

- **Trempeleau County**

The Trempeleau County Long Term Care Consortium includes home care providers, nursing homes and public and private agencies interested in long term care. Its purpose is to analyze the long term care worker crisis and develop practical solutions to decrease or remedy the shortage of workers. It has worked with high schools to promote long term care careers, produced a video highlighting the various long term care professions and a CD-ROM with detailed information about health careers in Western Wisconsin, and implemented an image and marketing campaign to assist recruitment. In 2004, it plans to focus more on retention activities, including a mentoring program within member provider organizations, work with educational facilities to improve communication on CNA class openings, subsidize CNA class seats to assure that needed classes occur, and initiate a Care for the Caregiver Project, offering educational opportunities to assist long term care workers in blending family and work life.

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*Note: Community Links project funding from the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services' Bureau of Aging and Long Term Care Resources (BALTCR) has supported several of the efforts described here, as well as a number of other projects designed to expand and improve the long term care workforce in Wisconsin.*

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## Resources

- The Better Jobs Better Care web site includes information about national efforts to improve the LTC workforce. They have begun issuing a series of issue briefs, the first of which is on building local coalitions. The issue paper cites additional resources on coalition-building.

The main web site is at [www.bjbc.org](http://www.bjbc.org)

The issue paper can be found at <http://www.bjbc.org/content/docs/BJBCIssueBriefv1n1.pdf>.

- The National Clearinghouse on the Direct Care Workforce provides a wealth of news about national and local efforts, research findings and articles, examples of best practices that make a difference, and other useful information. You may also sign up to receive an e-mailed newsletter on current issues and topics. The Clearinghouse is sponsored by the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute and the Direct Care Alliance; links to both organizations are on the Clearinghouse web page.

The address is <http://www.directcareclearinghouse.org/index.jsp>.

- Information about Wisconsin's Community Links Workforce Project, along with related research reviews and other information.

The address is <http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/aging/Genage/workforce.htm>.

- The Wisconsin Health Careers Information Center includes information about healthcare occupations, educational institutions and other resources.

The address is <http://www.wihealthcareers.org/>.

- A synopsis of the Caregiver Retention Study done by the Milwaukee Aging Consortium is available from Amy Ambrose, [aambrose@uwm.edu](mailto:aambrose@uwm.edu) or 414-229-2734.

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The Wisconsin long Term Care Workforce Alliance is a coalition of public and private organizations that recognize the crucial role direct caregivers play in meeting the long term care needs of older persons and persons with disabilities in Wisconsin. Providers, worker representatives, consumer advocates, educational institutions, and state and local governmental organizations are members.

While the Alliance works on statewide long term care workforce issues, its members also believe in the strength of Wisconsin communities. We strongly encourage and support local efforts to address long term care workforce issues.

This manual presents the lessons learned by stakeholders in some Wisconsin communities who are addressing long term care workforce issues – together.

January 2004 Issue

## LTC Worker Shortage: A Community Issue

People who need assistance with the routine activities of daily living, and people who know someone who does, should be concerned about the current and future availability of long term workers in their communities. The shortage of direct care workers is straining the ability of home care agencies, nursing homes and other facilities to provide safe, high quality care to the people who need it. People who try to hire personal care help directly often have a hard time finding trained and caring individuals. Recruitment is difficult and turnover rates are high. After family, direct care workers are among the most important people helping elderly people and persons with disabilities to participate fully in life activities.

Our society is aging, a trend that will accelerate quickly when Baby Boomers reach older ages in just a few years. Population trends indicate that Wisconsin will have a smaller pool of available workers overall, compared to neighboring states. With more people needing care and the labor market tightening, the long term care workforce shortage will get worse unless serious action is taken.

The availability and quality of care that we expect for our families and ourselves may not be available in our communities unless our communities do something about it. Long term care workforce issues present a Wisconsin crisis that affects the well being of every citizen and community of the state.

## How Local Alliances Can Make a Difference

The long term care workforce shortage is affected by complex factors including low wages, poor fringe benefits, difficult working conditions, insufficient training, limited workplace support and recognition, lack of involvement in decision-making, negative public perceptions about work with elderly people and people with disabilities, labor market competition and regulatory policy. This complexity calls for a united effort involving all the groups with a stake in resolving the problem. No single organization or sector can resolve this crisis on its own. Moreover, it is expensive for individual organizations to develop improvement strategies from scratch. The Wisconsin Long Term Care Workforce Alliance believes that resources can be focused more effectively and practical solutions more easily found if organizations within communities work together.

The most lasting and effective methods will be those that come from, or are supported at the grass roots level. Blending together the respective skills, knowledge, strengths and connections of a variety of critical players can create a powerful engine for change. A coalition of organizations and individuals who have formed a partnership with a common purpose and positions is also politically powerful – especially when member organizations may have been in competition or at odds with one another in the past.

Wisconsin has a strong tradition of grass-roots activism, coalition-building and locally-tailored solutions to problems. County or multi-county alliances formed around long term care workforce issues can:

- Improve the quality of care for consumers by helping to assure a competent and compassionate workforce.
- Improve job quality for workers by providing supports, enhancing community respect for their work, improving the workplace, and creating opportunities for training and professional growth.
- Expand educational opportunities for workers and potential workers.
- Enable stakeholders to better understand the complexity of long term care workforce issues and ways of solving them.
- Create a unified forum for communicating with legislators and policy makers, bridging barriers between various stakeholders.
- Identify and address uniquely local issues that impact on the long term care workforce.
- Seek funding for community initiatives to improve quality across the continuum of care.

### Potential Coalition Members

Many individuals and organizations have an interest in seeing that their communities have a strong, high-quality long term care workforce. Those who may be interested in participating in a local coalition include:

- Home Health Agencies
- Nursing Homes
- Independent Living Centers
- CBRFs
- Assisted Living Facilities
- Adult Day Care
- Technical Colleges
- School to Career Programs
- Direct Care Workers
- Aging Advocates
- Disability Advocates
- Area Agencies on Aging
- County Aging Units
- Alzheimer's Association
- Job Centers
- County Disability Services
- Community Organizations
- Aging & Disability Resource Centers
- County Community Options Program & Family Care Agencies
- Care Worker Labor Unions
- Workforce Development

## Getting Started

1. **Who** calls the first meeting should be someone respected by other stakeholders and able to see beyond her/his own organization's interest. A neutral (non-competitive) organization or multiple organizations may generate better attendance.
2. **Where** the first meeting is held should be a place viewed as neutral territory. The dining room of one nursing home may not be comfortable for representatives of competing homes or community care providers.
3. **When** you schedule the first meeting may take a few preparation calls. You wouldn't want to schedule it when all of the area's home health agencies have an association meeting or when some key people are unavailable.
4. **What** you want to accomplish at the meeting should be outlined on an agenda, with a beginning and end time, including time to establish action steps.
5. **How** the first meeting is conducted is key to its success. The leader must be able to establish an atmosphere of equality, sharing and consensus building.

## Getting Started

A coalition may become a membership organization with by-laws and dues or remain an informal association of individuals and organizations united by a common interest in long term care workforce issues. The group will experience greater success if communication is clear and members make a commitment to follow through on assignments.

Whether formal or informal the coalition will benefit from defining in its early stages:

- Statement of Purpose or Mission
- Objectives (or what the coalition wants to accomplish)
  - Set realistic goals, with reasonable time lines
  - Try to demonstrate success early on to create momentum for future efforts

### Hogsmeade County Agency

Dear Colleague,

The quality and availability of care for older persons and persons with disabilities in our community is at risk because of workforce shortages. We invite you to a meeting to discuss the shortage and turnover of long term care workers in our community and what we might do together to address this situation.

Please join us on Thursday, February 29, 2004 at 1:30 p.m. at Room 100 of the Foggy Valley Technical College, 324 Dragon Lane, Hogsmeade, WI. An agenda is attached. We look forward to seeing you.

Sincerely,

Helen Granger, Hogsmeade Co. Aging  
Ron Welton, Bishops Home  
Ginny Weber, Home Nursing, Inc.

### Hogsmeade County Meeting

Long Term Care Workforce Issues  
2/19/04, 1:30 -3:00 p.m.  
Room 100, FVTC

Agenda

1. Introductions and brief description of organizations' concerns about LTC workforce.
  2. Report on local and state activities to improve retention and recruitment.
  3. Suggested local activities to address workforce issues.
  4. Action steps
  5. Next meeting?
  6. Resource Sharing\*
- \* Please bring any information, training announcements that you would like to share.

- Operating Procedures or by-laws

Without consensus on the purpose of the coalition, meetings can easily drift to issues that are of interest to only a few or that polarize some of the groups represented. Members need to remind each other that the coalition is focused on workforce issues across the full continuum of care and for all long term care consumer groups.

Set a collaborative tone, invite broad participation by members, and share leadership. Take time to foster respect, build trust and find common ground. Make use of the varied skills of members by encouraging them to take leadership for various aspects of the coalition's work such as legislative liaison, media contacts, policy development, educational efforts, worker recognition or fund-raising.

### Maintaining Interest

Members will come to meetings when they feel that they can make a difference, when there is positive dialogue among the people who attend and when they or their organization will benefit from being represented. Aim for a democratic decision-making process that allows everyone to be heard, but is reasonably efficient in making decisions and moving forward. Members will become discouraged if there are no rewards or progress.

Meetings and communication should report on coalition activities and recognize the work of committees and individuals. In between meetings e-mail is a great way of reminding members of committee meetings and sharing information about upcoming events and training opportunities. One coalition sends out "Tuesday's Tips" with updates, announcements and suggestions for recognizing care workers.

Before they occur, agree on processes for resolving potential conflicts and disagreements. Promote open communications; look for solutions that satisfy all parties. Don't ignore or hide conflicts.

Periodically re-assess the coalition's goals and objectives, progress in achieving them, and the commitment and involvement of member organizations in the coalition. If problems are present, collaborate on what changes might improve your effectiveness.

### MISSION Hogsmeade County LTC Workforce Alliance

*To develop and implement strategies to improve the recognition, recruitment and retention and of long term care workers in our community.*

#### Objectives

- To encourage good long term care workers to stay in the field.
- To raise community awareness of the contributions of direct care workers.
- To influence caring people to consider a career in long term care.

### Sample Operating Procedures

**Membership:** Open to any organization in XYZ County interested in long term care workforce issues. **Responsibilities:** Organizational members will assign a representative who can regularly attend meetings. All members will participate in annually establishing goals for the year and helping to carry them out.

**Dues:** 50+ Employees . . . . . \$50  
0-49 Employees . . . . . \$25  
Individuals . . . . . \$10

**Meetings:** Every other month on the 2nd Tuesday from 12:00-1:00

**Voting:** Each organization is entitled to one vote.

**Officers:** Officers shall be Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary elected by paid members at the annual meeting.

### Activities of Local Coalitions

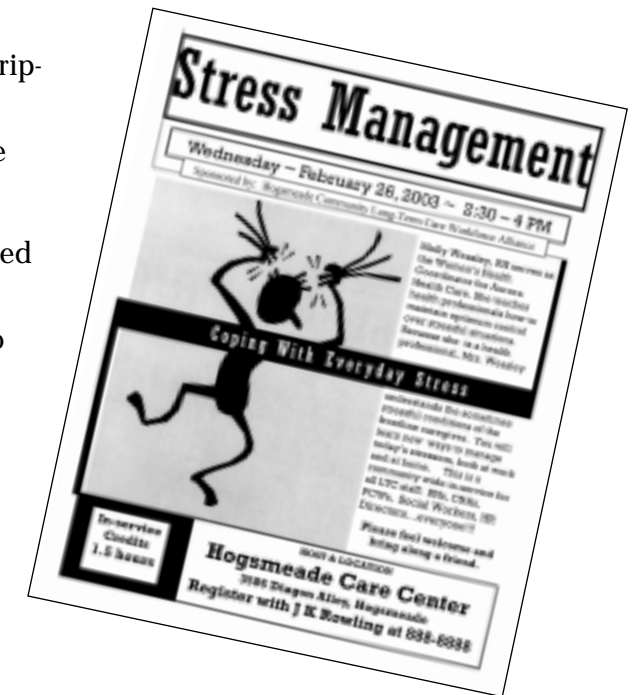
Here are examples of some of the activities sponsored by coalitions in Wisconsin that are organized around long term care workforce issues.

#### Recognition

- Annual community-wide recognition lunch for direct care staff of nursing homes, home care agencies, assisted living and adult day care. In one community an adult day care provider is a member of a local country club and sponsors the group's use of the club's restaurant. Each member organization pays for its employees' lunches and donates a center piece or basket for a door prize. After a speaker, the mayor and county executive hand out recognition certificates. Another coalition makes a day-long affair of the recognition event, including training along with the certificates of appreciation and drawings for prizes.
- Starting with seed money from a local foundation one coalition does bulk buying of incentives such as mugs, key chains and thank you cards and then sells them to members at cost for use with their direct care workers.
- A box of chocolate "kudos" is given out at bi-monthly alliance meetings to recognize a member's contribution or success; the member is expected to share the kudos with others in his or her organization.

#### Retention

- Member dues are used to purchase a bulk subscription to the Nursing Assistant Monthly. Copies are distributed to the member organizations with the help of the County Aging Office.
- A local newsletter for direct caregivers is produced by a talented administrative assistant and sent to each employer-member to copy and distribute to their staff. It has an article recognizing a direct caregiver, tips to make work easier, a recipe for a homemade gift and a notice of free or low cost local events.
- A Care for the Caregiver Project offers educational opportunities to assist workers in blending family and work life.
- A mentoring program within each consortium's provider-member organization provides informal training and support to workers.



## Training

- Continuing education workshops are sponsored by a county coalition, with speakers of interest to workers in residential care, home care and day services. Member organizations take turns providing the refreshments.
- Another coalition focuses on training topics that individual member-providers find difficult to schedule, such as background on disabilities, conditions or medications, system issues, or staying healthy under stress.
- One group has a small video library accessible to its members.
- A grant from the Area Health Education Center was received by a non-profit organization on behalf of the coalition to sponsor workshops for administrative, supervisory and direct care staff of local providers.
- Another coalition is working to improve communications with its technical college and other nursing assistant trainers about class openings and cancellations. It also subsidizes class seats to assure that needed classes occur.

## Recruitment

- Several coalitions have implemented community-wide image campaigns using bus boards, posters, newspaper testimonial ads, and post card mailings with positive images of direct care workers and a number to call for information about jobs and training in long term care.
- One coalition's members worked with their local technical college to establish a nursing assistant class for persons with English as a second language.
- Another group contacted area high schools, offering to organize a health care career day, guest speakers from the coalition or job shadowing opportunities, suggesting that the school coordinate with the technical college to offer nursing classes in the school. They also provided a video highlighting various long term care professions, as well as a CD-ROM on health careers.

## Advocacy

- Semi-annual breakfast meetings with local state legislators focused on issues affecting quality of care and care workers across the continuum.
- Meetings are held with policy makers and stakeholders about special issues such as the impact of a state nursing assistant testing contract on worker recruitment.



## Where the Action Is

### • Kenosha County

The Kenosha County Long Term Care Workforce Alliance evolved from a task force focused on an annual recognition lunch to a formal organization with by-laws, officers, dues and committees working on legislative issues, education and training and an annual community-wide image campaign. The county aging unit provides staff support and grant-writing and the job center provides space.

*Contact person:* Barbara Wisnefski, bwisnefski@co.kenosha.wi.us or 262-697-4637.

### • Marathon County

The Marathon County Long-Term Care Workforce Alliance grew from the Marathon County Long-Term Care Planning Committee at the Department of Social Services. A group of area providers developed a sub committee to write a grant to provide initial training to hone in on the challenges faced by long term care providers and what could be done to resolve some of the common issues. After the training the goals of the area were expressed. The sub committee received another grant to hire a Workforce Development Coordinator to address these issues. The program developed from a sub-committee to a steering committee and a task force that holds monthly meetings. They provide supervisory skills training tailored for long-term care, educational training for direct caregivers, an annual caregiver celebration, area provider recruitment booklet, and data collection for statistical comparison. They are writing for grants to support an image campaign and future funding of the program. The VNA Home Health provides office space for the program.

*Contact person:* Darcy Dickman, darcy@waushosp.org or 715-847-2600 ext 52401.

### • Milwaukee County

The Milwaukee Aging Consortium, a network of older adult service providers, is leading a collaborative project around caregiver retention. The project is part of the Connecting Caring Communities initiative, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and administered by the Milwaukee County Department on Aging. The planning phase, guided by representatives from health care systems, employers, the local SEIU Local 150 and academics, concluded recently and implementation funds are being sought. Three Interdisciplinary Task Forces are being developed to address three issue areas: (1) Work-Life Concerns (issues such as childcare and transportation that affect caregivers); (2) Intra-Agency Concerns (issues within an agency such as team building, training and recognition); and (3) Long Term Care Industry (issues that require a broader effort, such as pay/benefits and standardizing training).

*Contact person:* Amy Ambrose, aambrose@uwm.edu or 414-229-2734.

### • Racine County

Eight agencies, including the County Department of Human Services, collaborated to form the Direct Care Worker Recruitment, Retention and Recognition Task Force. It has initiated a number of activities to recruit and retain workers including training for employers and employees, media efforts and job fairs. Typically, the task force holds 3 to 4 low-cost trainings each year, focusing on topics such as career ladders, background topics on disabilities, medications and the like, systems issues, and staying healthy. In 2003, they held their fourth annual recognition event for caregivers, which included breakfast, lunch and training, along with drawings for prizes and certificates of appreciation. The group recently got a federal ID number and opened a checking account.

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