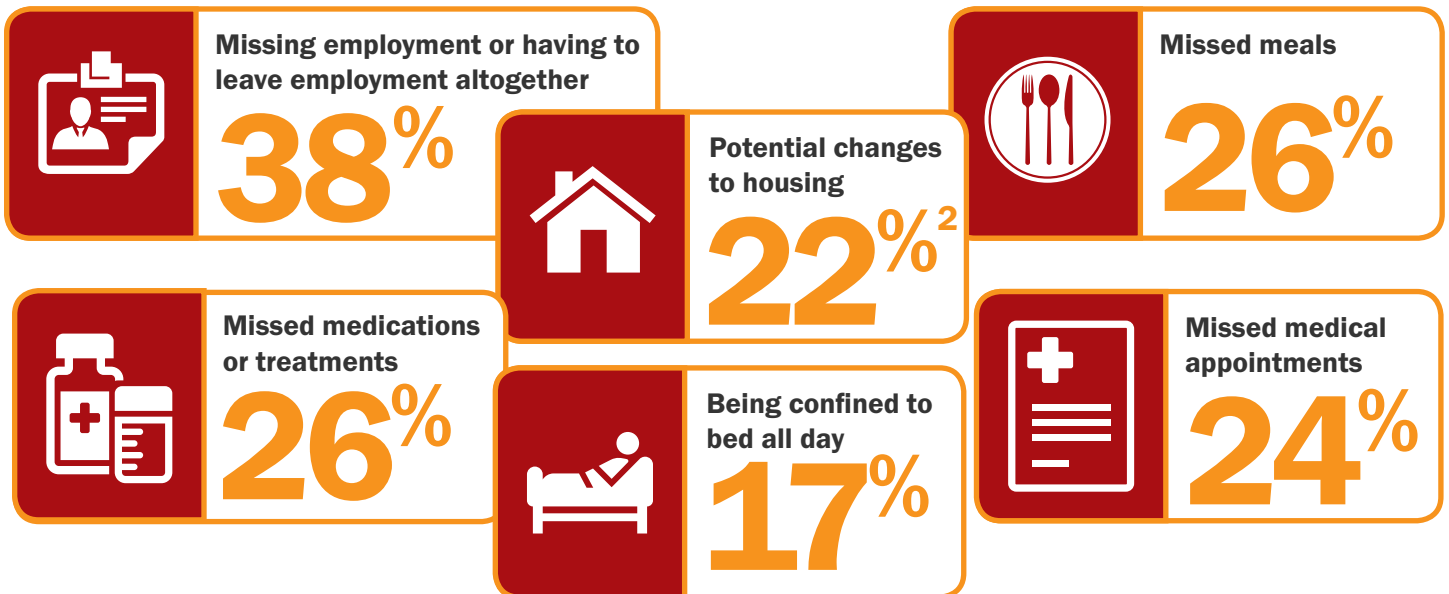


Support the Professional Direct Care Workforce: Keep People in Their Homes

■ In Wisconsin a shortage of professional direct care workers has created a crisis for people with disabilities, older adults, and their families. **The need for direct care workers is projected to increase by an additional 20,000 workers by 2026¹.**

When there is no direct care worker, Wisconsin residents with disabilities describe these common impacts on their daily lives:



■ In 2016, a statewide survey of more than 500 people who rely on direct care services and their families found **95% had trouble finding workers, 85% did not have enough workers to cover all their shifts, 43% couldn't find a worker 7 or more times per month, and 60% said they get sick more often when they do not have enough staff³.**

■ In Wisconsin, the annual worker turnover rate is **more than 50% and can be as high as 67%⁴.**

■ Currently, **70% of personal care agencies are unable to staff all hours needed, and 93% of agencies find it difficult to fill job openings⁵.**

■ In Wisconsin, **51% of Home Care workers and 38% of Nursing Home workers rely on some form of means-tested public benefits⁶.**

■ **29% of the Home Care workforce are on Medicaid; 35% of Nursing home workers on Medicaid⁷.**



71% of Home Care and 70% of Nursing home workers are below 300% of the Federal Poverty Line; 22% and 18% are below 100% FPL respectively⁸.

Recommendations



Direct Department of Health Services (DHS) to create a Medicaid Buy-In waiver for direct care workers and unpaid caregivers. Many direct care workers are also Medicaid BadgerCare recipients. A Medicaid Buy-In model would allow workers to earn and save more in exchange for paying a premium, may encourage worker retention, and encourages workers to contribute more hours to Wisconsin's caregiving needs.



Direct DHS to include a mechanism within their rate setting formula to adjust direct care worker pay rates upward in counties adjacent to borders of other states (Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois, Michigan) so Wisconsin direct care worker rates are competitive with the rates in adjacent states. In some areas, Wisconsin workers are commuting and working across the border because the wages are higher; this exacerbates the existing worker crisis for Wisconsin residents living in border areas.



BPDD supports legislative efforts to address other factors that contribute to direct service worker turnover and vacancy rates including low wages, few or no benefits (including health insurance, paid time off, and retirement savings plans), transportation costs associated with commuting to client's homes, and lack of training/career advancement opportunities.



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¹ State of Care: Wisconsin's Home Care Landscape. PHO. 2017. <https://phinational.org/resource/state-of-care-wisconsins-home-care-landscape/>

¹¹ Wisconsin Personal Services Association.

² Survival Coalition Consumer Survey, November 2016. <http://www.survivalcoalitionwi.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/SurvivalSurveyFactSheet.pdf>

³ Survival Coalition Consumer Survey, November 2016. <http://www.survivalcoalitionwi.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/SurvivalSurveyFactSheet.pdf>

⁴ State of Care: Wisconsin's Home Care Landscape. PHO. 2017. <https://phinational.org/resource/state-of-care-wisconsins-home-care-landscape/>

⁵ Wisconsin Personal Services Association.

⁶ <https://phinational.org/policy-research/workforce-data-center>

⁷ <https://phinational.org/policy-research/workforce-data-center>

⁸ <https://phinational.org/policy-research/workforce-data-center>