National Workforce Development Month, September 2022
Talking Points

- September is National Workforce Development Month. LeadingAge and its nonprofit, mission-driven members strongly support the aging services workforce and are committed to bringing more people into the sector.

- LeadingAge and its nonprofit, mission-driven members, following weeks of advocacy throughout the Aging Services Workforce NOW campaign, are marking this month by highlighting initiatives to support and grow the number of employees working in the sector.

- Developing the aging services workforce is more important than ever: America's population is aging rapidly, demand for services is continuing to grow, and the coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated existing workforce needs in the aging services sector.

- LeadingAge and its nonprofit, mission-driven members strongly support the aging services workforce and appreciate the incredible sacrifices and dedication they give in their care and service to our older adults and families.

ACTION AND INITIATIVES

- Action is needed at all levels to make real progress: we need federal-level, state-level, community-level, and provider-level solutions. Our community is taking action by <insert example here>

- Without staff, there is no care, so we need to grow our pipeline of workers. Our community is taking action by <insert example here>

- Our nation and its policies must value and support aging services professionals with a range of immediate actions—in education and training, in career development (ladders and lattices), through immigration policy, and more. Our community is taking action in <insert area here> by <explain how/initiative here>.

- Workforce stability is dependent upon the ability to pay a living wage. Wages for direct care and home care professionals – aides, physical therapists, social workers, nurses – are tied to reimbursement rates. Our nation won't have a stable workforce until we improve reimbursement rates that keeps caregivers living in poverty. We need to join together to educate lawmakers on their role in this.

- LeadingAge envisions a direct care workforce that is a professionalized workforce. Just like professionals in other fields, direct care professionals would:
  - Receive high-quality, competency-based training.

- Earn a living wage and meaningful benefits commensurate with their competency levels.
- Enjoy good working conditions and skilled supervision.
- Have access to a variety of career advancement opportunities.
- Be respected and appreciated by their employers, care recipients, and the public.

- Mission-driven, nonprofit aging services providers tap a myriad of resources to support their workforce – including <insert your organization's examples> as well as LeadingAge programs and services, such as:
  - Career Center,
  - Leadership development programs,
  - Training and education webinars,
  - Student internship and scholarship opportunities
  - Student career path development resources

BACKGROUND

- The United States is experiencing a significant shortage of, and a growing demand for, qualified workers who are capable of managing, supervising, and providing high-quality services and supports for older adults. Several trends are fueling this national workforce crisis

- Among those currently reaching retirement age, more than half (52%) will require LTSS at some point, and for an average of two years. By 2050, the number of individuals using paid LTSS in any setting will likely double from the 13 million who used services in 2000, to 27 million people.

- Workforce opportunities and needs in aging services are broad – including, but not limited to, caregiving. The projected percentage increase, in 2020, in the number of positions employed in long-term care between 2010 and 2030 for non direct care / health care work:
  - 94%: Counselors and social workers
  - 93%: Community and social service workers
  - 69%: Building and ground maintenance workers
  - 67%: Food preparation and serving workers

- LeadingAge's vision for professionalizing the direct care workforce, as laid out in our Feeling Valued Because They Are Valued report, includes the following strategies:
  - Expand The Caregiver Pipeline
  - Enhance Training And Education
  - Facilitate Career Advancement
  - Increase Compensation
  - Prepare Universal Workers
  - Reform The LTSS Financing System

- Raising wages positively impacts workers, communities and older adults, as our Making Care Work Pay research shows:
    - **Benefits of paying a living wage:**
    - Benefit to workers: Financial well-being
    - Benefits to the direct care field: Fewer staffing shortages, lower turnover, higher productivity
    - Benefit to care recipients: Higher quality care
    - Benefits to local economies: Increased consumer spending and deduced public assistance

ADVOCACY FUNDING INFORMATION

Funding is critical. Providers of LTSS receive three quarters of their funding from Medicaid, Medicare, and other public sources, depending on state and federal policymakers to allocate sufficient funds to cover the costs of care. Because funding levels are woefully inadequate, providers continually struggle to find the resources they need to pay direct care workers at least a living wage. Poor compensation has far-reaching effects. It contributes to the financial instability of direct care workers and their families. It leads to chronic staffing shortages, decreased productivity, and reduced quality of care, and also adversely impacts the economic health of local communities.

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