

Solutions for the LTC Workforce Shortage: Retaining Temporary Nurse Aides & Helping Them Become CNAs

AHCA/NCAL urges Congress to take action now to retain Temporary Nurse Aides (TNAs) and strengthen the long-term care workforce by supporting efforts to transition them to more permanent roles.

Please co-sponsor the Building America's Health Care Workforce Act (H.R. 7744), recently introduced by Brett Guthrie (R -2-KY), Madeleine Dean (D-4-PA), and David McKinley (R-1-WV), that provides a reasonable grace period of 24 months to continue the emergency waivers after the public health emergency ends to enable all TNAs who wish to, the ability to transition to long-term roles (to accommodate training and testing capacities to meet demand).

The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented challenges for health care and our entire public health system. Long term care was already dealing with a workforce crisis prior to COVID-19, and the pandemic caused an all-hands-on-deck emergency. TNAs help nursing home and assisted living residents -- and an already thinly stretched staff. The role of the TNA is a valuable first step on the direct caregiving path and can be a source of hope for the future, if it can be retained. These caregivers deserve support and the opportunity to retain their jobs while they are working toward becoming fully certified nursing assistants (CNAs).

Building a Pipeline of Caregivers

In nursing homes, the 1135 waiver on training and certification of nurse aides allows vital support to critical staffing needs for care of residents during the pandemic. Based on this waiver, in spring 2020, the American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL) created a TNA training course. To date, this course has allowed more than 270,000 individuals to learn how to support residents with non-clinical tasks, such as helping with activities of daily living; delivering meals; assisted dining; ambulation and range of motion; and offering companionship to help residents stay connected and engaged. Each week, we continue to see thousands of heroes sign up for this training, seeking to serve our seniors and find meaningful work. The TNA role has attracted individuals who have long wanted to serve in direct care capacities but did not have a pathway in the past. The TNA role also supports our nation's refugees and immigrants in receiving vital training to enter the long-term care field.

TNAs have gained thousands of hours of on-the-job, supervised training, and experience in providing critical services and support to residents in nursing homes and assisted living centers. When this 1135 waiver ends, only four months are provided in statute for TNAs to become CNAs or they cannot continue working in long term care communities. State capacities are not sufficient to accommodate the training and testing needs for thousands of TNAs in this short timeframe, thus another solution is urgently needed to retain these caregivers. We cannot lose these heroes who continue to step up and serve our nation's seniors in a time of crisis, and urge you to co-sponsor the Building America's Health Care Workforce Act (H.R. 7744) today.

Facts and Impact

Based on a recent survey of nearly 7,500 individuals that completed AHCA/NCAL's Temporary Nurse Aide training program:

- Nearly 80% of respondents stated they were interested in becoming CNAs after having completed the training.
- Nearly 60% of respondents indicated they took the training because they saw there was a need and wanted to help, while nearly 50% indicated they wanted to start a new career in long term care. For nearly 40% of respondents, the need for a job was also a factor in their decision to take the training.
- Many respondents noted that they took the training as a gateway into broader career opportunities in nursing or other health care professions, to return to prior work in nursing care, and/or to learn a new skill and enhance their further job opportunities.

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