



Wisconsin Personal Services Association, Inc.

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Personal Care Agencies from Every County Report Dire Workforce, Access Issues

More than half of agencies surveyed report 7 or more open caregiver positions; 17 agencies considering closing

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Wisconsin Personal Services Association (WPSA) released alarming data from more than 120 personal care agencies who responded to its 2021 Workforce Survey that show a dangerous shortage of personal care workers is threatening the health and safety of older adults and people with disabilities. Over 50% of agencies currently have seven or more open caregiver positions while 1 in 3 agencies have more than 10 open positions.

“We heard from a record-number of personal care agencies, representing every county in the state, that they cannot recruit and retain workers with the current Medicaid reimbursement rate. This means that today in Wisconsin, someone will miss a meal, sleep in their wheelchair or spend hours in soiled clothing because there aren’t enough personal care workers to go around,” said WPSA President Todd Costello.

A lack of personal care workers poses a serious health risk for individuals who must go without services. Concerning trends were revealed by the survey, including:

- 95% of personal care agencies turned away a client in the past year because of a lack of workers;
- 76% of agencies have a client whose family member quit their job to care for them;
- 47% have a client who's moved to a more restrictive setting like a nursing home;
- 40% of agencies are thinking about leaving Medicaid;
- 17 personal care agencies are considering closing; more than 100 agencies have closed in the past eight years.

“If action is not taken in the state budget to address the serious shortage of personal care workers, the access issues we are seeing will only get worse, and costs will continue to be shifted to more expensive settings,” said Costello.

The current Medicaid reimbursement rate for personal care agencies is \$19.16 per hour, but the average estimated cost of providing care according to survey respondents is \$24.60 per hour. WPSA is advocating for a 23% increase to the Medicaid reimbursement rate and the creation of a statewide rate band as part of the 2021-23 state budget to help close the gap.

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