

Community Care: Quality Attendants Wage Increase

Position Statement approved by One Voice: November 14, 2008

Issue/Concern: Low reimbursement rates that negatively affect recruitment and retention of attendants. Community living options are severely limited without attendants to support elderly and disabled Texans. Attendants provide personal care such as bathing, dressing, toileting, and transferring, as well as preparing meals, and assessing changes in physical status. Without attendant support, the elderly and disabled would be institutionalized against their preferences, and at a significantly higher cost to the State.

Specific Policy Recommendation(s): Support the LAR budget request to increase wage reimbursement rates for attendant care provided through DADS. The average wage for attendants in Texas is \$6.41 while the national average is \$8.54.¹ A livable wage in Texas for a family with one adult and one child is \$13.63.² The poverty level for a family of one adult and one child is \$6.38.³ By increasing wages, retention of a direct care workforce is increased, the elderly and disabled are able to remain at home, and the burden and cost to the public care system and taxpayers is lessened.⁴

How does this issue/recommendation relate to prevention and early intervention or maximizing federal funds for health and human services? The significant turnover rate and lack of sufficient numbers of attendants keeps the elderly and disabled from being able to remain in their own homes. Institutionalization is much more expensive for our State as well as not being the choice of homes for most people in need of this help. Improving wages will help with recruitment and retention of attendants who are so desperately needed.

Supporting Facts/Research/Resources:

1) Texas 2008 Direct Service Workers Report: 2
<http://www.careforelders.org/files/DDF/FINAL%20DSW%20REPORT%2C%20June%2018%2C%202008.pdf>
Texas Direct Service Workforce Initiative's Report: Stakeholder Recommendations to Improve Recruitment, Retention, and the Perceived Status of Paraprofessional Direct Service Workers in Texas. Discusses backgrounds of direct service workers and what they do. Recommendations of stakeholders to offer compensation, opportunity, and support to Personal Care Attendants as a result of small focus groups held around the state.

2) PHI data on wages for home care workers: <http://phinational.org/>
PHI 2008 Report on wages of workers by state:
http://www.directcareclearinghouse.org/download/PHI_State_Chartbook_PHCA_Wages_99-06.pdf
Provides information on wages received by Personal and Home Care Attendants in all 50 states (1999-2006). Data underscores the problem of low and declining wages for attendants that contributes to an unstable workforce and near-poverty incomes.

3) PHI Overview of wage issues for Direct Care Workers: <http://phinational.org/issues/low-wage-work/>
Chart comparing state wages of Personal and Home Care Attendants to the federal poverty level.

4) Care for Elders' Report on Direct Care Workers:
http://www.careforelders.org/files/DDF/CFE%20Quality%20and%20Workforce%20Initiatives%20Final%20Report_%20April%202008.pdf
Summarizes and discusses the evaluation of four interventions (enhanced screening, new-hire orientation, continuing education series, recognition/reward program) implemented by Care for Elders in a 2 year pilot program to address the goals of improving direct care service quality, training, and stability.

5) Penn State's Poverty in America Project: Living Wage Calculator:
<http://www.livingwage.geog.psu.edu/results.php?location=43>
Breakdown for each state that shows expenses and the hourly rate necessary for an individual to support his/her family

Contact: Leah Mueller at 713.667.9336 ext. 111 or lmuller@ifshouston.org