



# IOWA CAREGIVERS COVID-19 STATEMENT

THE FIRST FRONT LINE AGAINST COVID-19  
Nursing Assistants, Home Care, Hospice Aides & Direct Support Professionals



## LET US NOT FORGET THE FIRST FRONT LINE AGAINST COVID-19

Nursing Assistants/Home Care/Hospice Aides, Direct Support Professionals, and Other Direct Care Workers (DCWs) Are Among Those Who Are the Best Defense in Fighting the Spread of COVID-19.

### SOCIAL DISTANCING IS NOT AN OPTION IN DIRECT CARE

Could you bathe, dress, toilet, feed, provide oral care for, or ambulate someone while 6 feet away? And would you without personal protective equipment? If you worked in a facility or agency with co-workers or individuals served who have now tested positive for COVID-19, especially if you had children at home? What if you didn't have health insurance?

Direct hands-on personal cares are carried out by certified nursing assistants, home care aides, direct support professionals, hospice aides, and others who serve Iowans of all ages and abilities in locations ranging from in the homes of those served and assisted living to group homes, nursing homes, hospitals, and hospices:

- Median hourly wage is \$13.80
- 10% lack access to health care coverage
- Rely on child care subsidies and other worker supports

### IOWA CAREGIVERS (IC) IS AN ADVOCATE FOR DIRECT CARE WORKERS

As an advocate for direct care workers (DCWs) and all health care workers and the Iowans they serve, Urges President Trump, the Centers for Disease Control, Iowa's Congressional Delegation, Governor Reynolds, the Iowa Legislature, Mayors, Boards of Supervisors and Public Health leaders to consider four priorities to mitigate the threat of COVID-19:

1. Provide priority Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for direct care workers and child care workers
2. Provide priority COVID-19 testing to all direct care and child care workers
3. Address core needs of the direct care workforce
  - Access to health care coverage.
  - Access to paid sick leave.
  - Access to child care and financial support for covering additional costs due to school closures and overtime.
4. Conduct early intervention and mitigation efforts in care settings where staff or residents/consumers have tested positive for COVID-19



## PROVIDE PRIORITY PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

- Any deviation from the sound infection control standards needed to stop the spread of COVID-19 is not acceptable.



## PROVIDE PRIORITY COVID-19 TESTING

*Provide Priority COVID-19 Testing to All Direct Care and Child Care Workers in All Settings (Hospitals, In-home and Hospice Care, Nursing Homes, Residential and Group Homes, Veterans' Homes, Assisted Living and Other Places where Older Iowans, Children and Adults with Disabilities Receive Care and Support).*

The sheer number of individuals served in a day by one health care worker is reason enough to provide them priority PPE. If we want to flatten the curve and the strain on the doctors, nurses, patient care technicians, therapists, and other hospital workers, it starts in the community where people are infected.

- Nurse aides, home health and hospice aides, and direct support professionals are among those at greatest risk for contracting COVID-19
- Nurse aides, home health and hospice aides, direct support professionals are our greatest line of defense against the spread and an eventual end to the virus
  - They see multiple individuals every day in the homes of those they serve and multiple residents/patients in more congregate care settings such as nursing homes



## ADDRESS CORE NEEDS OF DIRECT CARE WORKERS

Department of Inspections and Appeals is sending out appeals to recruit Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs). Research indicates that the following core needs must be met in order to recruit and retain this vital workforce.

- Nurse aides, home health and hospice aides, and direct support professionals are among those at greatest risk for contracting COVID-19
- Access to health care coverage (10% of DCWs are uninsured).
- Access to sick time and paid leave.
- Access to child care needed during school closures and when working overtime.
- Cover additional child care costs resulting from COVID-19 (many workers are already utilizing childcare subsidies).

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## Health, Long Term Care, and Home and Community Based Employer Survey Regarding Essential Worker Child Care Needs

114 respondents | For more from this survey: [DCW Child Care Survey of Employers](#)

- **83% of the employers** said their essential workers were facing childcare challenges due to COVID-19.
- **65% of childcare providers** closed due to COVID-19.
- **53% said their childcare provider is a family member or friend** who can no longer provide care because they are at high risk for COVID-19.
- **51% said they can't afford the cost of additional hours of childcare** needed due to school closures.

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## Direct Care Workers (DCWs) Survey Re: Child Care & COVID-19 Challenges

151 respondents | For More from this survey: [Child Care Survey of DCWs](#)

- **69% said they did not feel comfortable leaving their child/children** in childcare at this time.
- **58% said they had missed work due** to not having access to child care.
- **49% said they can't afford the cost of additional hours of childcare** needed due to school closures.
- **42% said their childcare provider is a family member or friend** who can no longer provide care because they are at high risk for contracting COVID-19

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## What Other Challenges or Concerns Do Direct Care Workers Have?

For More from this survey: [Child Care Survey of DCWs](#)

- Keeping the residents safe.
- I have two high risk children who use breathing treatments when they are sick with a cold or have asthma like symptoms.

- Staffing shortages.
- Fear of taking the virus home to my husband and kids who have asthma.
- Working without proper PPE.
- My second job is in massage therapy and that's how I pay for childcare but now I can't do massage so not sure how I will pay for childcare.
- Several reported spouses had lost their jobs due to COVID-19.
- Numerous responses about financials, paying the bills, bills being behind.



## CONDUCT EARLY INTERVENTION AND MITIGATION EFFORTS

*Conduct Early Intervention and Mitigation Efforts in Care Settings Where Staff or Residents/Consumers Have Tested Positive and Social Distancing is Not an Option and Use What's Learned to Prevent Future Outbreaks*

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) could focus attention on helping Iowa's nursing homes, the Veteran's Home, and other caregiving settings that now have residents or workers who have tested positive for COVID-19. This vital hands-on care makes it impossible to comply with social distancing recommendations. Workers who are risking their own safety deserve to have the peace of mind that they are not infected and are not at risk of infecting their loved ones. We offer the following recommendations:

- Test every resident to see who, if any, test positive and if they test positive, isolate those individuals and ensure those residents receive care by staff who are properly protected.
- Test every staff member because they ALL have some form of direct contact with the residents (certified nursing assistants, medication aides, licensed nurses, activity coordinators, pastors, dietary staff, therapists, housekeeping, maintenance, and medical directors).


- If workers or residents/consumers test positive comply with the CDC recommendations to undergo two negative COVID-19 tests within a 48-hour period before they are cleared to return to work or the non-COVID-19 area in the facility.

## WE ARE ESSENTIAL TO ESSENTIAL WORKERS—STAY HOME

During times of crisis when there are more questions and unknowns than answers, most of us are willing to step up. We can all play an indispensable role in protecting essential workers by staying home. Doing so protects direct care and other health care workers, childcare workers, waste management employees, funeral home directors, law enforcement, and other essential workers and volunteers. Until there is a vaccine for COVID-19, it's up to all of us to reduce the cost in human life, destabilization of our health care system and economy.

### QUESTIONS ABOUT COVID-19?

Call the COVID-19 Hotline



DIAL

2-1-1

## MAY WHAT'S BEEN POLITICALLY IMPOSSIBLE NOW BECOME INEVITABLE!

*“Only a crisis— actual or perceived— produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes the politically inevitable.”*

—Milton Friedman

On that note... we reference the recommended solutions that Iowa CareGivers (IC) and others have made over the past 15-20 years regarding the need to focus on recruitment, retention, and stabilization of the direct care workforce.

**Building a Strong Direct Care Workforce:**  
[10 Step Solutions](#)



L to R: Shirley Renfro and Di Findey

### IT'S PERSONAL...

## LOSING MY BELOVED MOTHER DURING A PANDEMIC

My mother was born during the 1918 pandemic and passed away over 100 years later during a pandemic. Due to COVID-19 we were unable to hold a public memorial. We celebrated her 101 amazing years during a graveside ceremony attended by nine family members.

[Read about Shirley's story.](#)



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