

# **Older Workers: A Solution to the LTC Workforce Crisis**

**Robyn I. Stone , DrPH**

**Executive Director, Institute for the Future of Aging Services (IFAS)**

**Senior Vice President of Research, American Association of Homes  
and Services for the Aging (AAHSA)**

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# Demand For LTC Workforce

- **Direct care workers provide 70 to 80% of paid hands-on care and personal assistance**
- **In 2006, over 3 million direct care workers across all LTC settings**
- **Growing number of independent providers—nearly 1 in 4 personal care/home care aides in 2006 directly employed by consumers**

# Future Demand For LTC Workers

- **By 2016 projected demand calls for an additional one million new positions**
- **By 2016 home and community-based workers outnumber those employed in nursing homes by 2 to 1**
- **Between 2006 and 2016, home care/home health aides projected to be second and third fastest growing occupations (increasing by 51% and 49%)**

# Challenges In Recruitment and Retention

- **Lack of financial incentives**
- **Variable working conditions and job design**
- **Lack of adequate/quality training**
- **Decreasing availability of traditional caregivers (women aged 25 to 54 years) to fill jobs**

# Older Workers: Part of the Solution

- **One option for expanding labor pool**
- **Data from Operation ABLE study supports potential (Kosniewski and Hwalek, 2006)**
- **Explored potential of low-income older workers in 7 states as new direct care worker labor pool**
- **Methodology**
  - **Focus groups with 40 older workers from MI, NE and CA**
  - **Telephone survey with 696 older workers aged 55+**
  - **Telephone interviews with 615 nursing home operators and 410 home health agency operators**

# Major Findings

- **Older workers interested in direct care worker careers (43% of respondents)**
- **Frontline jobs in home health more appealing than nursing home jobs**
- **Employers expressed interest in maintaining current older workers and hiring new ones (with some reservations)**

# Employer Perceptions

- **Positive perceptions of older workers' work behaviors**
  - **More loyal, knowledgeable and motivated**
  - **More likely to be team player**
  - **More likely to be independent problem solver**
- **Positive perceptions of worker/client relationships**
  - **More understanding and patient**
  - **Greater interest in caregiving role**
  - **Better able to communicate and develop trust with client**
- **Negative perceptions**
  - **Lack of physical strength/endurance**
  - **Technology illiteracy**

# Challenges to Expanding Older Worker Labor Pool

- **Finding new recruitment avenues (e.g., senior centers, places of worship)**
- **Perceptions (sometimes real) of increases in health care costs**
- **Age discrimination laws may restrict targeted recruiting**
- **Over reliance on public transportation**
- **Training issues (costs, availability and content)**
- **Technology illiteracy**