

**PA WDB Healthcare Workforce Ad Hoc Committee  
Professional Care Worker Shortage Crisis Statement**

**Crisis Statement on Shortage of Professional Care Workers  
Approved by the PA WDB on May 5, 2020**

Pennsylvania is in the midst of a crisis in the form of a shortage of professional care workers.<sup>1</sup> These are the workers whose job it is to care for others, ranging from Pennsylvania’s youngest children to its most senior citizens. This crisis need for frontline healthcare workers, in particular, has only heightened over the last few weeks as a result of the community spread of the COVID-19 virus across the commonwealth. The current high unemployment rate, combined with an industry that needs workers, makes now the most opportune time to support the many vulnerable Pennsylvanians as well as the unemployed.

While there are several factors contributing to this shortage, most can be attributed to two major challenges – an increased demand for the services that these types of workers provide, and the difficulty of retaining these individuals after they begin employment in these occupations.

Increased demand for these workers is attributable to factors including the overall demographic trends in Pennsylvania, including an increase in the numbers of older Pennsylvanians and individuals with disabilities, an increased demand for early childhood education, especially in areas considered to be childcare deserts, and increasing need for treatment of mental health and substance abuse disorders. Because of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the overall demand for and recognized value of these essential workers, particularly those in the healthcare, childcare, and education fields, is increasing at a rapid rate in Pennsylvania and nationwide.

Turnover and retention challenges are attributable to several issues, including, but not limited to, the physically demanding nature of these jobs, low wages paired with the rising cost of living, infrequent access to employer provided benefits, unpredictable schedules, and poor opportunities for advancement. These turnover and retention challenges may also reasonably be expected to rise considering the increased health risk for low-wage workers who fall under the professional caregiver umbrella, due to the current and future impacts of COVID-19.

**Specific data demonstrating the crisis:**

Demand Factors

- Employment growth in Pennsylvania for this occupational group is projected to be nearly 2.5 times the average for all occupations (13.4 percent vs. 5.5 percent) over the next ten years. More than 50,000 more workers are needed for these occupations by 2026, not including the replacement needs of those who leave these fields for other work or retirement.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Table 1 for a list of occupations included as professional care workers

<sup>2</sup> See Table 2 for the PA Employment Outlook by Detailed Occupation

## PA WDB Healthcare Workforce Ad Hoc Committee Professional Care Worker Shortage Crisis Statement

- According to PHI, the long-term care sector is expected to add an additional 1.3 million professional care worker jobs, nationally, from 2018 to 2028 to its already nearly 4.5 million workers, primarily personal care aide positions—more new jobs than any other occupation in the U.S. economy.<sup>3</sup>
- As of July 2018, Pennsylvania’s estimated population was 12.8 million, with persons 65 years and older representing 18.2 percent of the commonwealth’s population.<sup>4</sup>
- Pennsylvania’s senior citizen population is growing at a rate 20 times faster than the commonwealth’s overall population. By 2025, more than one in five PA residents will be age 65 or older, while the numbers of people below the traditional retirement age decreases.<sup>5</sup> Studies show that seniors want to remain in their own residences as they age, with access to necessary care and assistance. Additionally, vacant care worker positions at nursing homes is leading to less capacity to accommodate all those in need of care outside of the home.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the professional caregiver staff and residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities are at an increased risk for COVID-19 infections and fatalities.<sup>7</sup>
- In Pennsylvania, 57 percent of all residents live in a child care desert, defined as an area where there are more than three times as many children as licensed child care slots. Typically, availability is especially limited for families who have infants and toddlers, work evening and night shifts, or live in rural areas.<sup>8</sup>
- In addition, only 39 percent of all child care in Pennsylvania currently meets high-quality standards. Among the shortcomings in quality are high rates of provider turnover, resulting in a lack of stable, consistent caregiving for young children. The economic impacts of insufficient child care on working families costs Pennsylvania 2.5 billion annually.<sup>9</sup>
- According to the 2014 Pennsylvania Autism Census Update, the number of individuals with autism in all age groups receiving services has increased tremendously since the original census study was released (in 2009). It also found that adults with autism were the fastest growing group in Pennsylvania. This dramatic upward trend is expected to continue.<sup>10</sup> This trend would reasonably be expected to increase the need for specific support services, within the classroom environment and well beyond.
- From 2015 to 2018, the number of Medicaid consumers receiving outpatient drug and alcohol treatment services from medical experts, including professional care workers, increased by nearly 40 percent.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <https://phinational.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Its-Time-to-Care-2020-PHI.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/PA>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.inquirer.com/philly/news/pennsylvania/pennsylvanias-population-is-aging-who-is-going-to-pay-for-it-20180115.html>

<sup>6</sup> [https://phinational.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/phi\\_homecare\\_factsheet\\_2017\\_0.pdf](https://phinational.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/phi_homecare_factsheet_2017_0.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Cases.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> <http://paearlylearning.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2019-04-ELIC-RN-report-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <http://paearlylearning.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2019-04-ELIC-RN-report-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://drexel.edu/now/archive/2014/November/Pennsylvania-Autism-Census/>

<sup>11</sup> See Table 3 for the unique count of Medicaid Consumers receiving outpatient drug & alcohol treatment services

## PA WDB Healthcare Workforce Ad Hoc Committee Professional Care Worker Shortage Crisis Statement

### Turnover and Retention Factors<sup>12</sup>

- In Pennsylvania, the average cost of living (COL) for one adult with one child is \$49,192 per year.<sup>13</sup> The average full-time professional care worker earns just \$28,101 per year.<sup>14</sup>
- For those workers with children, the cost of infant care in a licensed childcare center in Pennsylvania, averages \$11,560 per year, which represents 46 percent of the annual income of a single parent in the commonwealth. Comparatively the average annual cost of public college tuition in the state is \$14,437.<sup>15</sup> This increases the likelihood that the increased turnover and vacancies within professional care worker occupations might be largely attributed to the lack of affordable childcare.
- Additionally, Pennsylvanians pay 26.8 percent more on average for housing than Americans elsewhere. Transportation runs 12.3 percent above average, utilities 11.8 percent above average, miscellaneous goods and services 7.6 percent above average, and groceries 6.5 percent above average.<sup>16</sup>
- Low wages mean that a significant portion of professional care workers and their families in the U.S. rely on public assistance, such as food stamps, cash assistance, and Medicaid. Almost half of workers (home health aides, nursing assistants, and personal care aides) in home care and 30 percent in nursing homes receive some form of public assistance. This does not include other types of assistance that these workers and their families may receive for housing, child care, energy needs, etc.<sup>17</sup>
- Employers are struggling to recruit and retain enough workers to fill vacant positions, while existing workers are shouldering the burden of growing demand without enough resources or support. In turn, consumers are struggling to access the care they need—piecing together support from family and friends; waiting months or even years to receive formal services; moving into nursing homes sooner than necessary; or simply doing without.<sup>18</sup>

### Professional Care Worker Demographics

- Professional Care Workers, on average, are more likely to be women and people of color.<sup>19</sup> As these occupations are not as likely as others to provide the economic stability to support individuals and families as other types of occupations, they are impacting segments of the population already more likely to face challenging economic prospects.

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<sup>12</sup> See Table 4 for a breakdown of estimated turnover rates.

<sup>13</sup> <https://livingwage.mit.edu/>

<sup>14</sup> See Table 5 and Table 6 for the 2018 hourly and annual wage ranges for the professional care worker occupational titles and a Wage Range Comparison, respectively.

<sup>15</sup> <http://paearlylearning.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2019-04-ELIC-RN-report-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.rural.palegislature.us/documents/reports/Cost-of-Living-Study-2018.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.aging.pa.gov/organization/PennsylvaniaLongTermCareCouncil/Documents/Reports/LTCC\\_Blueprint%20for%20Strengthening%20Pennsylvania%E2%80%99s%20Direct%20Care%20Workforce\\_April2019.pdf](https://www.aging.pa.gov/organization/PennsylvaniaLongTermCareCouncil/Documents/Reports/LTCC_Blueprint%20for%20Strengthening%20Pennsylvania%E2%80%99s%20Direct%20Care%20Workforce_April2019.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> <https://phinational.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Its-Time-to-Care-2020-PHI.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> See Table 7 for PA data specific to gender and race/ethnicity.

**PA WDB Healthcare Workforce Ad Hoc Committee  
Professional Care Worker Shortage Crisis Statement**

It follows that addressing the crisis facing the professional care workforce is not only a socioeconomic necessity, but also a necessity of equity within Pennsylvania at large.

- While the overall workforce in Pennsylvania is slightly less than 50 percent female, every occupation identified as a Professional Care Worker occupation is majority female. For at least three of these occupations, nearly 9 in 10 individuals working in these occupations is female. For 7 of the 8 occupations, at least 7 in 10 individuals working are female.
- In 6 of the 8 occupations, non-white individuals account for a greater percentage of individuals working in these occupations than the average across all occupations. This is especially pronounced in the Nursing, Psychiatric, and Home Health Aides occupations, where persons of color account for nearly 3 in 10 individuals working in these occupations.
- In the coming decades, millions of older adults and people with disabilities in the U.S. will increasingly rely on professional care workers for assistance, and women of color will be critical to meeting this demand.
  - Nationally, women of color make up the largest and fastest-growing segment of this workforce (home health aide, nursing assistant, and personal care aide occupations)—from 2005 to 2015, the number of women of color in these occupations grew from 1.2 million to 1.7 million.
  - In addition, from 2016 to 2026, the number of women of color in the labor force is projected to grow by 6.3 million workers, while the number of white women in the labor force is projected to decline by 384,000 over the same timeframe. Professional care worker jobs do not provide economic stability to women of color and their families—leaving them generally more likely to live in poverty and rely on public benefits than their counterparts, and they have smaller family incomes to rely on for support.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> <https://phinational.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Racial-and-Gender-Disparities-in-DCW-PHI-2017.pdf>

**PA WDB Healthcare Workforce Ad Hoc Committee  
Professional Care Worker Shortage Crisis Statement**

**Table 1**

<b>SOC</b>	<b>Professional Care Worker Occupations</b>	<b>Reported Job Titles<sup>21</sup></b>
21-1093	Social & Human Service Assistants	Advocate, Caseworker, Community Coordinator, Family Support Worker, Home based Assistant, Human Services Program Specialist, Mental Health Technician, Outreach Specialist, Social Services Assistant, Social Work Associate
25-2011	Preschool Teachers, except Special Education	Child Development Teacher, Early Childhood Teacher, Group Teacher, Infant Teacher, Montessori Preschool Teacher, Nursery Teacher, Pre-Kindergarten Teacher (Pre-K Teacher), Preschool Teacher, Teacher, Toddler Teacher
25-9041	Teacher Assistants	Educational Assistant, Instructional Assistant, Paraeducator, Paraprofessional, Special Education Aide, Special Education Paraprofessional, Special Education Teacher Assistant, Teacher Aide, Teacher Assistant, Teaching Assistant
29-2041	Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics	Emergency Medical Technician (EMT); Emergency Medical Technician, Basic (EMT, B); Emergency Medical Technician/Driver (EMT/DRIVER); EMT Intermediate (Emergency Medical Technician, Intermediate); EMT, Paramedic (Emergency Medical Technician, Paramedic); EMT/Dispatcher (Emergency Medical Technician/Dispatcher); First Responder; Flight Paramedic; Multi Care Technician (Multi Care Tech); Paramedic
31-1011	Home Health Aides	Caregiver, Certified Home Health Aide (CHHA), Certified Medical Aide (CMA), Certified Nurse Aide (CNA), Home Attendant, Home Care Aide, Home Health Aide (HHA), Home Health Provider, Hospice/Home Health Aide, In Home Caregiver
31-1013	Psychiatric Aides	Mental Health Aide (MHA), Mental Health Technician (MHT), Mental Health Worker (MHW), Patient Care Assistant (PCA), Psychiatric Aide, Psychiatric Nursing Aide, Psychiatric Nursing Assistant, Resident Care Technician, Residential Counselor, Therapeutic Program Worker (TPW)
31-1014	Nursing Assistants	Certified Medication Aide (CMA), Certified Nurse Aide (CNA), Certified Nurse Aide (CNA), Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Geriatric Nursing Assistant (GNA), Licensed Nursing Assistant (LNA), Nurses' Aide, Nursing Aide, Nursing Assistant, State Tested Nursing Assistant (STNA)

<sup>21</sup> Federal and State occupational data is categorized by the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system. SOC occupations often encompass many alternative job titles used by employers and workers to describe the same job.

**PA WDB Healthcare Workforce Ad Hoc Committee  
Professional Care Worker Shortage Crisis Statement**

31-1015	Orderlies	Attendant, Operating Room Assistant, Orderly, Patient Care Assistant (PCA), Patient Care Technician (PCT), Patient Escort, Patient Transporter, Radiology Transporter, Resident Assistant, Transporter
31-9092	Medical Assistants	Certified Medical Assistant (CMA), Chiropractor Assistant, Clinical Assistant, Doctor's Assistant, Medical Assistant (MA), Medical Office Assistant, Ophthalmic Technician, Optometric Assistant, Optometric Technician, Registered Medical Assistant (RMA)
39-9011	Childcare Workers	Assistant Teacher, Caregiver, Child Care Worker, Child Caregiver, Childcare Provider, Childcare Worker, Daycare Teacher, Daycare Worker, Infant Teacher, Toddler Teacher
39-9021	Personal Care Aides	Caregiver, Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Home Care Aide, Home Health Care Provider, Medication Aide, Patient Care Assistant (PCA), Personal Care Aide, Personal Care Assistant (PCA), Personal Care Attendant (PCA), Resident Care Assistant (RCA)

**Table 2**

		<b>Estimated Employment 2016</b>	<b>Projected Employment 2026</b>	<b>Percent Change</b>
<b>00-0000</b>	<b>Total, All Occupations</b>	<b>6,181,960</b>	<b>6,523,990</b>	<b>5.5%</b>
<b>N/A</b>	<b>Total, All Professional Care Workers</b>	<b>388,110</b>	<b>440,160</b>	<b>13.4%</b>
21-1093	Social & Human Service Assistants	21,350	23,260	8.9%
25-2011	Preschool Teachers (Early Childhood Education)	17,590	18,790	6.8%
25-9041	Teacher Assistants	45,390	48,160	6.1%
29-2041	Emergency Medical Technicians & Paramedics	12,150	13,700	12.8%
31-1011	Home Health Aides	47,040	59,670	26.8%
31-1013	Psychiatric Aides	2,240	2,230	-0.4%
31-1014	Nursing Assistants	78,610	86,510	10.0%
31-1015	Orderlies	2,520	2,660	5.6%
31-9092	Medical Assistants	26,930	32,810	21.8%
39-9011	Childcare Workers	44,830	46,220	3.1%
39-9021	Personal Care Aides	89,460	106,150	18.7%

*NOTE: If applicable, there may be future additions to this list of professional care worker occupations.*

**PA WDB Healthcare Workforce Ad Hoc Committee  
Professional Care Worker Shortage Crisis Statement**

**Table 3**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Unique Count of Medicaid Consumers receiving outpatient drug and alcohol treatment services</b>
2014	79,336
2015	99,761
2016	121,785
2017	134,981
2018	138,696

*Source: PA Department of Human Services (DHS)*

*NOTE: The increase from 2014 to 2015 is due, in part, to DHS expanding Medicaid coverage to more individuals.*

**Table 4**

<b>SOC Code</b>	<b>Occupational Title</b>	<b>Estimated Turnover Rate</b>
<b>00-0000</b>	<b>Total, All Occupations</b>	<b>11.2%</b>
<b>N/A</b>	<b>Total, All Professional Care Workers</b>	<b>12.6%</b>
21-1093	Social & Human Service Assistants	12.1%
25-2011	Preschool Teachers	10.0%
25-9041	Teacher Assistants	10.4%
29-2041	Emergency Medical Technicians & Paramedics	6.2%
31-1011	Home Health Aides	12.6%
31-1013	Psychiatric Aides	11.1%
31-1014	Nursing Assistants	11.7%
31-1015	Orderlies	11.4%
31-9092	Medical Assistants	11.7%
39-9011	Childcare Workers	14.6%
39-9021	Personal Care Aides	15.3%

*Source: PA Dept of Labor & Industry's Center for Workforce Information & Analysis; Long-Term Occupational Projections (2016-2026)*

*NOTE: The turnover rates provided in this table are calculated according to Bureau of Labor Statistics methodology. These capture the turnover that results from individuals leaving these occupations for work in other fields, but do not account for individuals that move from one employer to another within the same field. Therefore, this data only accounts for one aspect of the retention and turnover issues prevalent among these occupations.*

**PA WDB Healthcare Workforce Ad Hoc Committee  
Professional Care Worker Shortage Crisis Statement**

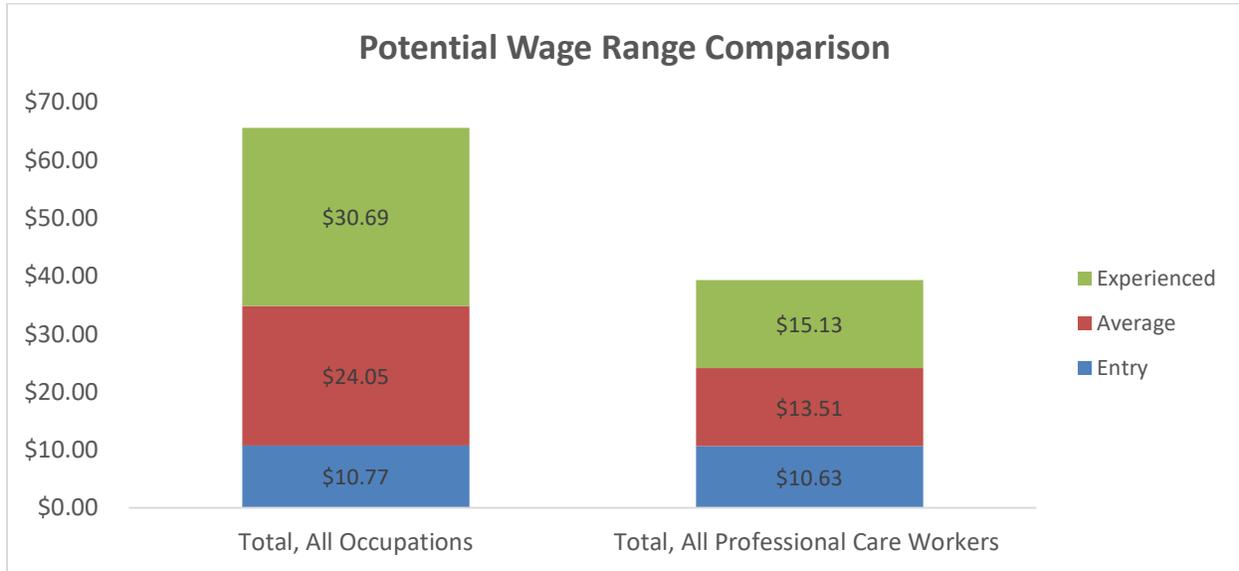
**Table 5**

Occupational Title	Hourly Wages (2018)			Annual Wages (2018)		
	Entry	Average	Experienced	Entry	Average	Experienced
<b>Total, All Occupations</b>	<b>\$10.77</b>	<b>\$24.05</b>	<b>\$30.69</b>	<b>\$22,402</b>	<b>\$50,024</b>	<b>\$63,830</b>
<b>Total, All Professional Care Workers</b>	<b>\$10.63</b>	<b>\$13.51</b>	<b>\$15.13</b>	<b>\$22,110</b>	<b>\$28,101</b>	<b>\$31,470</b>
Social & Human Service Assistants	\$12.32	\$16.50	\$18.59	\$25,620	\$34,320	\$38,670
Preschool Teachers	\$10.05	\$14.06	\$16.07	\$20,910	\$29,250	\$33,420
Teacher Assistants	\$9.33	\$12.81	\$14.54	\$19,410	\$26,640	\$30,250
Childcare Workers	\$8.45	\$11.02	\$12.30	\$17,580	\$22,920	\$25,590
Emergency Medical Technicians & Paramedics	\$11.20	\$16.34	\$18.90	\$23,300	\$33,980	\$39,320
Home Health Aides	\$10.26	\$12.17	\$13.12	\$21,350	\$25,310	\$27,280
Psychiatric Aides	\$12.33	\$17.04	\$19.39	\$25,650	\$35,450	\$40,340
Nursing Assistants	\$12.28	\$14.73	\$15.95	\$25,550	\$30,630	\$33,170
Orderlies	\$11.38	\$13.83	\$15.05	\$23,670	\$28,760	\$31,300
Medical Assistants	\$12.50	\$15.75	\$17.38	\$26,010	\$32,770	\$36,150
Personal Care Aides	\$10.12	\$11.96	\$12.88	\$21,040	\$24,880	\$26,800

*NOTE: The Social and Human Service Assistants title includes the following common examples of reported job titles within this occupational category: Behavioral Health Specialists, Social & Human Services entry-level staff, Peer Specialists, and Substance Abuse Support workers.*

**PA WDB Healthcare Workforce Ad Hoc Committee  
Professional Care Worker Shortage Crisis Statement**

**Table 6**



*NOTE: Table 4 (above) outlines the 2018 hourly and annual wage ranges for the professional care worker occupational titles, while Table 5 (Wage Range Comparison) illustrates the wage gap, and more significantly the wage cap, when professional care workers' wages are compared to the total wages for all occupations in the commonwealth.*

**Table 7**

SOC	Occupational Group	Gender		Race			Hispanic / Latino	
		Male	Female	White	Black	other	Yes	No
00-0000	Total, All Occupations	51.5%	48.5%	82.8%	10.0%	7.2%	6.3%	93.7%
21-1000	Counselors, Social Workers, and Other Community and Social Service Specialists	26.4%	73.6%	69.7%	23.9%	6.3%	5.5%	94.5%
25-1000	Postsecondary Teachers	47.2%	52.8%	78.1%	4.6%	17.3%	4.4%	95.6%
25-2000	Preschool, Primary, Secondary, and Special Education School Teachers	24.6%	75.4%	91.1%	5.0%	3.9%	3.3%	96.7%
25-9000	Other Education, Training, and Library Occupations	11.8%	88.2%	86.2%	9.9%	3.9%	5.7%	94.3%
29-2000	Health Technologists and Technicians	17.9%	82.1%	81.7%	13.3%	5.0%	4.2%	95.8%
31-1000	Nursing, Psychiatric, and Home Health Aides	11.2%	88.8%	63.8%	28.3%	8.0%	5.9%	94.1%
31-9000	Other Healthcare and Support Occupations	13.1%	86.9%	79.9%	15.1%	5.0%	8.9%	91.1%
39-9000	Other Personal Care and Service Workers	20.5%	79.5%	71.5%	21.6%	6.8%	8.5%	91.5%