

## Long Term Care Workforce Talking Points

**With fourteen million people expected to develop Alzheimer's disease by the middle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, all of whom will eventually require total care, the demand for long term care in the future and the current shortage of direct care workers is alarming.**

### **The demand for direct care workers is growing.**

- Today, more than one million nursing assistants provide as much as 90 percent of hands-on care in nursing homes and other settings. The demand for these essential workers will continue to grow (PHI, 2001).
- In response to the rising demand, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that by 2006, personal home and care aides are projected to be the fourth-fastest growing occupation, with a dramatic 84.7 percent growth rate expected (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001).

### **The turnover rate in this profession is high.**

- National long term care staff turnover rates are at a mind-boggling 94 percent annually. Some facilities are facing turnover rates of 100 to 500 percent (Alzheimer's Association, 2000).
- Staff turnover is expensive. According to NCCNHR, it costs \$4000 to hire and train a new employee.
- 57 percent of CNAs have considered leaving their job – 36 percent of those persons said that a shortage in staffing was the main reason (Iowa Caregivers Association, 1999).

### **Staffing shortages affect the overall quality of care to residents; and contribute directly to staff turnover.**

- Research and investigations demonstrate the positive relationship between nurse staffing levels and quality of care in nursing facilities (Harrington, et. al., 1997)
- According to the National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform (NCCNHR), higher staffing levels can improve resident functioning. Higher rates of RNs to residents reduce the likelihood of death, and higher ratios of LPNs significantly improve functional outcomes (Harrington, et. al., 2000).
- CNAs identified staff shortages as one of the main factors that contribute to job dissatisfaction (Iowa Caregivers Association, 1999).

### **Direct care staff is often underpaid, and publicly funded programs can play a large role in assuring that staff is adequately compensated.**

- Nursing assistants, attendants, orderlies, home health aides and personal care aides earn on average \$7.56 an hour. This rate is *lower* than retail sales wages of \$8.64 per hour and unskilled factory earnings of \$10.30 an hour (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001).

- Medicare and Medicaid account for almost three-fifths of long term care expenditures and therefore play a substantial role in determining provider wages, benefits, and training opportunities (Stone, 2001)

**Direct care staff receive few, if any, essential benefits including health insurance, retirement plan, paid leave or child care.**

- CNAs identified low wages and poor benefits as confounding factors that lead to job dissatisfaction (Iowa Caregivers Association, 1999).
- 57 percent of CNAs said that they considered leaving their job – 33 percent of those respondents said that it was because of wage and benefits (Iowa Caregivers Association, 1999).

**Direct care workers receive inadequate training, little or no recognition and few career advancement opportunities. One of the most important steps toward better care is better training.**

- 80 percent of CNAs indicated that education and training to do their job better is very important to them. Only 63 percent responded that their training was adequate (Iowa Caregivers Association, 1999).
- CNAs indicated that their work was increasingly demanding and complex – they said that more training and orientation was needed. Respondents specifically mentioned the importance of Alzheimer's education and understanding behaviors related to dementia (Iowa Caregivers Association, 1999).

**Other Long Term Care Workforce Resources**

Alzheimer's Association (2000). *News Release*  
<http://www.alz.org/media/news/current/071700crisislooming.htm>

Iowa Caregivers Association (2000). *Certified Nursing Assistant Recruitment and Retention Pilot Project Final Report* [http://members.aol.com/\\_ht\\_a/iowacga/report.pdf](http://members.aol.com/_ht_a/iowacga/report.pdf)

*Nursing Staff Requirements and the Quality of Nursing Home Care. A Report to the California Legislature* (2001). <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/lnc/reports/NursingStaffReport.pdf>

Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute (PHI) (2001). *Direct-Care Health Workers – The Unnecessary Crisis in Long Term Care.*  
<http://www.paraprofessional.org/publications/Aspen.pdf>

*Who Will Care For Us? Addressing the Long-Term Care Workforce Crisis* (2001).  
<http://www.urban.org/health/CareForUs.html>

*The Alzheimer's Association's State Policy Clearinghouse also maintains additional information on long term care workforce issues. To find out more, please contact Jill Schaefer at [jill.schaefer@alz.org](mailto:jill.schaefer@alz.org) or by phone at 202/393-7737 ext. 226.*