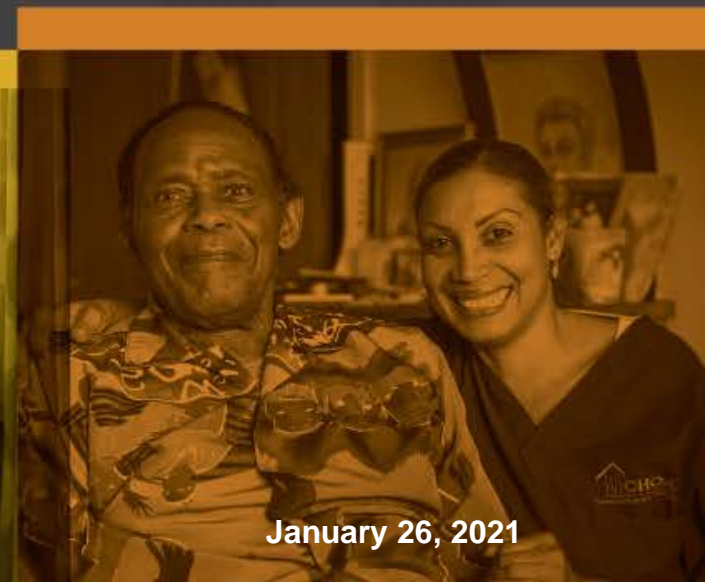


Quality Jobs Are Essential: Considerations for Quality of Care in Nursing Homes

Kezia Scales, PhD, Director of Policy Research



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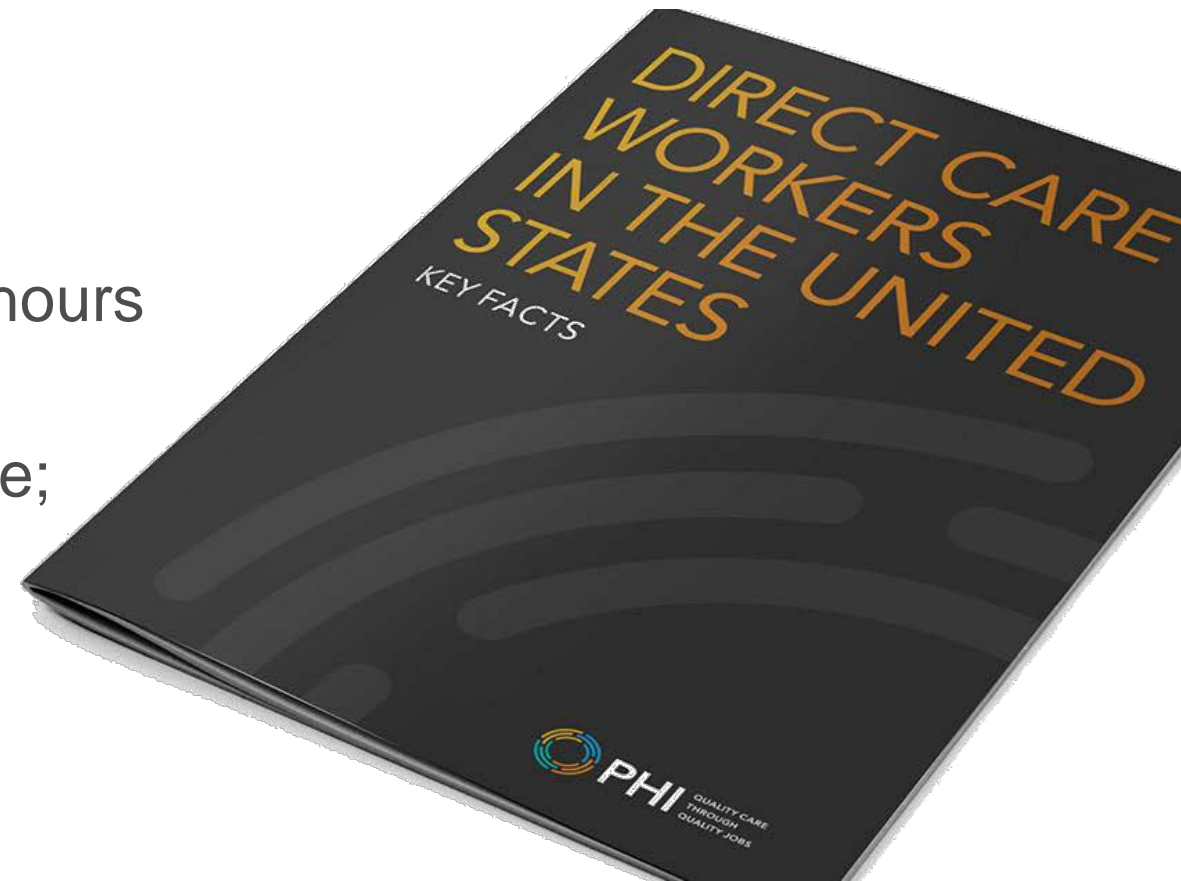
We believe that caring, committed relationships between direct care workers and their clients are at the heart of quality care. Those relationships work best when direct care workers receive high-quality training, living wages, and respect for the central role they play.



Snapshot of the Nursing Assistant Workforce

Who Are Nursing Assistants?

- ~566,000 nursing assistants in nursing homes nationwide
- One segment (12%) of the 4.6m direct care workforce (across settings)
- Female (90%), people of color (54%), immigrants (20%)
- Majority of direct care for residents: 2.1 hours per resident day
- Support 13 residents per shift on average; 10% support 16+ residents



Source: PHI. 2020. *Direct Care Workers in the United States: Key Facts*. Bronx, NY: PHI.
<https://phinational.org/resource/direct-care-workers-in-the-united-states-key-facts/>

“You have a lot of responsibility taking care of members. You are giving medication. You are doing laundry. You are feeding them. You are giving them a shower. You are making sure they don’t fall. You are also taking care of their family members and answering all their questions about their loved ones. **We are the eyes and ears for these members, and we know what is going on with them 24/7 more than anybody else.**”

CULIX WIBONELE

Care Partner at Park Springs
Stone Mountain, GA



Source: PHI. 2020. “The Direct Care Worker Story Project.”
<https://phinational.org/worker-stories/>

Challenges Facing This Workforce

- Low wages, high poverty
- Limited training: 75-hour federal minimum, traditionally didactic training methods
- Few career pathways
- 35% more likely than all U.S. workers to hold second jobs
- 3x more likely to experience on-the-job injuries

**NURSING ASSISTANT
MEDIAN HOURLY WAGES
ADJUSTED FOR INFLATION,
2009 TO 2019**



Sources: PHI. 2020. *Direct Care Workers in the United States: Key Facts*. Bronx, NY: PHI.
<https://phinational.org/resource/direct-care-workers-in-the-united-states-key-facts/>; Baughman, Reagan A., Bryce Stanley, & Kristin E. Smith. 2020, "Second Job Holding Among Direct Care Workers and Nurses: Implications for COVID-19 Transmission in Long-Term Care." *Medical Care Research and Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077558720974129>

The Impact of COVID-19

As of December 20, 2020:

- **593,000** nursing home staff have had COVID-19 (suspected or confirmed).
- **One in five** nursing homes (20 percent) experiencing a shortage of nursing assistants.
- **Eleven percent** of nursing homes lacked one week's supply of at least one form of personal protective equipment.



Source: Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS). 2021. COVID-19 Nursing Home Data. <https://data.cms.gov/stories/s/bkwz-xpvg>; analysis by PHI (January 2021).

Key Recommendations for Action

THE 5 PILLARS OF DIRECT CARE JOB QUALITY



QUALITY
TRAINING



FAIR
COMPENSATION



QUALITY
SUPERVISION
& SUPPORT



RESPECT &
RECOGNITION



REAL
OPPORTUNITY

Quality Training

- Establish a national standard for direct care competencies that are relevant to all direct care workers, as the foundation for a flexible, skilled workforce—with additional competencies for setting and population served.



Source: Campbell, Stephen, Angelina Del Rio Drake, Robert Espinoza, and Kezia Scales. 2021. *Caring for the Future: The Power and Potential of America's Direct Care Workforce*. Bronx, NY: PHI. <https://phinational.org/caringforthefuture/>

Fair Compensation

- Establish a wage floor for nursing assistants that aligns with their skills and experiences and ties to the cost of living in their geographic area; and ensure that wage measures are accompanied by increased reimbursement rates (determined through a transparent rate-setting process) and employer accountability.



Source: Campbell, Stephen, Angelina Del Rio Drake, Robert Espinoza, and Kezia Scales. 2021. *Caring for the Future: The Power and Potential of America's Direct Care Workforce*. Bronx, NY: PHI. <https://phinational.org/caringforthefuture/>

Quality Supervision & Support

- Establish evidence-based minimum staffing standards for nursing homes to improve resident-to-staff ratios and reduce the risks of injury, burnout, and inadequate care.



Sources: Harrington, Charlene, John F. Schnelle, Margaret McGregor, and Sandra F. Simmons. 2016. "The Need for Higher Minimum Staffing Standards in U.S. Nursing Homes." *Health Services Insights*, 9: 13-19. doi: 10.4137/HSI.S38994; McGilton, Katherine S. et al. 2016. "Outcomes Related to Effective Nurse Supervision in Long-term Care Homes: An Integrative Review," *Journal of Nursing Management*, 24(8): 1007-26.

Respect and Recognition

- Address structural gender and race inequities within the nursing assistant workforce, including by: (1) developing targeted interventions to address disparities within the workforce and (2) collecting and disaggregating workforce data by gender, race/ethnicity, and other demographic characteristics to identify problems, evaluate interventions, and track changes over time.



Source: Adapted from: Race Forward. 2017. *Race-Explicit Strategies for Workforce Equity in Healthcare and IT*. New York, NY: Race Forward.
https://www.raceforward.org/system/files/pdf/reports/RaceForward_RaceExplicitStrategiesFullReport.pdf

Real Opportunity

- Develop, test, and scale-up advanced roles for nursing assistants in nursing homes that meet employers' and residents' needs—matched by additional training, responsibility, and compensation. Key examples include dementia care specialists and care transition aides.



Source: Campbell, Stephen, Angelina Del Rio Drake, Robert Espinoza, and Kezia Scales. 2021. *Caring for the Future: The Power and Potential of America's Direct Care Workforce*. Bronx, NY: PHI. <https://phinational.org/caringforthefuture/>

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PHI works to transform eldercare and disability services. We foster dignity, respect, and independence for all who receive care, and all who provide it. As the nation's leading authority on the direct care workforce, PHI promotes quality direct care jobs as the foundation for quality care.



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