

Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Workforce Supports Subcommittee Meeting

Meeting Agenda

Date of Meeting: Thursday, October 10, 2024

Time: 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Virtual: [Zoom Link](#)

This is a meeting of the **Workforce Supports Subcommittee** of the permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. This subcommittee will collect data and analyze initiatives that address the workforce crisis for people who provide services to individuals with disabilities.

Members Participating Remotely	
1	Andrew Levrault – Deputy General Counsel, Disabled Persons Protection Commission
2	Chris White – CEO & President, Road to Responsibility, Inc
3	Representative Kay Khan – Massachusetts House of Representatives
Members Not Present	
4	Angela Ortiz (Chair) – Executive Director, MA Health Council

Action items	Person responsible
1 Invite the Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA) to discuss their workforce survey (Follow up in 2025)	Andrew and Imene
2 Set a meeting cadence with Dr. Patricia Yu/EOHHS for quarterly updates on workforce solutions	Angela and Imene

Agenda

- Welcome, Roll Call, approval of minutes
- Guest Speakers Deputy Director of the Center for Innovation and Partnership at the Administration for Community Living Caroline Ryan and Director, Direct Care Workforce (DCW) Strategies Center at the National Council on Aging (NCOA) Stephanie Gibbs

Key Takeaways

- **Workforce Composition and Demographics:**
 - Women make up 84% of the direct care workforce.
 - 67% are people of color, and 40% live in low-income households.

- The median age of workers is 47 years.
- **Workforce Crisis, Data from [ANCOR](#) studies:**
 - Annual turnover rates range between 42.8% and 64.8%.
 - Vacancy rates range from 8.5% to 11.2%.
 - There is a significant gap between workforce demand and the availability of working-age adults.
- **Impact on Service Availability:**
 - Referrals turned away increased from 77% in 2021 to 83% in 2022.
 - Programs and services discontinued rose from 58% to 63% during the same period.
 - Struggles to meet quality standards increased from 81% to 92%.
- **Direct Care Workforce Strategies Center:**
 - Established through a 5-year grant to improve recruitment, retention, training, and professional development.
 - Provides technical assistance, facilitates peer-to-peer learning, and maintains a resource hub at <https://acl.gov/DCWcenter>.
- **Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) [FORWARD Initiative](#):**
 - Focuses on identifying key data gaps and policy priorities to support the workforce.
 - Recommendations include conducting national surveys of direct care workers and adults with disabilities, enhancing state data collection, and leveraging federal data sources.
- **State Technical Assistance in 2024:**
 - 20 states, including Maine and Vermont, are engaged in technical assistance programs.
 - Support includes intensive technical assistance, peer-learning collaboratives, and self-guided resources.
- **Resource Development and Webinars:**
 - Four national webinars covered topics such as workforce data infrastructure and recruitment strategies.
 - The Strategies Center launched a [resource hub](#) offering materials on recruitment, retention, and self-direction.
 - Technical assistance programs are being developed.
 - Latest webinar highlights included strategies from Maine and insights from Joe McBeth, CEO and President, National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals on the direct care profession.

Q&A Highlights

- Was Massachusetts included in the technical assistance program or peer learning collaborative?
 - No, but there are plans to support Massachusetts in Spring 2025. Discussion on the application process is anticipated. Other states have created logic models and worked directly with subject matter experts, dedicating over 200 hours to these initiatives.
- What specific metrics or indicators are being used to measure the success of the Direct Care Workforce Strategies Center's initiatives in improving workforce conditions and outcomes for direct care workers?
 - Efforts include creating logic models to inform the work. Maine was highlighted as a collaborative state focusing on recruitment and retention efforts. Partners such as PHI and the University of Minnesota have conducted extensive surveys to analyze the state of the workforce and advance best practices.
- What trends have emerged in your work, and what are the most impactful data questions we should be addressing?
 - States face capacity and resource challenges. Key focus areas include identifying impactful data questions to inform policy and programmatic changes, understanding how to reach direct care professionals, and addressing accessibility challenges related to available technology.
- Recruitment and retention require diverse approaches, including outreach to disability communities, new Americans, and high school students to build a diverse workforce. Collaboration across Medicaid HCBS, aging, education, and labor sectors is critical to addressing complex needs.
 - Strategies:
 - Compensation: Career ladders, rate structure reviews, bonuses, and training opportunities.
 - Non-Monetary Benefits: Transportation and childcare stipends, health benefits, and mentorship programs.
 - Advisory Engagement: Strategies to involve individuals with lived experience and workforce members in planning.
- **Comment by Chris:** Collaborations with [Babbel](#) and English teachers have been implemented to train staff in English proficiency. However, this approach is costly, with Babbel alone costing \$100,000, plus additional expenses for teachers.
- As care shifts away from hospitals to home settings, is there a focus on mental health needs for caregivers and their support systems?
 - Visiting Nurse Associations (VNAs) and support systems for mental health are essential, alongside strategies for providing integrated care.

- Initiatives like [Together In Care \(National Alliance\)](#) emphasize the critical relationship between professional caregivers and family caregivers. From the ACL perspective, caregiver support remains a priority, with efforts to provide respite training and operationalize caregiving plans.
- Housing insecurity, financial burdens, and medical leave are significant challenges. Are there discussions on these topics at the federal level?
 - Efforts are ongoing at the state level to address housing and transportation issues.
 - Other key areas include benefit cliffs, income improvements, and innovative models like [Good Life Innovations](#). Collaboration across states is critical for exploring these solutions.

Next Steps:

- Follow up on Spring 2025 plans for Massachusetts: how can we get involved?
- Discuss application processes and strategies to support direct care professionals further.
- Consider engaging with state and federal representatives to address challenges in housing, transportation, and workforce diversity.