

Workforce Tools is a series of publications specifically targeted to people concerned with improving the quality and stability of the home- and community-based direct-care



workforce. The Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute is producing this series, under subcontract to the MEDSTAT Group, Inc. (CMS Contract No. 500-96-006, Task Order No. 2) for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services pro-

ject *Research on the Availability of Personal Assistance Services*.

As more people living with disabilities choose to live in home- and community-based settings, finding direct-care workers is becoming an increasingly critical public policy issue. CMS is funding research to help states develop a workforce that can support people living with disabilities and long-term illnesses. As part of the research effort, PHI is identifying and collecting resources to help state agencies, service providers, and individual consumers recruit, train, and retain home care and personal assistance workers. These resources are available in an on-line database at:

www.directcareclearinghouse.org/practices.html

The Right People for the Job, which synthesizes promising recruitment practices, is a tool for agency providers and individual consumers who find it difficult to attract qualified workers. An on-line version of this brief, with links to additional resources, is posted at:

www.directcareclearinghouse.org/pas.html

The Right People for the Job

Recruiting direct-care workers for home- and community-based care

If you've ever hired a personal care attendant, direct support professional, or other direct-care worker, you know how hard—and how important—it is to find the right person.

If you're an individual consumer, you may find it increasingly difficult to get the support you need. Perhaps you feel like you don't know where to look any more, or there just aren't any good people out there.

If you hire for an agency, you're probably spending a lot of time and money on recruitment—perhaps even more than you realize.

The goal of this publication is to help a wide spectrum of employers, from individuals to small and large agencies, find direct-care workers. The field-tested methods outlined here won't necessarily require you to spend more time or money on recruiting. Instead, they should help you redirect your efforts to get a better return on that investment.

1. Recruitment Challenges

It isn't easy to find good candidates for direct-care work. Workers must be interested in assisting people who are elderly or living with disabilities and able to handle the physical demands of the job. They must be mature, reliable, sensitive to other people's preferences and needs, and good at prioritizing tasks, solving problems, and negotiating sticky situations. Depending on the client's needs, a job may also require specific technical skills, such as monitoring vital signs or complex medical equipment (for details, see **Types of Workers**, page 2).

Those requirements alone eliminate many prospective employees. Other barriers discourage thousands more. The work is both physically and emotionally demanding, yet wages are generally low—comparable to what people earn for far less demanding work in fast-food restaurants, hotels, and other service industries. Moreover, there are few opportunities for advancement for committed workers who want to make direct-care work their career. The scarcity of affordable health coverage makes the work unappealing to many candidates, especially those with children to support.

Negative attitudes also discourage prospective workers. The work is not highly respected by the general public, and some employers see it as “unskilled,” something anyone “off the street” can do after a few days of training.

Not surprisingly, many employers find it hard to fill openings, even when unemployment rates are relatively high. In fact, in a recent national survey, only eight states indicated that the economic downturn had had a positive

impact on the supply of direct-care workers (*Results of the 2002 National Survey of State Initiatives on the Long-Term Care Direct Care Workforce*. Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute and North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Office of Long-Term Care, June 2002). And it's only getting harder. Over the next two decades or more, the demand for personal assistance workers and home health aides will increase dramatically as the number of Americans with disabilities increases. Meanwhile, Department of Labor projections show that the traditional pool of workers—women between the ages of 25 and 44 in the civilian workforce—will grow only slightly.

But succumbing to the urge to hire the first available “warm body” isn't the answer. The better a worker is matched to the job at the outset, the better the odds for retention and quality care.

To attract the right people, you can't simply place an ad in a newspaper. You need to make the job as attractive as you can. You need to rethink your hiring criteria, making sure you are looking in the right places for the right kind of person. You need to ask the right questions and listen carefully to the answers.

2. Creating an Appealing Job

The best way of attracting good workers is being a *good employer*. There are many ways of improving the quality of the job, starting with pay.

Personal assistance and home health aides often live near or below poverty level. Many are single parents, working two or more jobs to make ends meet. There's only so much you can do about that. Wage levels are restricted, at least in part, by federal and state reimbursement rates. However, if you can afford to provide better than average wages, regular raises, and/or benefits such as paid health insurance and paid vacation time, you'll find it easier to attract and keep good workers.

By offering as high a wage and benefits package as possible, you'll make it easier for workers to make a living by working just for you rather than dividing their time, energy, and loyalties between multiple jobs. You'll also show your respect for direct-care work and those who provide it, which makes you a more appealing employer.

Money isn't everything, of course. There are other ways to become an employer of choice. These include recognizing and respecting the work, providing opportunities for learning, and trying to provide guaranteed work hours and schedules that meet workers' needs. It may also mean adapting organizational or personal practices in order to support workers and help them be effective.

3. Deciding Whom to Look For

You can't evaluate candidates effectively or launch an effective recruitment campaign unless you know what qualities you're looking for.

Types of Workers

Two types of direct-care workers provide home- and community-based care: personal assistance workers and home health aides.

Personal assistance workers provide personal care, such as toileting, bathing, eating, and transferring, for people living with physical or mental disabilities. In addition, they usually help with activities such as housekeeping, meal preparation, shopping, and bill paying. These workers are known by a variety of names, including home care aide, personal assistance worker, personal care attendant, personal attendant, personal assistant, and direct support professional.

Home health aides help people with disabilities, most of whom are elderly, with personal care as well as some clinical care. Home health aides are required by federal law to undergo 75 hours of training, and they work under the supervision of a registered nurse. They may perform light housekeeping tasks such as helping to prepare food or changing linens, but their primary focus is providing assistance with personal care and health-related needs.

Create a Profile of the Ideal Candidate

To create an ideal candidate profile, start with the following list of qualities:

- Maturity, reliability, and honesty
- Good problem-solving and communication skills
- A demonstrated interest in assisting people with disabilities
- Ability to cope with the physical demands of the job
- Basic language and math skills

Then add whatever attributes are important to you. Individuals directing their own care may prefer such things as a sense of humor, cooking or housekeeping skills, a current driver's license, a specialized skill set, or a certain type of personality, either quiet or outgoing.

Add traits based on the type of work you need done, any state requirements you may need to follow (check with your state department of public health), and your personal or organizational values. You may also want to add the following characteristics which have been shown to correlate to success on the job:

- Sensitivity to other people, tolerance for diverse points of view, and the ability to respect and honor a client's choices
- A relatively stable home life

When exploring these issues, be careful not to ask direct questions about personal matters. You cannot ask job candidates about their marriage or parental status. You can ask whether anything at home might interfere with their ability to

get to work on time or whether they have reliable child care. Initial answers are likely to provide openings for more in-depth conversation.

If you work for an organization that employs a number of direct-care workers, ask some of your senior workers to help develop your candidate profile. Also, make sure everyone who has contact with potential candidates—starting with the person who answers your phones—is familiar with your candidate profile and can communicate the qualifications you are looking for clearly and concisely.

4. Looking in all the Right Places

Once you know whom you're looking for, you need to go out and find candidates. Traditionally, personal assistance workers have been women with little formal education who enjoy helping others. But don't overlook others who may also be interested in caregiving work: for example, men and women laid off from other industries where the workforce is contracting; women who are second earners in their families and want to work with people; or parents of young children, retirees, or college students looking for part-time employment. Some people living with physical disabilities have had success using people with developmental disabilities as personal assistants.

So where will you find these potential candidates? They may be volunteering with faith- or community-based organizations. If they are new immigrants, they may be clients of immigrant organizations or enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. If they have been on welfare, they may be seeking jobs through the welfare department or other workforce training and employment agencies. Seniors often gather at local senior centers or volunteer at places of worship. These are all good places to begin looking for potential employees.

For agencies, building ongoing relationships with faith- and community-based organizations like these is the most effective form of outreach (see **Spreading the Word**, page 6).

For individual consumers, building relationships with organizations is probably too time-intensive to justify the results. Instead, begin by checking out referral sources. Some states or local communities have started worker registries, and independent living centers can often provide referrals (see **Resources**, page 7). You can also leave information with church leaders and human service providers, so they know you are looking for workers. Explain your ideal candidate profile to those who offer to pass on the information.

More traditional forms of outreach are also useful. The most effective method is posting flyers where women and their children gather—for example at child care and health centers (see sidebar, **Where the Candidates Are**). It may also be worth placing ads in community newspapers. If you work for an agency, attend job fairs, set up a booth at a local shopping center, or have direct-care workers hand out flyers to their neighbors and friends. Be creative, get out into the community and market yourself as an employer.

Where the Candidates Are

- Churches, synagogues, mosques, and other places of worship
- Faith-based and other human service agencies
- The local welfare department
- Local offices for the federal or state office of Housing and Urban Development
- Supermarkets, shopping centers, and other stores
- The local public housing authority
- Community-based organizations that serve immigrants, the elderly and disabled, victims of domestic abuse, or other underserved populations
- Neighborhood associations
- Immigrant aid groups and cultural centers
- GED and other educational programs
- Health clinics
- Laundromats
- Unemployment offices
- Senior centers
- Local colleges with nursing, social work, or other human service programs

5. Evaluating Candidates

One of the hardest parts of the process is evaluating whether someone is right for the job. As much as possible, make the interview process itself reflect the responsibilities of employment, requiring candidates to demonstrate a high level of maturity, responsibility, and motivation.

For example, if you are interviewing large numbers of candidates, you might hold an information session to tell people about the job, then ask those who are interested to fill out a written application. You can then ask the candidates to call and schedule an interview within the next few days. This gives you a second chance to see whether each candidate is truly motivated to pursue the job, dresses appropriately, makes child care arrangements (if necessary), and either shows up on time or reschedules in advance.

If you're directing your own care, the following tips may be useful:

- Schedule interviews in two parts or ask candidates to call back or show up at a specific time to test for reliability.
- If housekeeping is part of what you need done, make sure the house looks the way you want it when job candidates arrive, so they get a realistic sense of how much cleaning will need to be done.
- If you can't pay for travel time, don't hire anyone who lives too far away.

Create an Application Package

To conduct an effective hiring process, compare candidates effectively, and ensure fairness and consistency, you'll need three standardized forms: an application, a reference form, and an interview questionnaire.

Make sure all references are sent directly to you, not to the candidate. You can supply an envelope with your address for this purpose. If no recent employer is available, ask for another reliable source, such as a social service provider, a teacher, or someone who has worked with the candidate in the community.

If you're directing your own care, creating an application package may sound too cumbersome, but it could prove worthwhile. Written application forms are an easy way to ask potentially uncomfortable questions, such as whether an applicant is authorized to work in the United States and whether he or she has ever been convicted of a crime. Likewise, a written questionnaire for interviewing candidates makes it easier to compare applicants by ensuring that you ask everyone the same set of questions.

Ask the Right Questions

Review the application in detail, screening for the characteristics outlined in your ideal candidate profile.

Don't limit yourself to questions with only one right answer. Ask open-ended questions and listen closely to the answers, sifting for clues as to how the candidate thinks. If a candidate has no formal experience but did unpaid work in the home or assisted a friend or relative with disabilities, talk about what that involved (see **Interview Tips**, page 5).

Probe to assess the candidate's ability to make judgments, solve problems, set priorities, and react to unexpected developments. Listen for indications that he or she is honest, is sensitive to other people's wishes and needs, and understands the concept of client-centered or consumer-directed service. If the job involves health care, look for sensitivity to specific health problems and the mood changes that can accompany chronic pain or disability. If you're directing your own care, talk about your needs and preferences and the role you want your personal care assistant to play in your life. Make sure the person understands when you will need help (for example, early mornings, evenings, or weekends) and that she or he is comfortable with assisting with your personal care.

Ask what the applicant is looking for in a job, besides a paycheck. You may learn that direct-care work fits more closely with the candidate's values than he or she realizes—or that it doesn't fit at all.

Market the Job

When you encounter promising candidates who aren't sure they want the job, you need to "sell" them on the merits of direct-care work. Fortunately, there's a lot to be said for it. Be realistic but upbeat, focusing on the rewards without minimizing the challenges.

Emphasize the personal calling aspect of the work. Helping people with disabilities to maintain their independence and dignity is meaningful and rewarding. Many people are motivated by their relationships with clients and the knowledge that they make a difference in their lives.

Talk about how marketable direct-care skills are. People with experience can get a job almost anywhere in the U.S. — and that isn't likely to change any time in the foreseeable future.

Don't hesitate to talk about yourself or your organization if part of the job's appeal is your organizational structure, your respect for direct-care work, or some other aspect of your personal or organizational values. If you're directing your own care, talk about what you can offer that makes working for you more appealing than working for an agency or another employer.

Keep an Open Mind

You won't necessarily find your ideal candidate, so keep an eye out for people who would probably make good direct-care workers with a little encouragement or support. Some candidates initially feel no special calling for the job yet become committed workers. Others may need reassurance that they can do the job, remedial classes to improve literacy or other skills, or help in accessing child care or other needed supports.

Although it isn't your job to solve everyone's problems, you can greatly expand your pool of candidates if you can help potential workers overcome barriers to employment by making sure they receive public benefits for which they are eligible, such as Medicaid benefits, rent subsidies, or transportation assistance.

Be flexible, but always look for a caring attitude, maturity, good problem-solving skills, and the ability to cope with the physical demands of the job.

Get Required Test Results as Early as Possible

While personal assistance workers are not usually required to undergo extensive screening, you may want candidates to pass certain tests before being hired. These will vary depending on state law and your organization's policy or personal preference, but may include the following:

- *A drug screen.* Require temperature-sensitive drug screens and tests that cover all illegal substances, including marijuana.
- *A criminal background check.* To find out how this is done, call the state office responsible for the checks—most likely your state police office of criminal records. Try to get results from all states, not just your own, and arrange for all results to be sent directly to you.
- *A physical exam* to ensure that the candidate carries no communicable diseases, has appropriate vaccinations, and is basically healthy.

Interview Tips

Explain the job requirements as clearly as you can. You may want to prepare a written job description to review. Then ask candidates:

- Have you cared for anyone who was very ill or who had a disability?
- Who? For how long? What was her/his disability or illness? What were some of the things you did for this person?

If the person has had experience, ask:

- What did you like about the work?
- What about the job was difficult for you?

If this person hasn't done this type of work before, ask:

- What experiences have you had that prepare you for this job?
- What do you think you would like about the job?
- What will be challenging or difficult for you?

For all candidates, the following are good questions:

- What are your expectations about this job?
- Of all the tasks and duties a direct-care worker performs, what do you think is the most important role he or she has to play? (Listen for an answer that centers on client-centered service or touches on the role of companion/partner.)

Using the job application as your guide, explore things that might present barriers to success on the job. For instance:

- For candidates who have not been recently employed, explore how much thought and preparation they have already given to making the transition to full-time work. Ask particularly about child care and transportation arrangements, and whether they have talked through these changes with other family members.
- For candidates with no formal experience as a direct-care worker, discuss specific aspects of the job, both challenges and rewards. Probe for how they would handle the

challenges. Ask what they think would be some of the harder parts of the job and why. If possible, show a videotape depicting “typical” client-worker interactions and note their reactions.

If reading and writing skills are needed for the job, try one of the following tests:

- Ask the candidate to read a paragraph aloud and answer a few written questions about it.
- Ask questions and have the candidate answer in writing. Do not ask for more than short paragraphs.

Assess the candidate's sensitivity to client concerns and preferences, ability to solve problems, and ability to prioritize tasks. To do this:

- Outline a problem that might be encountered on the job. Ask how the candidate would solve it, or provide a short list of responses and ask the candidate to circle the right one. Discuss the answer to explore the thinking that went into it.
- Give the candidate a short list of tasks that might be completed during a two-hour home visit, asking that they be numbered in the order in which the candidate would do them. Discuss the answer.

If you're directing your own care, spend enough time with the candidate to get a good idea of whether you'd be compatible.

If you work for an agency with a number of direct-care workers, enlist senior aides to be part of the interview process whenever possible. Have workers talk about the position and why they enjoy the work they do, and encourage them to answer questions about specific job duties and agency culture (see **Involve All Staff in Recruiting**, page 6).

For a booklet that includes sample interview questions and videos showing typical worker-client interactions, see **Resources**, page 7.

If you require screening, do so early in the application process, since it can take some time to get results.

If not mandated by state or federal regulation, individuals directing their own care may choose not to require such tests, since they can be costly and time-consuming to arrange. One advantage of using a state registry or other referral service is that workers may have already undergone these screening tests.

6. Taking Up the Challenge

Though finding high-quality direct-care workers is challenging, many people are searching for rewarding jobs that make them feel that they are contributing positively to society. As an employer, you can find those people, if you know: 1) whom

you are looking for, 2) where to look for them, and 3) how to identify them. In this publication, we've tried to provide you with some tips to do just that. Remember:

- Prepare your ideal candidate profile
- Be creative about marketing the position, but always look for places where you can target your ideal candidate
- Ask the right questions to determine if the candidate has the qualities that you care about

When you hire the right person for the job, you have a much greater chance of establishing the kind of mutually beneficial long-term relationship that is so important to quality care.

Spreading the Word

For organizations that hire workers regularly, targeted community outreach is the most effective way to attract a steady flow of appropriate candidates.

Develop Written Marketing Materials

Written materials should present a realistic picture of what the job entails, outlining the challenges as well as the rewards. If you can only afford one printed piece, make a flyer. Make it simple and clear, put contact information on tear-off strips at the bottom, and include the following:

- Key aspects of the job, including job title and duties (emphasize the “personal calling” aspect of the work)
- Minimum qualifications for candidates
- Information about wages (this may be a range) and hours, as well as benefits or training, if applicable

Involve All Staff in Recruiting

Recruitment is an organization-wide responsibility. Everyone who has contact with potential employees should be involved in the effort, including the people who answer your phones.

Direct-care staff have an important role to play in recruiting new workers. Nobody can better convey the rewards of direct-care work than someone who’s doing it and likes it, and nobody else is better at judging whether someone is likely to take to the work. Ask your staff to recommend people for the job, bring them into the interviewing process, and invite them to help with outreach efforts.

To encourage participation, you may want to pay stipends for participating in recruitment activities such as handing out flyers or putting up posters. Some employers also provide bonuses for recruiting successful new workers.

Use Available Technology

Use available technology to communicate your values and the qualities you want in a worker. If you have a website, post your flyer and current job openings. If you have a video about your mission or corporate culture, hold periodic information sessions for job candidates and show the video.

Also useful are videos that realistically depict direct-care workers with people with disabilities (see **Resources**, page 7). By showing both the positive aspects and the challenges of the work, they serve a dual educational and marketing function: People who like what they see get excited about the work, while others can see that it isn’t for them.

Targeted Outreach: Establishing Partnerships

Targeted outreach means identifying local organizations that work with people who are likely candidates for your jobs, developing relationships with their key staff, and then asking them to refer prospective workers to you.

This method of networking and relationship building is more effective than running newspaper ads or attending job fairs. At Cooperative Home Care Associates, a worker-owned direct-care staffing agency in the South Bronx, recruitment

partners referred 30 percent of the 339 direct-care workers hired in 1999 and 2000. Retention rates for these workers were high, with 87 percent still employed after six months.

Establishing partnerships is also time-consuming, however. Plan to spend between one and three hours a week contacting and staying in touch with recruitment partners.

To start, contact your state agency overseeing training for personal assistance workers or home health aides—often the department of health or the department of education—for a list of approved trainers in your area. Then call and ask permission to address students at a job fair or in class, or ask if their teachers will distribute your literature to students.

Local community colleges are also good recruitment partners, and students are often available for hard-to-fill weekend shifts. High school students can make good candidates as well, but look for those with a high degree of maturity. Talk to teachers of subjects compatible with direct-care work.

Churches, synagogues, and other houses of worship are another good place to look. So are human service organizations (see **Where the Candidates Are**, page 3). For a list of the organizations in your area, contact the local United Way. Then decide which ones to target, including any that teach English as a Second Language, link clients to training and employment, organize volunteer programs, or work with retirees or others who may be looking for part-time work.

When initiating contact with an agency, arrange a meeting with the director. Bring a stack of your recruitment materials, and explain what kinds of candidates you’re looking for and what you can offer workers—but don’t stop there. It’s equally important to establish relationships with agency staff. Have members of your staff—preferably direct-care workers—meet with the caseworkers who work with the agency’s clients and explain your program to them. Make sure your partners—particularly those who work directly with clients—understand the qualities that make a good direct-care worker.

Monitor and Refine Your Recruitment Process

Keep track of your referral sources so you can drop those that yield few or no returns. You can get a simple tracking tool from *Recruiting Quality Health Care Paraprofessionals* (see **Resources**, page 7), or add a line to your application form asking candidates where they heard about the job.

Twice a year, look at all the applicants from the past six months. Note the quality of the candidate and where he or she heard about you. If you’ve spent time cultivating a recruitment partner that isn’t sending you good candidates, consider what to do next. Should you make more frequent visits? Cross them off your list? Then check back again, in another six months, to see how that plan worked.

Recruitment is an imperfect science. You’ll never reach perfect equilibrium with every job filled for life by the ideal candidate. However, through trial and error, you can learn how to find more good candidates by using less effort.

Resources

Manuals, Books, and Sample Forms

Recruiting Quality Health Care Paraprofessionals. Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute, August 2000. Describes recruitment practices and includes a sample interview questionnaire and a form for tracking success of recruitment methods. Available through the National Clearinghouse on the Direct Care Workforce. For print copies: 349 E. 149th St., Bronx, NY 10451. Phone: 718-402-4138 Toll-free: 866-402-4138 Fax: 718-585-6852 E-mail: info@directcareclearinghouse.org. On-line: www.directcareclearinghouse.org

Finding and Keeping Direct-Care Staff: Employer of Choice Strategy Guide for Catholic-Sponsored Long-Term Care and Home Care Providers. Catholic Health Association, 2002. This resource guide is relevant for any agency, whether it is faith-based or secular. Available through the National Clearinghouse on the Direct Care Workforce (see *Recruiting Quality Health Care Paraprofessionals*, above, for Clearinghouse contact information).

Avoiding Attendants from HELL, by June Price. Science and Humanities Press, 1998. A pragmatic guide written by a woman who has required personal assistance since birth, it includes chapters on how to determine what you need, advertising on-line, application forms, and how to probe for a candidate's "true personality" in a job interview. Available on-line at: www.personalcareattendants.com

Caregivers and Personal Assistants: How to Find, Hire and Manage the People Who Help You (Or Your Loved One!), by Alfred H. DeGraff, M.A., S.E.A. Saratoga Access Publications, revised edition, 2002. Author DeGraff, a spinal cord injured tetraplegic, has employed more than 350 personal assistants and taught formal courses on managing PAs. That experience informs this detailed book.

How to Manage Your Personal Care Attendants: Maine's Home-Based Care Program and Personal Attendant Management: Regular Medicaid Program and Medicaid Waiver Program. Although some of the information is state-specific and/or dated, both manuals offer useful general information for consumers, such as sample job descriptions, ads, screening applicant calls, interview protocols, job applications, and reference and work record checks. Also included are sample contracts; and material about training, supervision, job evaluation, conflict resolution, and firing a PCA. www.hcbs.org/resources/one/one_protocols2.htm

Recruiting a Personal Assistant. An on-line resource from Disability Gateshead. Provides excellent advice to individual consumers, including a sample application form, interview questions, and step-by-step procedures. www.disabilitygateshead.org.uk/recruit/recruit.htm

Videos

HeartWork: A Video Celebrating the Lives and Work of Direct-Care Workers. Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute, 2002. Through storytelling, music, song, and dance, six home health aides and certified nursing assistants provide an honest and moving account of their work. The video comes with a discussion guide that offers suggestions on how to use it with various audiences, including new recruits. Available through the National Clearinghouse on the Direct Care Workforce (see *Recruiting Quality Health Care Paraprofessionals*, above, for Clearinghouse contact information).

Career in Caring. Video produced by Iowa CareGivers Association, 2002. This 10-minute video, which realistically depicts the direct caregiver's job, is useful for recruitment, orientation, and training. To order, send \$60 to: Iowa CareGivers Association, 1117 Pleasant Street, Suite 221, Des Moines, IA 50309. Phone: 515-241-8697 E-mail: iowacga@aol.com

Referral Sources

Institute on Independent Living. The Institute's purpose is to promote opportunities for persons with disabilities to gain more personal and political power, self-determination, full participation, and equality through information, training materials, consultancy, and technical assistance. Though the Institute is located in Sweden, its website includes a personal assistance network and referral service that are used by U.S. residents. www.independentliving.org

Directory of Publicly Funded PAS Programs. World Institute on Disability, 2002. This directory is available on-line, and allows you to search by state. www.wid.org/pages/halts/pas/PAS%20survey/statepas.htm

National Directory of Centers for Independent Living. This on-line directory from the National Council on Independent Living may be searched by state. www.virtualcil.net/cils/

Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute

349 East 149th Street, 10th Floor
Bronx, NY 10451

For Employees of Government Agencies

In your work with people who are living with a disability or long-term illness, or with the organizations that serve them, you're likely to encounter some who need help finding personal care assistants. This may happen more often as the Olmstead decision is implemented in your state, and more people with disabilities choose to live in home- and community-based settings.

Although you can't do their recruiting for them, there are things you can do to support their efforts. These include:

- Provide technical assistance. For example, distribute this brief or help people contact the appropriate agencies for background checks or referrals.
- Start a registry of personal assistance workers, so people looking for workers can call a single agency to find a list of potential employees.
- Find ways to improve the public contribution to wages and benefits offered to personal care assistants. Some states are developing health insurance pools for health care workers so that these workers can access affordable care. California has implemented county-level public authorities that act as the personal assistance workers' "employer of record," a mechanism within which workers can organize to improve their working conditions and receive support services. As a result, wages have increased and workers receive health benefits, making it easier to attract and keep high-quality candidates.
- Work with people at social service agencies, including publicly funded welfare-to-work programs, to make them aware of the need for this kind of worker. Alert them to what kind of candidates are most suited for the work and where the openings are, so they can encourage some of their clients to consider direct-care work.
- If your budget allows it, launch a public service campaign publicizing the need for workers and/or upgrading the image of the job.
- Identify model practices by providers and individuals who are successful in finding and keeping good workers, and disseminate them to others. A number of practices may be found at www.directcareclearinghouse.org/practices.html

For more information contact: **Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute**

349 East 149th Street, 10th Floor

Bronx, NY 10451

Phone: 718-402-7766 • Fax: 718-585-6852

e-mail: info@paraprofessional.org • web: www.paraprofessional.org