

# **IOWA CAREGIVERS ASSOCIATION**

## **EVALUATION OF THE CERTIFIED NURSE ASSISTANT (CNA) MENTOR PROGRAM**

### **Surveys of Long Term Care Facility Administrators, CNA Mentors and Mentees**

#### **PROGRAM EVALUATION SUMMARY**

Brad Richardson, Ph.D.  
Associate Research Scientist  
and  
Nancy M. Graf, Research Assistant



*December 2002*

**National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice  
The University of Iowa School of Social Work  
100 Oakdale Campus, W206 Oakdale Hall  
Iowa City, Iowa 52242-5000**

**Funded by the Iowa Department of Elder Affairs Contract #29703010.**

## **MISSION AND HISTORY OF THE IOWA CAREGIVERS ASSOCIATION (ICA)**

### ***History***

Founded in 1992 as a nonprofit organization, the Iowa CareGivers Association (ICA) is Iowa's first independent statewide association devoted to identifying and addressing the needs of Direct Care Workers (DCWs) and other caregivers. Certified Nurse Assistants (CNAs), Home Care Aides (HCAs), Patient Care Technicians (PCTs), Personal Assistants (PAs) and others deliver 80-90% of the care in Iowa's nursing facilities, home care agencies and in many other health care settings. The ICA fosters partnerships with and between workers, providers, consumers, advocates, policy makers, labor, educators and others committed to quality care.

### ***Mission***

Enhancing quality of care through dedication to the direct care worker and all caregivers.

### ***Purpose***

Access to quality care

- Increase number of caregivers
- Retain caregivers longer
- Enhance the quality of care received

### ***Focus***

Education

Public Awareness

Advocacy

Research and Innovation

### **National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice**

The National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice is a project of the University of Iowa School of Social Work. Its mission is to promote family-centered, culturally responsive practice across human service systems through research and evaluation, training and technical assistance, and information dissemination.

## Acknowledgements

*Dedicated to the CNA Mentors and Mentees who have participated in the program*

### **Development and Coordination**

Heidee Barrett  
Pat Breur  
Marilyn Stille  
Sarah Kleffman  
Belinda Hobson  
Di Findley  
Pam Biklen  
Christine Smith  
Community College CNA Mentor Instructors

### **Participating Community Colleges**

Des Moines Area Community College  
Eastern Iowa Community College  
Iowa Central Community College  
Iowa Lakes Community College \*  
Iowa Western Community College\*  
Northeast Iowa Community College\*  
Northwest Iowa Community College  
Southeastern Community College  
Southwestern Community College  
Western Iowa Tech Community College\*

\*Districts where evaluation surveys were conducted

### **Participating Facilities**

Algona Good Samaritan Center  
Algona Manor Care Center  
Bethany Lutheran Home  
Brentwood Good Samaritan Center  
Country View Manor  
Gardenview Care Center  
Heritage House  
Hillcrest  
Lake Park Care Center  
Longview Home  
Newell Good Samaritan Center  
Northwest Iowa Health Center Senior Care (Oak Park)  
Primghar Care Center  
Risen Son Christian Village  
Senior Caregivers Support  
Sibley Nursing and Rehab Center  
Sioux Center Hospital  
Valley Manor  
Village Northwest Unlimited

## STUDY BACKGROUND

Certified Nurse Assistants (CNAs) are health care workers who deliver much of the hands on care in a variety of health care settings. Most receive training at community colleges and through employers. There are approximately 60,000 CNAs registered with the Iowa Nurse Aide Registry.

In 2000, Iowa CareGivers Association (ICA) implemented the CNA Mentor Program to further address the needs of both veteran CNAs and those just entering the field. Veteran CNAs received opportunity for advancement as peer mentors after successfully completing the CNA Mentor training. New CNAs who were paired with mentors were able to experience longer and more meaningful work experience through their association with their peer mentor.

The CNA Mentor Program was developed from the ICA Recruitment and Retention Project in response to major concerns about the shortage and turnover rate among nurse aides. As part of the Recruitment and Retention Project a survey of CNAs conducted in 1998 found that CNAs expressed needs for more education and training, opportunities for advancement, and longer and more meaningful orientations. The CNA Mentor Program is proving to be an effective means of worker retention.

Aspects unique to the Iowa CareGivers Association CNA Mentor Program include:

- Certified instructors
- Taught at participating community colleges
- Individuals who complete the program receive joint certification from the ICA and the respective community college
- Certification will become part of the CNA's permanent credentials on the Nurse Aide Registry at the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals.

The University of Iowa School of Social Work, National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice (NRCFCP) conducted surveys to evaluate the Iowa CareGivers Association mentoring program.

## METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the Iowa CareGivers Association Mentoring Project was to develop and implement strategies to recruit, train, and retain direct caregivers (CNAs). Two types of surveys were conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the CNA Mentoring Program. Administrators of long term care (LTC) facilities who were involved in the Iowa CareGivers Mentor Program were surveyed, and surveys of participating CNA mentors and mentees were conducted.

### *Administrator Survey*

An exhaustive telephone survey of administrators of long term care (LTC) facilities participating in the Iowa CareGivers Mentor Program was conducted during a one week period in late October, 2002. Each LTC administrator was asked to respond to the following questions:

- Are you familiar with the Iowa CareGivers Association program to train mentors to reduce turnover in long-term care facilities?
- Are you still involved in the CNA Mentor Program?
- How long have you been the administrator?
- Can you give me an estimate of the number of mentors you have working in your facility?
- And about how many mentees do you think there are in your facility?
- Did you generally provide a pay increase as a result of completing the mentor training?
- Do you see evidence that the skills learned in the mentor training workshop are useful?
- Of the mentors you know of, what percentages have stayed employed at your facility?
- What about mentees, of those you know of who have a mentor, what percentages of those have stayed employed at your facility?
- What do you see as the most beneficial aspects of the CNA Mentor Program?
- Are there any drawbacks or negative aspects?

### ***Mentor and Mentee Surveys***

Self-addressed postcard questionnaires were mailed from the Iowa CareGivers Association to mentors at three months and six months following mentor training. Sixty-seven mentors who were trained at least three months ago were surveyed, and nine mentors who were trained at least 6 months ago were surveyed. Thirty-six three-month surveys (response rate = 54 percent) were received and six nine-month surveys (response rate=67 percent) were received.

Self-addressed postcard questionnaires were mailed from the Iowa CareGivers Association to mentees who have been mentored by the new CNA mentors. These postcard questionnaires were designed for administration to the mentees and contained questions similar in nature to those on the mentor evaluation survey postcards (questions are listed below).

Initial and follow-up postcards were mailed to mentors and mentees involved in the CNA mentor training program during the state 2001-2002 fiscal year. Questions for mentors included:

- Are you still working at the same facility as when you attended the CNA Mentor training?
- Are you still in the CNA profession?
- Did you receive a pay increase as a result of completing the mentor training?
- Are you able to use the skills you learned in the mentor training workshop?
- Are there institutional barriers that prevent you from using the skills you learned?
- Was the CNA mentor training beneficial to you?

Mentees were asked to respond to the following questions:

- Are you still working at the same facility as when you were mentored by a CNA Mentor who completed the Iowa CareGivers mentor training?
- Are you still in the CNA profession?
- Was the orientation with your mentor beneficial?
- Are you able to use the skills you learned from your mentor?
- Are there institutional barriers that prevent you from using the skills you learned?
- Are you still using your mentor as a guide?

## RESULTS

### *Administrator Survey*

Eighteen of the 20 administrators we attempted to contact responded to the survey. This is a response rate of 90%. Professional titles of those who responded include administrator, director of nursing, staff development director, human resources administrative assistant, and mentor program coordinator. Table 1 below presents the results from the survey. For yes/no questions, the percent responding “yes” is reported. Questions in which responses were made in counts or percentages are reported as average (mean) responses.

**Table 1: Summary of Responses to Administrator Survey**

<i>Question</i>	<i>% “yes”</i>	<i>‘Average’ (Mean)</i>
Are you familiar with the Iowa CareGivers Association program to train mentors to reduce turnover in long-term care facilities?	100%	
Are you still involved in the CNA Mentor Program?	88.9%	
How long have you been the administrator?		6.8 years
Can you give me an estimate of the number of mentors you have working in your facility?		4.2 mentors
And about how many mentees do you think there are in your facility?		7.1 mentees
Did you generally provide a pay increase as a result of completing the mentor training?	77.8%	
Agencies that provided an incentive (pay increase or bonus)	94.5%	
Do you see evidence that the skills learned in the mentor training workshop are useful?	93.8%	
Of the mentors you know of, what percentages have stayed employed at your facility?		80.7%
What about mentees, of those you know of who have a mentor, what percentages of those have stayed employed at your facility?		66.8%
Are there any drawbacks or negative aspects?	16.7%	

All of the respondents were familiar with the CNA Mentor program, and 88.9% are still involved in the program. Of the two programs not “still involved” in the mentor program, one site is planning to establish a mentor program. The average number of years employed as an administrator ranged from .8 to 27.0 years, with an average (mean) of 6.8 years. Currently, the number of mentors working in these facilities ranged from zero to 15 with an average of 4.2, and the number of mentees ranged from zero to 20 with an average of 7.1. All programs, with the exception of one, reported offering a pay increase or a bonus to those completing the mentor training. Fourteen respondents (77.8%) said yes to providing a pay

increase, three (16.7%) offered bonuses, and one (5.5%) said no pay increases were offered. Agencies that provided an incentive of some sort (a pay increase or bonus) thus totaled 94.5%.

Nearly all respondents (93.8%) reported that they saw evidence that the skills learned in the mentor training workshop were useful. The average percentage of mentors that have retained employment at these facilities was 80.7%, while the average percentage of mentees that stayed was 66.8%. Only three of the respondents (16.7%) felt there were any drawbacks or negative aspects of the mentoring program. Asked to describe what those negative aspects were, respondents reported: “A couple of mentors were not so good, so now we have an application process;” “I didn’t know what the mentor was being taught (which made it difficult in setting up the program initially);” and “Finding the right people.”

When asked what the most beneficial aspects of the program were, administrators responded with:

- Believing in the training. Being consistent
- Better recruitment. Better communication
- Builds relationships with coworkers. Lends to job satisfaction. Provides a buffer between worker and supervisor
- Career for CNAs. Fills gap in orientation process to real world experience
- Confidence. Better to relate to CNA. Someone to go to with questions
- Consistency
- Develop longevity with employees
- Gives support to mentees
- Have someone to lean on
- Having someone they trust
- Having someone to share experiences with
- Helps skill level and self-esteem
- Helps training new CNAs
- Mentor has vested interest in making things work
- Orientation tool. Get to know others
- Peer teaching on site
- Sense of personal pride and responsibility
- Turnover has gone down significantly. One-on-one contact. Constant availability for answering questions
- The program is very positive here. Our mentors are very proud they are mentors

### ***Mentor Survey***

Thirty-six CNAs who received mentor training responded to the survey, which was conducted approximately three months after they received training. All thirty-six respondents (100 percent) reported that they were still working in the CNA profession. All thirty-six respondents (100 percent) also reported that they were still working in the same facility.

More than one-third (36 percent) reported that they had received a pay increase as a result of completing the mentor training. Ninety-seven percent reported that they were able to use skills learned in the mentor training workshops. Only twenty-three percent reported that there were barriers that prevented them from

using some of the skills that they learned. All CNAs who received mentor training reported that the mentor training was beneficial to them. These results are summarized in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Initial Mentor Survey Results**

<i>Question</i>	<i>Responses</i>	
	<i>No. of respondents</i>	<i>Percent who responded YES</i>
Are you still in the CNA profession?	36	100.0%
Are you still working at the same facility?	36	100.0%
Did you receive a pay increase?	36	36.1%
Are you able to use the skills you learned?	35	97.1%
Are there barriers to using the skills you learned?	35	22.9%
Was the CNA mentor training beneficial to you?	35	100%

Six CNAs who received mentor training responded to the survey administered approximately six months after they received training. The effect on the results of the attrition is not known. Five of the six respondents (83.3 percent) reported that they were still working in the CNA profession. All six respondents (100 percent) also reported that they were still working in the same facility, that they were able to use the skills they had learned, and that the CNA mentor training was beneficial. None of the follow-up survey respondents reported that there were barriers that prevented them from using some of the skills that they learned. All CNAs who received mentor training reported that the mentor training was beneficial to them. Fifty percent (50%) of the follow-up survey respondents reported that they received a pay increase as a result of completing the mentor training. The results of the mentor follow-up survey are summarized in Table 3, below.

**Table 3: Mentor Survey Follow-up Results**

<i>Question</i>	<i>Responses</i>	
	<i>No. of respondents</i>	<i>Percent who responded YES</i>
Are you still in the CNA profession?	6	83.3%
Are you still working at the same facility?	6	100.0%
Did you receive a pay increase?	6	50.0%
Are you able to use the skills you learned?	6	100.0%
Are there barriers to using the skills you learned?	6	0.0%
Was the CNA mentor training beneficial to you?	6	100%

Table 4 presents the results for comparison between the two mentor surveys.

**Table 4: Mentor Initial and Follow-up Survey Percentages**

<i>Question</i>	<b><i>“YES” RESPONSES</i></b>	
	<i>Initial Survey</i>	<i>Follow-up Survey</i>
Are you still in the CNA profession?	100.0%	83.3%
Are you still working at the same facility?	100.0%	100.0%
Did you receive a pay increase?	36.1%	50.0%
Are you able to use the skills you learned?	97.1%	100.0%
Are there barriers to using the skills you learned?	22.9%	0.0%
Was the CNA mentor training beneficial to you?	100%	100%

***Mentee Survey***

Six CNAs who were mentored by a CNA Mentor who received training through the Iowa CareGivers Association (ICA) project responded to the survey in time for this analysis. The results from the mentee surveys are summarized in Table 5, below.

**Table 5: Mentee Survey Percentages**

<i>Question</i>	<b><i>% “Yes”</i></b>
Are you still working at the same facility?	100.0%
Are you still in the CNA profession?	100.0%
Was the orientation beneficial?	100.0%
Are you able to use the skills you learned?	100.0%
Are there barriers to using the skills you learned?	16.7%
Are you still using your mentor as a guide?	50.0%

All mentees reported that they were still working at the same facility as when they were mentored by a CNA Mentor who completed the ICA mentor training. All mentees reported that they were still in the CNA profession. All mentees reported that orientation with their mentor was beneficial. All mentees reported that they were able to use the skills learned from their mentor. Fifty percent of mentees reported that they are still using their mentor as a guide. Only seventeen percent reported that there were institutional barriers that prevent them from using the skills they learned.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

Of the administrators who responded to the survey, a large majority were still involved in the CNA Mentor Program. Over three-fourths of those responding offered a pay increase to those who completed the mentor training, and almost all saw evidence that the skills learned were useful. Administrators in this group reported retention rates for mentors over 75%, and well over half of the mentees were still employed at their facilities. Few felt there were any drawbacks to the mentoring program. Administrators were quick with their responses about the beneficial aspects of the program and offered many positive comments.

Mentors and mentees who responded to the Iowa CareGivers Association (ICA) survey were generally still working in the profession and in the facility in which they were working during their training and mentoring. Barriers to using the skills learned were generally not encountered, and mentors and mentees reported being able to use the skills they learned. Half of the mentees reported that they are still using their mentor as a guide.

One-third of the mentors reported receiving pay increases by three months following their training, and half of the mentors who responded received pay increases attributed to completing the mentor training at six months after training. Although three-quarters of the administrators reported offering pay increases, the difference in responses from mentors to administrators may be due to the length of time that transpired (five months) from the completion of the Mentor Survey to the time the Administrator Survey was conducted. All mentors and mentees rated the training and the orientations as beneficial.

Empirical evidence suggests that the CNA Mentor program has resulted in positive outcomes: 1) CNAs perceive benefits of enhanced professionalism and increased status of their profession, and 2) providers report retaining workers longer which creates a more stable workforce and increased quality of care, and 3) patients and consumers ultimately benefit from the increased quality of care.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND INTENTIONS OF THE IOWA CAREGIVERS ASSOCIATION**

Given the positive outcomes, the following recommendations are made:

- Expand and promote the ICA/Community College CNA Mentor Program statewide;
- Strengthen partnerships with community colleges teaching the CNA Mentor Program;
- Advocate for further advancement opportunities that are recognized statewide for direct care workers and that become a part of the workers permanent credentials with the state;
- Continue to track mentor/mentees and providers to evaluate the success and effectiveness of the program over a longer period of time, and;
- Determine the feasibility of modifying the CNA Mentor curriculum for home and other care settings.

For additional information on the Iowa CareGivers Mentor Program contact:

Iowa CareGivers Association

1117 Pleasant Street #221

Des Moines, Iowa 50309

515-241-8697

515-241-8587 (fax)

[iowacga@aol.com](mailto:iowacga@aol.com)

Reports will also be available on our website

[www.iowacaregivers.org](http://www.iowacaregivers.org)

For questions regarding the evaluation contact:

Dr. Brad Richardson

National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice

University of Iowa School of Social Work

100 Oakdale Campus, W206 Oakdale Hall

Iowa City, Iowa 52242-5000

[Brad-richardson@uiowa.edu](mailto:Brad-richardson@uiowa.edu)

For questions regarding the CNA Mentor curriculum contact:

Heidee Barrett, R.N.

Iowa Lakes Community College

3200 College Drive

Emmetsburg, Iowa 50536

[Hbarrett@ilcc.ia.us](mailto:Hbarrett@ilcc.ia.us)