



## Improving Continuing Education Opportunities for Iowa's Direct Care Workforce

This issue brief has been developed by the Iowa CareGivers Association (ICA) and the Iowa Better Jobs Better Care Coalition (BJBC). The issue brief is designed to inform policymakers about several important issues relating to Iowa's direct care workforce in an effort to encourage well-informed policies.

### Introduction

The direct care workforce provides a variety of services to Iowa consumers and families. Services can range from chore services (cleaning and outdoor maintenance) within an individual's home to checking vitals such as blood pressure within an acute hospital setting. Most people are familiar with Certified Nurse Aides (CNAs), which is only one of many types of direct care workers. Direct care workers, in this case, are defined as individuals who provide long term care and health care services, supervision, and emotional support to people with illnesses and disabilities in various settings (e.g., hospital, nursing home, home care). This definition does not include nurses, case managers or social workers.

This issue brief examines several Federal and state regulations that impact the direct care workforce's ability to access quality and relevant training and education and proposes some potential solutions to improve training and education standards and opportunities for Iowa's direct care workforce.

### Federal and State Regulations

Federally, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) regulate certain types of direct care workers based on work setting and funding stream. At the state level, the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA), Iowa Department of Public Health (DPH), Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS), and the Iowa Department of Elder Affairs (DEA) are responsible for carrying out the Federal regulations and providing oversight to different types of direct care workers. Below is a list of Federal and state code that impacts education and training requirements for the direct care workforce.

- Federal Code 484.36, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
- P.L. 100-203 Nursing Home Reform Act, Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA)
- Iowa Administrative Code, Chapter 24, Iowa Department of Elder Affairs
- Iowa Administrative Code, Chapter 25, Iowa Department of Elder Affairs
- Iowa Administrative Code, Chapter 58, Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals
- Iowa Administrative Code, Chapter 80, Iowa Department of Public Health
- Iowa Administrative Code, Chapter 81, Iowa Department of Human Services
- Iowa Administrative Code, Chapter 114, Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals

### Impact of Federal and State Regulations

There are Federal and state regulations that currently impact how direct care workers in Iowa access continuing education and training, and remain a viable part of the long term care and health care workforce. The first issue is impacted by Federal and state regulations, whereby there are no continuing education standards that are linked to a direct care worker's certification. Continuing education and training for direct care workers in Iowa is currently based on the job setting and funding stream and not the functions or services provided by the direct care worker. Similarly, there is no way to ensure that the continuing education and training provided is of high quality.

In most cases, it is the responsibility of employers (nursing homes, home care agencies, hospitals, etc.) to provide twelve hours of in-service annually. There are no specific standards related to the in-services and they often include information about Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations, fire safety, and patient rights, which should already be included as part of employee orientation and annual review programs. Rather, clinically relevant topics should be a part of the direct care workforce's continuing education in order to improve the level of care given to Iowa's senior and disability population.

