

DC Coalition on Long Term Care

Recommendations by the DC Coalition for Long Term Care to support home health workers and enhance their number and quality during the COVID-19 Emergency

Presented by Judith Levy, Chair, LTSS Committee, MCAC and DC Workforce Workgroup
April 22, 2020

The Coalition received a helpful response from Deputy Mayor Turnage to our April 4 letter to the Mayor requesting five emergency actions to support home health workers and to prevent a shortage of these key health workers in a time of health crisis and social distancing. However, there are still important gaps in what has already been accomplished that need to be filled.

- The March 11, 2020 order issued by DC Health to waive DC credentials from health care providers in facilities who have already been licensed in other jurisdictions had two important gaps in its applicability to long term care. An update to the order should make clear that it also applies to those workers that are **certified and registered** in other jurisdictions and it should also apply to those **working for assisted living providers, home health and home care agencies** in addition to traditional health care facilities.
- The Emergency Rule published in the DC Register on Friday, April 10 by DC Health waiving HHA training requirements for CNAs certified in DC or other jurisdictions nonetheless requires that such workers take the HHA test to work as HHAs in DC. However, A) Pearson Vue, the District's test vendor, is not scheduling tests at this time due to the PHE and social distancing requirements, and B) the DC test is not suited to credentialing personal care aides and home care workers during a pandemic emergency because of the complexity of the multiple-choice questions. Furthermore, the order states that it expires on February 18, 2020. An update should: **set an expiration date far enough in the future to be valid as long as the health emergency continues.** The update should also **waive the requirement for the HHA test** for any worker who applies to work as a Personal Care or Home Health Aides in DC or who are already employed in agencies providing home care in DC.
- Currently, all CNA and HHA training programs have closed until further notice, due to the PHE. We are already facing a severe workforce shortage, with high turnover rates across all sectors. Coronavirus likely only increases



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attrition. Shuttering training schools means that there will be even fewer aides to fill critically needed positions in hospitals, nursing homes, home health and home care agencies in the coming months. Approved training programs for CNAs and HHAs in DC public schools, including public charter schools should be allowed to open as “essential service providers. Schools and students should be given the tools needed to continue studies remotely and guidelines should be established to allow students to safely complete the clinical portion of the curriculum.

- We applaud DHCF’s request for approval under the Federal CARES Act for temporary rate increases from Medicaid and Medicare for home health services, and one and a half time for work in quarantine settings. We urge expedited administration of such increases, once approved.
- We also applaud the partnership between the DC Hospital Association and Uber to provide transportation to hospital workers. However, other health care workers including CNAs, HHAs and PCA are struggling with reduced access to public transportation. We urge the Bowser administration to identify ways to expand this program to include workers who are supporting residents in other health care settings and at home. We know that the provision of these services is essential to reducing the burden on hospitals and helping hospitals to safely and effectively discharge patients who no longer need acute care.

The LTC Coalition and the DC Workforce Workgroup seeks to work collaboratively to address the pressing issues facing our health care system during this unprecedented PHE. We are currently compiling best practices from across the country with the goal of sharing constructive and actionable recommendations to address both the short and long-term needs of the District.



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