



Press Release

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Health Care for Healthcare Workers: Uninsured and Caring for Others

MUSKEGON – The Access Health Outreach Project is sponsoring a forum on the health care crisis among health care workers. Speakers will discuss how to secure better health care coverage for this vital population.

Direct care workers provide vital care and support to the elderly and people with disabilities, but many lack basic health coverage themselves. According to national statistics, about and 2 in 5 home care workers lack health coverage. Uninsured direct-care workers and their families often rely on emergency rooms to handle their health care needs, waiting until a problem grows urgent before addressing it. They cannot access preventative care to prevent future chronic diseases and illnesses, and those who have chronic diseases are not able to receive the care necessary to stabilize their illnesses. This affects their ability to provide care for the people they assist.

Most uninsured direct-care workers work for small employers that do not offer health insurance to their employees because the cost of coverage is prohibitive. Other employers offer insurance, but the premiums and co-pays are too costly for many of their low-wage workers and they do not know there is a local program available.

A forum will be held on Wednesday, September 19, 2007, to discuss these issues and how to secure health care coverage through the Access Health for direct-care workers in Muskegon and North Ottawa counties. The forum will take place from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Grand Valley State University MAREC Center, 200 Viridian Drive in downtown Muskegon.

Speakers include:

- Tameshia Bridges, Michigan Senior Health Policy Analyst, Health Care for Health Care Workers, Paraprofessional Health Institute, Lansing, MI.
- Jeff Fortenbacher, Executive Director, Access Health Inc.
- Employer and Employee Panelists- TBA

The Access Health Outreach Project is a collaboration between Access Health Inc., the PHI Health Care for Health Care Workers Campaign, Michigan Assisted Living Association, and Senior Resources of West Michigan.

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Access Health is a community nonprofit organization developed to offer affordable health coverage to the working uninsured. Its initiatives focus on covering the working uninsured and health improvement. On the web www.access-health.org or 231-728-5180.

Health Care for Health Care Workers is an initiative of the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute (PHI), a national nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening the long-term health care workforce. PHI's initiatives focus on developing innovative approaches to recruitment, training, and supervision; client-centered care giving practices; and effective public policy. PHI believes that creating quality jobs for direct-care workers is essential to providing high-quality; cost-effective services to long-term care consumers. On the web www.coverageiscritical.org and www.paraprofessional.org.

The Michigan Assisted Living Association (MALA) is a nonprofit organization representing 4,200 assisted living and vocational services programs statewide, including those persons receiving services with developmental, psychiatric, physical disabilities, closed head injuries or the elderly. On the web www.miassistedliving.org.

Senior Resources of West Michigan is a local agency that provides comprehensive and coordinated services to promote the independence and dignity of older persons in Muskegon, Oceana and Ottawa Counties. On the web www.seniorresources.us.