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NEWS RELEASE

Polling Data Show Direct Care Workers Committed to Profession, Want Additional Training to Provide Best Care

Lemoyne, Pa. (April 10, 2018) – Pennsylvania’s direct care workers – people who provide care and services at home for individuals of all ages who have disabilities or a chronic illness – are committed to caring for seniors and people with disabilities at home and seek out training so they can be better at their jobs. In fact, more than half reported that they have been working as a direct care worker for more than 10 years, and nearly half plan to continue for next 10 years or more. These findings were collected last month during the 2018 Direct Care Worker Forum in Harrisburg, organized by the Pennsylvania Homecare Association (PHA) and the Pennsylvania Department of Aging (PDA).

Nearly 120 direct care workers, each nominated for Pennsylvania’s 2018 Direct Care Worker of the Year Award, attended the Forum and participated in live polling with PHA. During that event, Verneil “Ric” Williams, a home health aide with Extended Family Care in Pittsburgh for nearly 20 years, was named 2018 Direct Care Worker of the Year.

“These are the best of the best direct care workers we have here in Pennsylvania, and while we had them all together in a room, we wanted to learn more about how they view their profession and what can be done to increase recruitment and retention of caregivers as Pennsylvania’s population ages and the demand for in-home care increases,” said PHA CEO Vicki Hoak.

Pennsylvania is home to more than 12.8 million residents. Of these, approximately 2.9 million are adults age 60 and older, and more than 300,000 are aged 85 and older. By 2020, the population of older Pennsylvanians is projected to increase by 25%, and the population of Pennsylvanians aged 80 and over is projected to increase by 20,000 individuals.

Of the 120 direct care workers participating in the live polling, nearly all – 98% – said that they would like to receive additional training on services they can provide to their consumers to keep them safe and healthy at home. In 2016, the Departments of Health, State and Human Services issued a policy clarification to broaden the type of services that direct care workers can perform in the home, including assistance with medication, assistance with bowel and bladder routines, ostomy care, clean intermittent catheterization and basic wound care. Two-thirds of the direct care workers surveyed said they are happy that they are able to perform these expanded services with training.

Nearly all of the direct care workers said they have a passion for caregiving, and aren’t in the profession for the money. The average wage of a direct care worker in Pennsylvania is \$10.50 per hour. The workers described their jobs as “challenging” but “rewarding.” Many said it is “life-changing.”

“Direct care workers are the unsung heroes of home-based care,” Hoak said. “They provide vital lifelines to the seniors and people with disabilities they serve. They act as the eyes and ears of their consumers and can recognize a change in condition and help to prevent avoidable hospitalizations.”

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