Long Term Care in Florida and the Growing Workforce Challenges

With seniors expected to account for the majority of Florida’s predicted population growth between now and 2030 and the increasing rate in the number of people living with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias, it is vitally important our state develops and reinforces a system with a quality continuum of long term health care for aging Floridians. Sustaining and improving quality care for these individuals depends upon a stable, well-trained workforce. Yet, the long term care profession – like many sectors of Florida’s health care system - is facing a chronic workforce shortage.

Growing Challenges

• By 2050, the population of adults aged 65 and over – who constitute 83% of nursing center resident population – is projected to nearly double, from 47.8 million (in 2015) to 88 million. The number of adults aged 85 and above – who account for 40% of nursing center residents– is expected to more than triple over the same period, from 6.3 million to 19 million.

• While the demand for long term care is growing, the number of workers available to provide that care is not.

• In 2015, there was a demand for approximately 2.3 million direct care workers. Based on the projected demand, by 2030 an estimated 3.4 million direct care workers will be needed to work in long term services and support (LTSS) settings.¹

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• Currently, there are 32 working-age adults for every adult over the age of 85. By 2050, that number is projected to plummet to 12.

• Demand for Registered Nurses (RNs) will grow by 46% from 438,600 FTEs in 2015 to 638,800 FTEs in 2030. Demand for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) is projected to drive the workforce to grow by 46%, from 364,200 FTEs in 2015 to 532,900 FTEs in 2030.¹

• Compounding the problem of too few long term caregivers is the ongoing shortage of nurses and nurse faculty. Nursing schools are having to turn away students looking to enroll in nursing programs due to an insufficient number of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, clinical preceptors, and budget constraints.²

• Additionally, a significant segment of the nursing workforce is nearing retirement age - 55% of the RN workforce is age 50 or older, and more than 1 million registered nurses are projected to reach retirement age within the next 10 to 15 years.²


². American Association of College of Nursing – Nursing Shortage Fact Sheet, April 2019

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• Turnover is also a significant concern. One in seven Florida nurses works in a skilled nursing or hospice facility, yet skilled nursing centers experience a 62.4 percent turnover rate in direct care registered nurses—the highest rate among six categories measured. The most difficult positions to fill will be those requiring RNs with experience and/or advanced education in caring for an increasingly elderly population.

• Especially in a stronger economy, many workers move to other industries that offer better job quality—whether higher wages, more stable hours, safer working conditions, opportunities for advancements or other advantages.

• Conservative estimates of turnover across the long term care sector range from 45 to 66 percent. One in four nursing assistants and one in five home health aides report they are actively looking for another job.

Programs to Support the LTC Workforce Needs

Studies show that having a well-trained nursing staff is key to ensuring quality long term care, since vacancies and staff turnover can compromise quality and increase costs. Florida Health Care Association (FHCA), which represents 82 percent of the state’s nursing centers, has established a Workforce Council to support member nursing centers with strengthening their workforce to facilitate the continued improvement in seniors’ quality care. Current FHCA workforce programs include:

• Online Long Term Care Job Board
• Career Climb Scholarships
• CNAOnline.com Nurse Assistant Training Program
• CNA Train-the-Trainer Program
• Executive Nurse Leadership Academy
• Infection Prevention and Control Officer Online Training
• LPN Supervisory Course Curriculum

For more information about FHCA’s programs that support long term care career opportunities, visit www fhca org.

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