



DIRECT CARE WORKFORCE STRATEGIES CENTER

Building national capacity to support community living

Addressing the Shortage: The Current State of the Direct Care Workforce



Housekeeping

- All participants have cameras turned off and are muted.
- ASL translation is being provided on this webinar.
- CART is available through the Zoom captions feature.
- A brief Questions and Answers session will be held towards the end of the webinar. Please use the Q&A feature to ask any questions to panelists.
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- The webinar will be recorded, and a copy of the slides will be available after the webinar.

Speakers

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Director of Health for BPC's Health Program



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Panelists

Stephanie Gibbs, J.D.

Director of DCW at NCOA

The Direct Care Workers (DCW) Strategies Center provides technical assistance and facilitates collaboration across service systems to improve recruitment, retention, and training of direct care professionals



Antoinette Gingerelli, M.P.P.

Associate Director of Policy and Advocacy

The National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC) is dedicated to improving quality of life for friend and family caregivers and those in their care, focusing on research, policy analysis, programs, technical assistance, and advocacy.



Kezia Scales, Ph.D.

VP of Research and Evaluation

PHI works to ensure quality care for older adults and people with disabilities by creating quality jobs for direct care workers, bringing a 360-degree perspective through policy, advocacy, research, evaluation and workforce innovations.





Bipartisan Policy Center
Where democracy gets to work

ADDRESSING THE DIRECT CARE WORKFORCE SHORTAGE

April 2024

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Agenda

- I. Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) Overview
- II. Direct Care Workforce Shortage
- III. Reform Opportunities
- IV. Panel Discussion



I. BPC Overview

BPC Overview

**Founded in 2007 by Former Senate Majority Leaders
Howard Baker, Tom Daschle, Bob Dole, and George Mitchell**



- Washington, DC-based think tank actively fostering bipartisanship
- Program areas include: Business, Campus Free Expression, Child Welfare, Democracy, Digital Democracy, Early Childhood, Economy, Elections, Energy, Health, Higher Education, Housing, Immigration, Infrastructure, and Technology

Health Program Overview

- **Health Program Leaders:**
 - Former Senate Majority Leaders Tom Daschle (D-SD) and Bill Frist (R-TN)
- **Working with Republicans and Democrats to Craft Viable Policy Solutions:**
 - Convening federal policymakers, stakeholders, and policy experts across the industry and across the aisle to develop bipartisan, federal policy solutions to America's health care challenges
 - Aiming to achieve a high-value, equitable, accessible system of care for all
- **Making an Impact:**
 - Coordinating with BPC Action, our 501(c)4 partner organization that disseminates BPC's work on the Hill

Check out BPC's report!

II. Direct Care Workforce Shortage



Available at:

[https://bipartisanpolicy.org/report/addressing-the-direct-care-workforce-shortage/.](https://bipartisanpolicy.org/report/addressing-the-direct-care-workforce-shortage/)

Direct Care Professionals: Roles and Settings

- While definitions vary, direct care professionals include individuals **who assist older adults and individuals with disabilities with essential daily tasks and activities.**
 - Work **across long-term care settings**, including in private homes, community based residential care settings (*e.g.*, assisted living communities), skilled nursing homes, and hospitals
 - **Training requirements** depend on the occupation and state regulations.
 - Large “**gray-market**” of home care workers hired directly by individuals or households using private funds
- Focus of BPC’s report: personal care aides, home health aides, direct support professionals, certified nursing assistants, psychiatric aides, and unpaid caregivers

Overview of the Direct Care Workforce Shortage

- **Long-standing shortage** of direct care professionals in the U.S
 - Rising demand from **increasing number of older adults** and **longevity**
 - The **COVID-19 pandemic** highlighted the essential contributions, exacerbated persistent challenges
- Workforce has grown from 3 million to 4.6 million between 2009 and 2019, but experts anticipate **significant workforce gaps**¹
 - No national estimate of the workforce shortage due to data limitations
 - Demand is likely somewhat greater in rural versus urban counties
 - Increasing demand in home and community-based settings

1. Campbell, S., A.D. Drake, R. Espinoza, & K. Scales. (2021). Caring for the Future: The Power and Potential of America's Direct Care Workforce. Bronx, NY: PHI. Available at: <https://www.phinational.org/caringforthefuture/>.

Impacts of the Direct Care Workforce Shortage

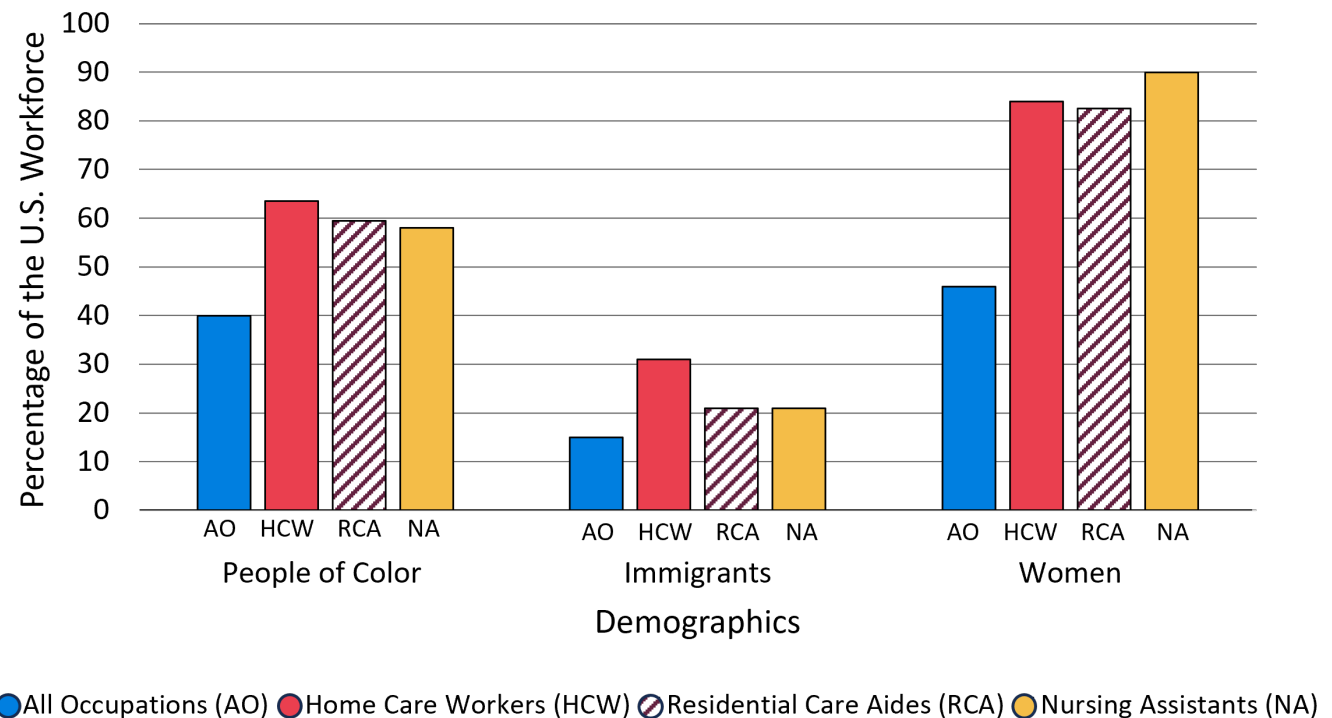
- **These shortages strain the health care system and harm care access, quality, and costs.**
 - In 2021, 656,000 individuals were on **waiting lists for Medicaid HCBS nationwide**, and some research suggests that the long waiting lists might be partially attributable to the shortage of direct care professionals.²
 - Contributes to providers not being able to accept referred patients and, in some cases, closing
 - Limits access to LTSS, which have potential to reduce avoidable hospitalizations and costs

2. Alice Burns, Molly O'Malley Watts, and Meghana Ammula, "A Look at Waiting Lists for Home and Community-Based Services from 2016 to 2023," KFF, November 28, 2022. Available at: <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/a-look-at-waiting-lists-for-home-and-community-based-services-from-2016-to-2023/>.

Equity Considerations: A Robust Workforce

- Compared with the entire civilian U.S. workforce, **direct care professionals are predominantly or disproportionately people of color, immigrants, and women.**
- Addressing challenges is crucial to promoting gender and racial equity.

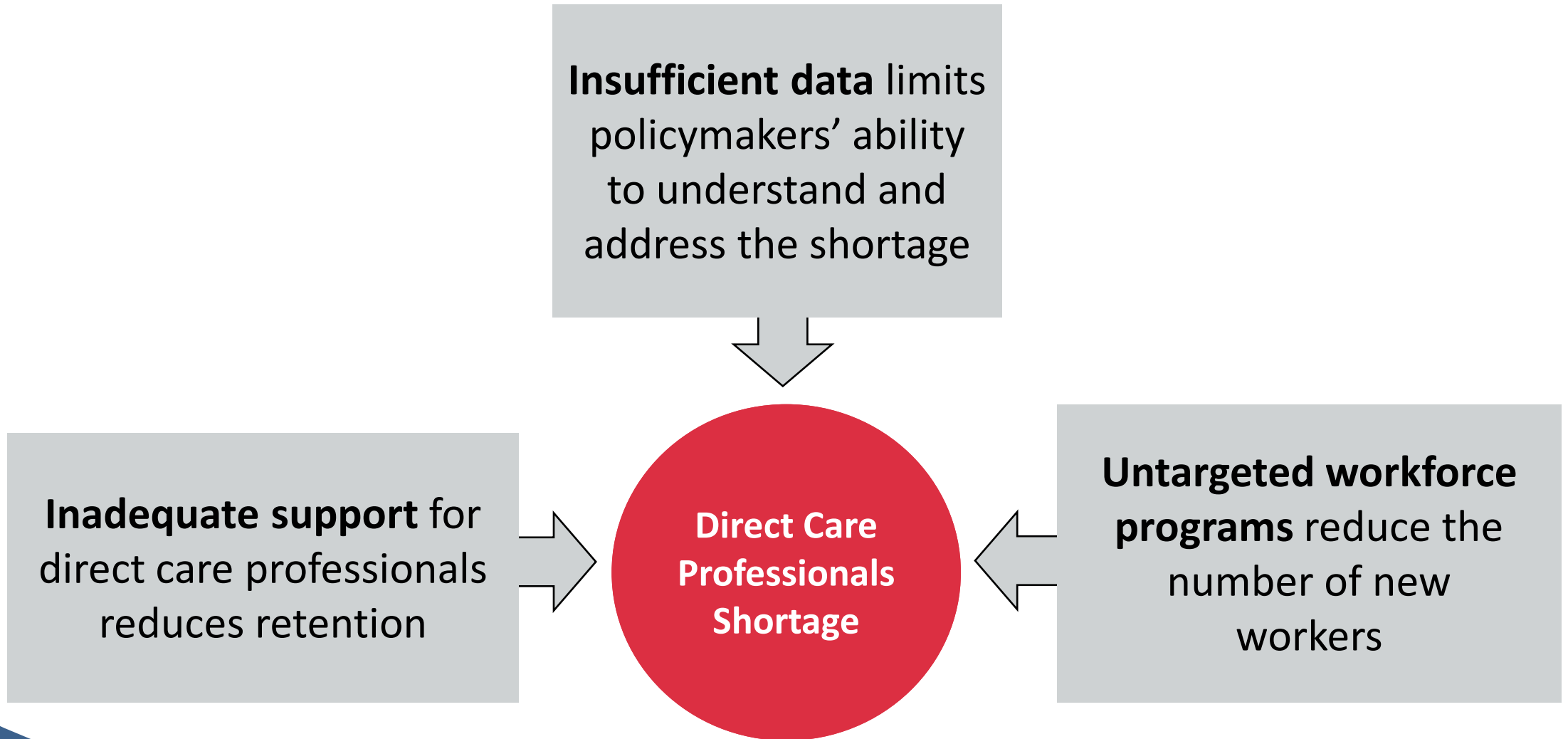
Demographics of U.S. Workforce Compared with Direct Care Professionals, 2022



Source: [PHI](#)

Note: "Immigrants" refers both to foreign-born individuals who are naturalized U.S. citizens and to individuals who are in the U.S. workforce but are not naturalized.

Key Challenges Contributing to the Shortage



Inadequate Support for Direct Care Professionals

- **Limited compensation**
 - Low, stagnant wages
 - Inadequate benefits
- **Inconsistent training and career advancement opportunities**
 - Increasing need for training to provide culturally competent care
- **Persistent devaluing of direct care work**

Reforms should bolster support for direct care professionals to improve retention, ensure access, and promote gender and racial equity.

Untargeted Workforce Programs

- **Limited domestic workforce programs**, as many predominantly target more medicalized or credentialed professions
- **Insufficient advertising** of job opportunities, training programs

Reforms should remove barriers to direct care professional recruitment to meet the escalating demand.

Insufficient Data

- Lack of detailed, comparable federal and state **data on workforce**
- No federal data on **unpaid family caregivers** or the **gray market**
- Available data often not **disaggregated** by direct care profession

Reforms should improve data collection and reporting on the direct care workforce to better measure the effects of policy reforms.

Current Policy Landscape

- **Congressional movement:**

- Recently held key committee **hearings** on the shortage
- **Introduced legislation** to enhance flexibilities for training and competency requirements, strengthen the home-based workforce, and improve data collection

- **Administrative initiatives:**

- Executive Order: Increasing Access to High-quality Care and Supporting Caregivers
- Ensuring Access to Medicaid Services Final Rule (CMS-2442-F)

III. Reform Opportunities

Create Sustainable, Supportive Environments

- **Ensure appropriate, competitive compensation**
 - Leverage **states' innovation to increase compensation** (*e.g.*, wage pass-throughs; wage floor increases; raises tied to workforce development and training; one-time wage increase; value-based reimbursements)
 - Ensure **adequate Medicaid provider reimbursement rates** (*e.g.*, market comparisons, increased transparency)
- **Develop provider training and certificate programs**
 - Consider program design options (*e.g.*, available in multiple languages; self-directed; flexible schedule/delivery modes; financial incentives)
 - Opportunity to learn from states' implementation of American Rescue Plan Act investments
 - Ensure a balance between the benefits of credentials and entry barriers

Increase the Number of New Workers

- **Strengthen recruitment and training programs for direct care professionals**
 - Grow and enhance the nation's **registered apprenticeship** programs
 - Strengthen **workforce development programs** under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act
- **Invest in initiatives, such as marketing campaigns, to raise awareness of direct care occupations**
- **Establish partnerships with community-based organizations** such as high schools and community colleges

Improve Data on Workforce Characteristics

- **Enhance data collection and reporting on the direct care workforce**
 - Establish standardized workforce metrics across states and care settings
 - Capture the volume, stability, compensation, and profile of the direct care workforce
 - Disaggregate data by occupation
- **Implement strategies to better estimate the “gray market” and number of unpaid caregivers**

Thank you!

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Panel Discussion



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