30 p.m. ET)



Structured workforce strategy briefing followed by share practice and discussion. Sharing key components of each workforce strategy and practical resources followed by open and interactive discussion where participants can exchange ideas, discuss challenges and share successful practices and implementation stories.





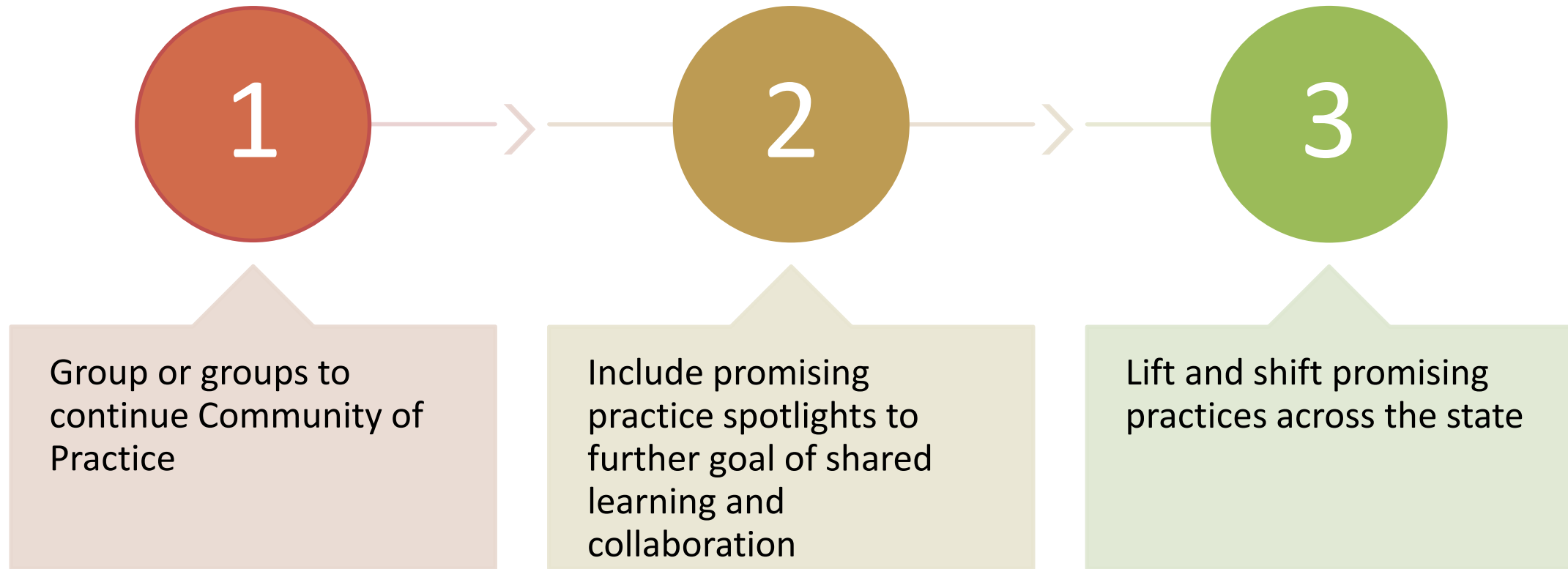
2026 Workforce Strategies Series and Community of Practice

Topics Focused on Evidence-based Strategies for:

- January: Leveraging Workforce Data: Turning Story into Strategy
- February: Recruitment Marketing
- March: Effective Selection: Realistic Job Previews
- April: Engage to Retain: Strategies to Engage your Direct Care Workforce
- May: Career Paths and Credentialing
- June: (Upcoming) Cultivating Leadership: Today's Supervisors, Tomorrow's Leaders 6/24 2-3:30



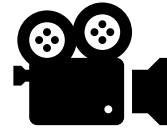
Next Steps: Sustainability



Housekeeping

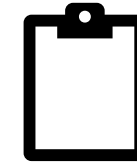


You will receive a copy of the slides and recording by email



The recording will be posted on the NHAHA website:

<https://NHAHA.info>



Share your feedback in the webinar survey

Call to Action



Identify one thing you can do to influence policy related to the direct care workforce



Stay informed! Sign up to join the NH Alliance for Healthy Aging mailing list



Learn more about joining a strategic priority work group

Thank You!



Website
www.nhaha.info



Email
Jennifer.Rabalais@unh.edu



FaceBook
NHAHA603



Twitter
[@NHAHA603](https://twitter.com/NHAHA603)



LinkedIn The NH Alliance for Healthy
Aging