

## Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Direct Care Workforce: Key Considerations for Long-Term Services and Supports Providers

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To meet client needs, long-term services and supports (LTSS) providers must be responsive to diverse cultural beliefs and values<sup>i</sup>—that is, culturally competent. One step towards delivering culturally competent LTSS is recruiting a direct care workforce that reflects many aspects of diversity, such as race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, faith, and country of origin. A diverse workforce, particularly when direct care workers' cultural and linguistic backgrounds match their clients' backgrounds, is important for providers committed to addressing the needs of the increasingly diverse population of individuals using LTSS.<sup>ii</sup>

Culturally competent employment policies and procedures can also help organizations retain direct care workers. Worker retention is an important employer concern within the LTSS industry, which experiences rates of turnover that exceed 50 percent according to many estimates.<sup>iii,iv,v</sup> Underscoring the need for culturally competent policies and procedures surrounding recruitment and retention, over half of all direct care workers belong to a racial or ethnic minority group, one in four direct care workers is an immigrant, and the direct care workforce has grown more diverse in race, ethnicity, and country of origin over time.<sup>vi,vii,viii,ix</sup>

Recruiting and retaining a diverse direct care workforce is particularly important for providers serving individuals dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid, nearly half of whom need LTSS.<sup>x</sup> This brief focuses on strategies for recruiting and retaining a diverse direct care workforce, while companion briefs in this series discuss direct care worker training and organizational cultural competence.

### Key Considerations

- **Implement inclusive hiring practices to identify diverse candidates for all levels of your organization.** An inclusive recruitment process not only identifies strong candidates in your community, but also bolsters organizational cultural competence and your organization's ability to effectively serve diverse populations.<sup>xi</sup> Some inclusive approaches to hiring include:
  - Partnering with community-based organizations to develop targeted outreach for recruiting diverse candidates and ensure representation from underrepresented communities.<sup>xii</sup>
  - Recruiting unpaid caregivers into the direct care workforce. Individuals who have experience caring for family members or friends understand many of the complexities and responsibilities of caring for individuals with complex needs and can enhance the diversity of your direct care workforce.<sup>xiii</sup>
  - Translating recruiting materials into the most common languages spoken by candidates in your community, and distributing recruiting announcements throughout the communities you serve to reach diverse candidates.

- **Support staff through an environment of inclusivity.** An inclusive environment helps individuals from diverse backgrounds feel understood and valued. You may consider some of the following strategies:
  - Adding inclusive language to your organization’s mission, goals, values statements, or action plans.<sup>xiv</sup>
  - Encouraging staff at all levels to share their celebrations, traditions, holidays, and customs in staff meetings or informal gatherings.
  - Reinforcing policies around discrimination and tolerance during regular staff meetings, and informing staff of policies for resolving any issues that may arise.
  - Including direct care workers in making decisions that affect them, such as scheduling or meal service protocols.<sup>xv</sup>
  - Establishing peer support networks and peer mentor roles for direct care workers to share common experiences and challenges.<sup>xvi,xvii</sup> Such programs can support new employees and provide more experienced employees with opportunities for growth, leadership, and increased compensation—elements of job quality that can lower staff turnover<sup>xviii</sup> and improve retention.
  
- **Provide comprehensive training.** Training helps direct care workers provide high quality and culturally competent care; for more information on training see the [Training Culturally Competent Direct Care Workers](#) brief. Culturally competent and effective training strategies that support direct care workers include:
  - Assessing the language needs of direct care workers and provide training in and translate training materials into those languages.<sup>xix</sup>
  - Tailoring trainings to fit the learning style and literacy level needs of your direct care workforce.<sup>xx</sup> Direct care workers may benefit from adult learner-centered training methods, which emphasize experiential learning and skills development through interactive methods, such as case scenarios and role play.<sup>xxi</sup>
  - Highlighting and assessing the specific competencies—including the knowledge, skills, and attitudes—needed to work effectively in long-term care.<sup>xxii</sup> You can assess competency through written tests, skills demonstrations, and instructor observation during in-class activities.
  - For peer mentoring programs, training direct care workers who are taking on peer mentoring roles. Peer mentoring requires additional responsibilities and new skills, including leadership, problem-solving and advanced communication, and training can prepare direct care workers for their roles as peer mentors.
  
- **Train supervisors and administrators on working with direct care workers from diverse backgrounds.** Training supervisors on working with individuals from diverse backgrounds can help them better support the individuals they manage and mentor.<sup>xxiii</sup> You may consider:
  - Teaching managers to use a person-centered approach to supervision. Person-centered supervision focuses on coaching and supporting direct care workers in their growth, and can lead to better care quality and performance.<sup>xxiv</sup>

## Additional Resources

These resources provide additional information about recruiting and retaining diverse direct care workers.

**[Growing a Strong Direct Care Workforce: A Recruitment and Retention Guide for Employers](#)**: This guide from PHI describes strategies for recruiting and retaining a high-quality direct care workforce, with an emphasis on person-centered approaches to hiring, training, supporting, and supervising direct care workers.

**[The Power of Diversity: Supporting the Immigrant Workforce](#)**: From the Institute on Community Integration at University of Minnesota, this curriculum is for supervisors, managers, and administrative staff working in community-based services and programs that provide supports to persons with developmental disabilities. The curriculum focuses on helping staff understand the impact of culture and diversity and strategies for recruiting, training, and supporting direct care workers who are immigrants.

*The Medicare-Medicaid Coordination Office (MMCO) in the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) seeks to help beneficiaries dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid have access to seamless, high-quality health care that includes the full range of covered services in both programs. This brief is intended to support health plans and providers in integrating and coordinating care for dually eligible beneficiaries. It does not convey current or anticipated health plan or provider requirements. For additional information, please go to <https://www.resourcesforintegratedcare.com/>*

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