

## Long Term Care Workforce Fact Sheet WISCONSIN

### Direct Care Worker Demographics

In 2006, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 68,000 direct care workers supported people with disabilities and aging adults in Wisconsin. These individuals hold positions as nurse aides, attendants, home health aides, personal care aides, or other direct care workers. However, it is believed that 68,000 significantly underrepresents the actual size of the workforce, since it does not take into account thousands of independent workers.

### Worker are a Valuable Part of the State Economy

Direct care workers are a substantial segment of the state's health care economy and are a fast growing field. According to the Department of Workforce Development's Health Care Workforce Annual Report 2007, nursing aides/orderlies/assistants are the 2<sup>nd</sup> fastest growing occupation and home health aides are the 3<sup>rd</sup> fastest growing occupation. Combined, Wisconsin will need 13,750 new nursing and home health aides between 2004-2014. DWD also estimates that in that same time period, Wisconsin will also need 6,900 replacement workers, which are those who leave the field. These additional demands for workers will occur on top of an already stressed industry which experiences a shortage of direct care workers and significant turnover in all long term care settings.

### **Top 10 Occupations with the Most Total Openings**

Occupational Title	2004 Estimated Employment	2014 Projected Employment	2004-2014 Employment Change (new)	2004-2014 Employment Change (replacement)	2004-2014 Total Employment Change (new & replacements)
Registered Nurses	48,410	64,420	16,010	10,100	26,110
Nursing Aides/Orderlies/Attendants*	38,630	45,320	6,690	5,100	11,790
Home Health Aides*	13,730	20,790	7,060	1,800	8,860
Medical Assistants*	5,890	8,640	2,750	1,100	3,850
Dental Assistants*	5,050	6,950	1,900	1,400	3,300
Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurses	11,040	12,650	1,610	2,400	3,010
Healthcare Support Workers/All Other*	6,160	7,510	1,350	1,100	2,450
Pharmacy Technicians*	5,770	7,200	1,430	800	2,230
Emergency Medical Technicians/Paramedics	7,140	8,560	1,420	800	2,220
Dental Hygienists	4,390	6,050	1,660	400	2,060

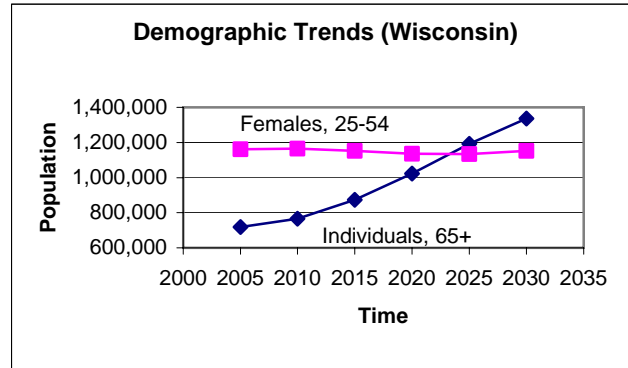
Source: DWD, Office of Economic Advisors, 2006

### Workers are Underpaid

To curb direct care worker turnover, surveys and national research have suggested that more competitive wages are needed. The median wage for various direct care workers in Wisconsin is \$9.09 to \$10.44 depending on work setting. Even the highest paid workers, nursing aides, earn 22% below the median hourly wage for all occupations in the state. Direct care workers are twice as likely as other workers to receive government benefits and it is estimated that between 25-40% of workers do not have health insurance, 2 – 4 times more than other workers.

## **The Growing Care Gap**

Without serious intervention, the shortage of workers is likely to worsen over coming decades. Due to medical advances that allow people with chronic illnesses and disabilities to live longer and the aging of the Baby Boom generation, an unprecedented increase in demand for long term care will occur over the next several decades. Between 2005 and 2030, the number of Wisconsin residents age 85 and older, those most likely to need long term care, is projected to grow by nearly 46%, from 108,000 to 158,000. In the same time period, the 65 and older population will increase by 86%. At the same time the population of those who traditionally provide that care, women between the ages of 25 and 54 is projected to decline by 8,000.



Source: Wisconsin Population Projection Tables: 2000–2030, Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center

## **Worker Turnover**

Recruiting and retaining employees is extremely important to the health of Wisconsin's long term care system. Unfortunately, though, staff turnover in long term care facilities and agencies is frequently high. Annual turnover rates range between 22% and 100% annually. This has considerable implications for the consumers, who experience care without continuity, inadequate and sometimes unsafe care, and reduced access to care. Additionally turnover costs employers about \$3,500 per employee. Since public funds pay for a considerable proportion of long term care, this means that taxpayers are spending substantial amounts for costs that increase neither the quantity nor the quality of care.

## **Higher Cost of Human Suffering**

Direct care worker shortages hurt everyone, but especially the people and families being served.

### **Limited Caregivers = Limited Care**

- Inconsistency in care and direct care workers
- Long waits and unmet needs
- Physical and emotional health concerns
- Increased organizational liability
- Falls and accidents
- Loss of dignity
- Less time for personalized compassionate care

## **Other Employer Expenses**

In addition to turnover costs employers have incurred other significant costs such as regular double-digit increases in utilities, health insurance premiums, liability insurance, and workers compensation. These costs coupled with minimal to no increases in reimbursement rates have made it difficult for providers to provide comprehensive benefits and competitive wages.