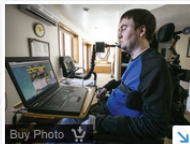


## Relax rules for direct-care instructors

Clare Kostelnick, RN, Boone 12:18 a.m. CST January 18, 2015



(Photo: Rodney White/The Register)

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Two stories in the Jan. 11 Register both dealt with the crisis we are facing with a shortage of direct-care workers in our state. Lee Rood's story illustrating [how caregivers are in short supply](#) to care for a young man who is a quadriplegic and Lynn Hicks' [commentary on the direct-care "disaster"](#) that is looming. There are no easy answers, but I do have

one solution that will definitely ease one obstacle that is fueling this shortage of competent direct-care workers.

I have taught nurse aide classes at the community college level for more than 20 years. I take great pleasure in participating in the instruction of our future caregivers. I have co-authored a textbook for long-term care nursing assistants, yet today if I applied for my current teaching position I would be rejected! In Iowa only nurses who have worked in a long-term care (nursing home) setting for one year (40 hours per week) are "qualified" to teach these courses. A colleague who has her master's degree in nursing, is a registered nurse practitioner, and has an interest in teaching CNA classes at the community college level is not "qualified." She can teach LPN and RN programs but cannot teach a basic nurse aide class. Keep in mind this is one of the most basic classes in health care. It covers important yet fairly basic skills such as bathing, dressing, bed making, etc.

In Iowa, the Department of Inspections and Appeals interprets the legislation of the Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1987 (OBRA'87) to exclude nurses from teaching who have not met that requirement of full-time employment in a nursing home. Other states interpret this legislation with more latitude. I was fortunate because I was "grandfathered in." Whenever some of my younger colleagues have questioned the OBRA wording, they are told there is nothing that can be done because it is *federal* legislation. They are not allowed to teach, and thus the number of CNA classes to be offered by the college is limited.

I agree with Hicks; many of these direct-care individuals are "part saint and part angel." If there is a direct-care worker that cares for you or a family member, start by giving them a hug or a word of encouragement. They are very much under-appreciated. In Iowa we need to stop turning away willing instructors to train these direct-care workers. I would be in favor of a comprehensive training program for interested RNs that would give them the necessary background in long-term care that would enable them to be effective teachers, while relaxing the requirement of having the year of full-time employment in that setting.

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