



# One Voice. Many Stories.

A glimpse into the lives  
of home care workers.



MissionCare  
COLLECTIVE





## National Association for Home Care & Hospice President

We all know the statistics. By 2040 there will be 81 million people in the United States 65 years or older, and the people turning 65 today have a nearly 70 percent chance of requiring long term care support. The caregiving force needs to fill 8.2 million jobs to meet that growth, on top of the needs we have today. Since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic, there has been a 23 percent decline in available home care aides. With nearly half of all direct care workers exiting the field annually, providers are forced to deny care to up to 50 percent of those seeking assistance.

Merely discussing this issue is inadequate; meaningful action is imperative. However, we acknowledge that, as an industry, we cannot work in isolation. To surmount these challenges, it is essential to unite efforts and collaborate effectively. Together, we can successfully address the critical workforce crisis in home care. That's why the National Association for Home Care & Hospice (NAHC) is collaborating with MissionCare Collective to provide the industry with the most up to date intelligence to address this challenge.

With the release of this groundbreaking report, we can listen to the voices of the direct care workforce. We can hear their goals, experience their motivations, and better understand their values to aid us in recruiting and retaining the workforce that elderly and disabled Americans deserve.

**BILL DOMBI**  
President, NAHC



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## Executive Summary

In the heart of the home care world, where two strangers find connection—one in need of care, and the other a caregiver—a tapestry of untold stories yearns to be shared. Privileged to embark on this transformative journey in partnership with NAHC, we explored these tales, guided by the voices of those who selflessly dedicate their lives to caring for others.

Through heartfelt interviews with home care workers, I delved into the essence of their lived experiences. Together, we shared laughter over joys and triumphs, shed tears for challenges and heartaches, found solace in prayers, and, most importantly, learned from one another.

Each conversation became a testament to the resilience, empathy, and strength these caregivers bring to their noble work. "One Voice, Many Stories" serves as a tribute to those who dedicate their precious time and boundless hearts to caring for others. Here, you will encounter genuine narratives echoing from the depths of their souls. These stories offer a glimpse into the impact and real lives of home care workers.

This initiative aims to surface their voice to accelerate much-needed change in care. With a growing workforce shortage and many leaving the profession to make ends meet, each story has the power to spark new thinking, innovation, and, most importantly, change.



**BRANDI KURTYKA**  
CEO, MissionCare Collective

*Brandi Kurtyka*





# Why We Do What We Do

In a heartwarming video interview, several dedicated home care workers illuminated the profound motivations behind their roles. For them, it's not just a job, but a calling, a deep-seated desire to make a difference in the lives of those they serve. It's about more than just assistance; it's about forming genuine connections with their clients, sharing in their stories, and being an integral part of their journey. Every day presents a new adventure, a chance to touch a life and be touched in return. The job offers them an unparalleled freedom, not just in routine but in witnessing firsthand

the impact of their service. Fueled by an unwavering passion, these caregivers exemplify the spirit of true service, reminding us all of the power of compassion, commitment, and human connection.



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Our Why

**PROVIDER ACTION**  
Share the heartfelt stories from all seven personas of direct care workers, illuminating the profound impact of working in care while recognizing that the perfect client match isn't just a logistical consideration—it's the heart and soul of sustaining care. Home care is about people.

**POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**  
To bolster the healthcare sector, we must amplify awareness of diverse home care roles and allocate funds to retain our experienced direct care workers.

"I feel like I'm traveling the world."  
Donna M.



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**DONNA M.**  
Home Health Aide

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The Power of Human Connection







### Care is a Calling

Faith propels a caregiver's unwavering servant leadership amidst care challenges.

"Love is what everyone is looking for.  
Faith is connected to Love."  
Monica H.

## Faith Anchors the Heart of Home Care

For many home care workers, faith and love for God are the driving force behind their unwavering dedication.

*"God gave me the desire to care for people."*  
Their caring nature is perceived as a divine gift, a calling to help others.

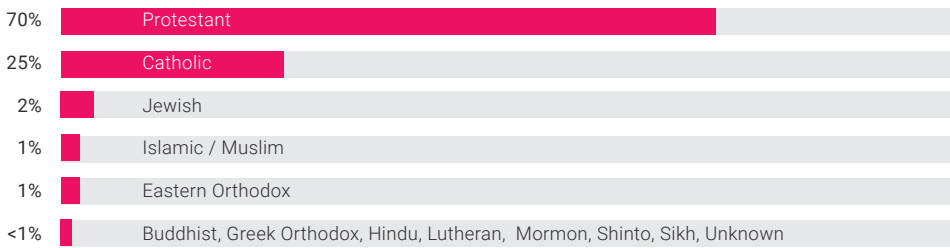
*"I love God, family, and my job."*  
The harmony between faith, family, and profession fuels their purpose and passion.

*"You build community with the work you do in home care."*  
Caregiving fosters connections, creating a supportive community.

*"Something greater than myself leads me."*  
Guided by a higher purpose, they serve with selflessness.

*"God put me here for a reason."*  
They see their role as part of a larger plan, emphasizing their significance.

### Direct Care Worker Religion\*



\*The State of The Direct Care Workforce Report, Analyzing 67K people



# Families Complicate Caregiving

Direct care workers go beyond the task of tending to clients in homes; they emphasize the intricate nature of interacting with families. Within the unpredictable home environment, hidden challenges often emerge on the job:

**Misunderstood Roles:** Direct care workers frequently encounter role misunderstandings, facing expectations to perform tasks beyond their training or being seen as housekeepers.

**Unseen Dangers:** Entering unfamiliar environments, new individuals entering homes introduce potential risks such as drug activity, violence, and sexual assault. Absence of background checks amplifies these risks.

**Resource Shortage:** Financial constraints prevent patients and families from obtaining necessary supplies, leading direct care workers to personally finance essential materials.

**Ethical Balancing Act:** Families may request actions not aligned with patient well-being, necessitating careful ethical navigation by workers to prioritize the patient's interests.

## PROVIDER ACTION

Supply comprehensive patient information and insights into the home environment before a care worker enters. Establish robust communication channels for reporting issues, supply shortages, and a clear chain of contact to address challenges, ensuring worker confidence and support.

## POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Expand universal background check processes for workers. Implement a dedicated support line so direct care workers can report hazardous situations encountered within homes.



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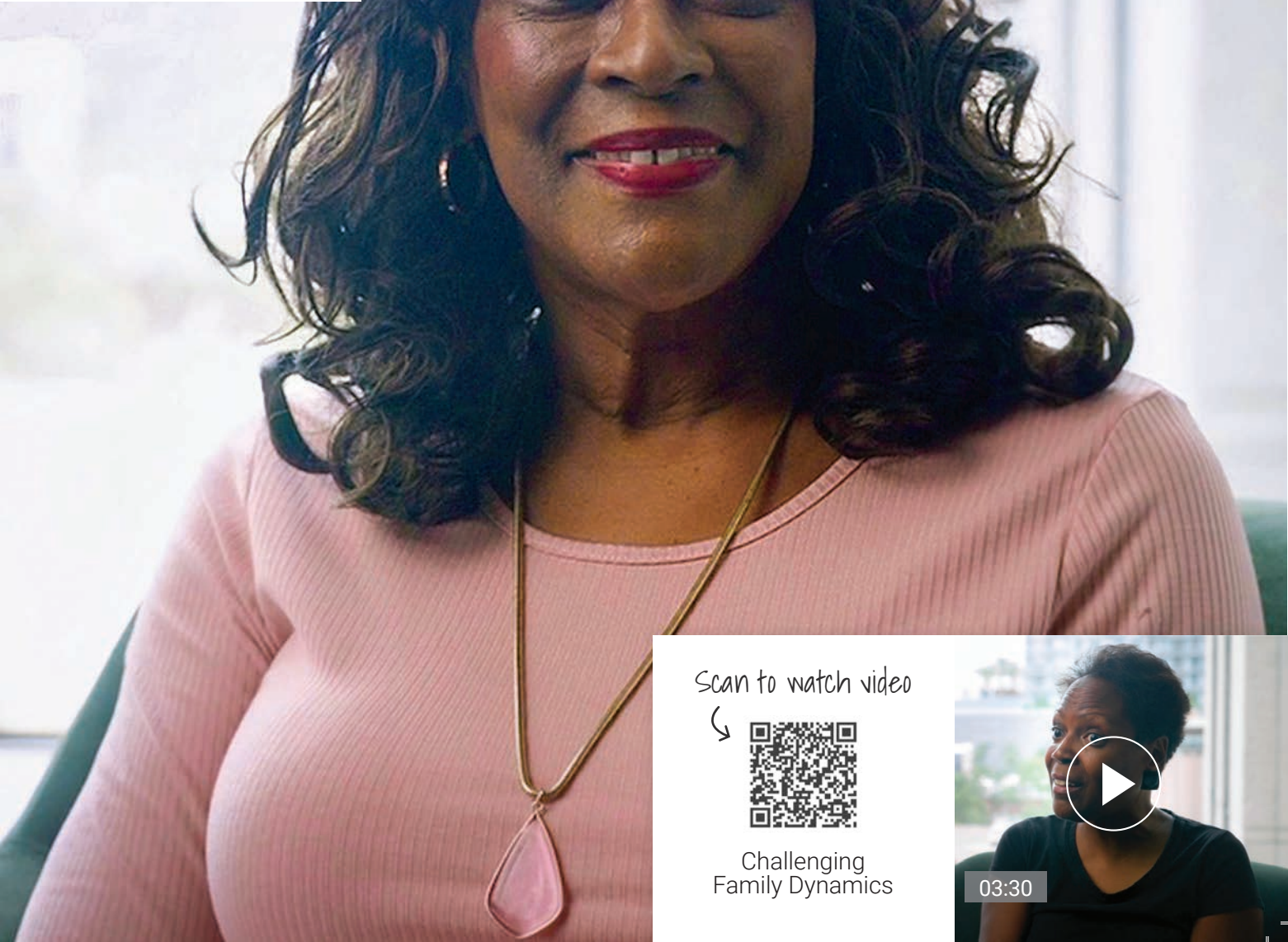


The Unknowns Behind Closed Doors

02:35

ALTHEA P.

Home Health Aide | 20+ years



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Challenging Family Dynamics

03:30



"I've experienced racism, but it doesn't change how I care for someone."



### Stories on Racism

63% of the direct care workforce consists of people of color, many of whom reside in underserved communities.



79%

of home care agencies report staffing challenges due to race-specific caregiver requests.\*

## Racism is a Sad Reality

Racism's presence in home care is a somber truth, and racial inequality stands as an extra obstacle in the home health care sector. Direct care workers often share their personal experiences, influenced by the historical context of elders' upbringing in times of racism. Despite these challenges, workers emphasize that their commitment to care remains unaffected, though influences their willingness to want to work with specific clients. Another study by Marshall University found that racial discrimination had a prevalence rate of 13.5% among home care workers.

### PROVIDER ACTION

Train employees to handle potential racial discrimination from clients and their families, promote open communication for reporting incidents, and provide supportive services. Build your care team's introduction around competencies and skills, encouraging clients to see beyond race.

### POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Mandate cultural sensitivity and behavioral training for Medicaid HCBS service recipients to enhance their understanding and awareness.

\*Through the Provider's Lens: A Study on Workforce Dynamics From the Perspective of an Agency

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# Craving Connection

Direct care workers highlight the significance of recognition, valuing it over material gifts. They frequently feel unnoticed by companies, forming stronger bonds with the clients they assist and the scheduler, rather than their coworkers or the company itself. A strong desire for connection and appreciation resonates deeply, underscoring the universal need for validation. Awards and recognition hold substantial importance, as they actively seek a sense of inclusion within the care team. The impact of small gestures, such as remembering birthdays and milestones, significantly contributes to their feeling of being valued and appreciated.

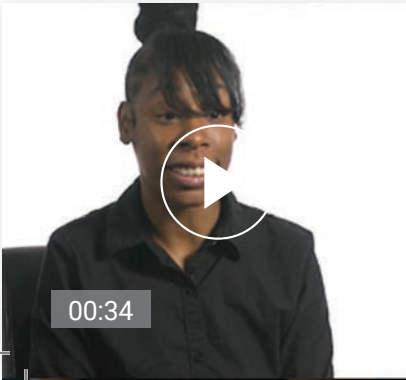
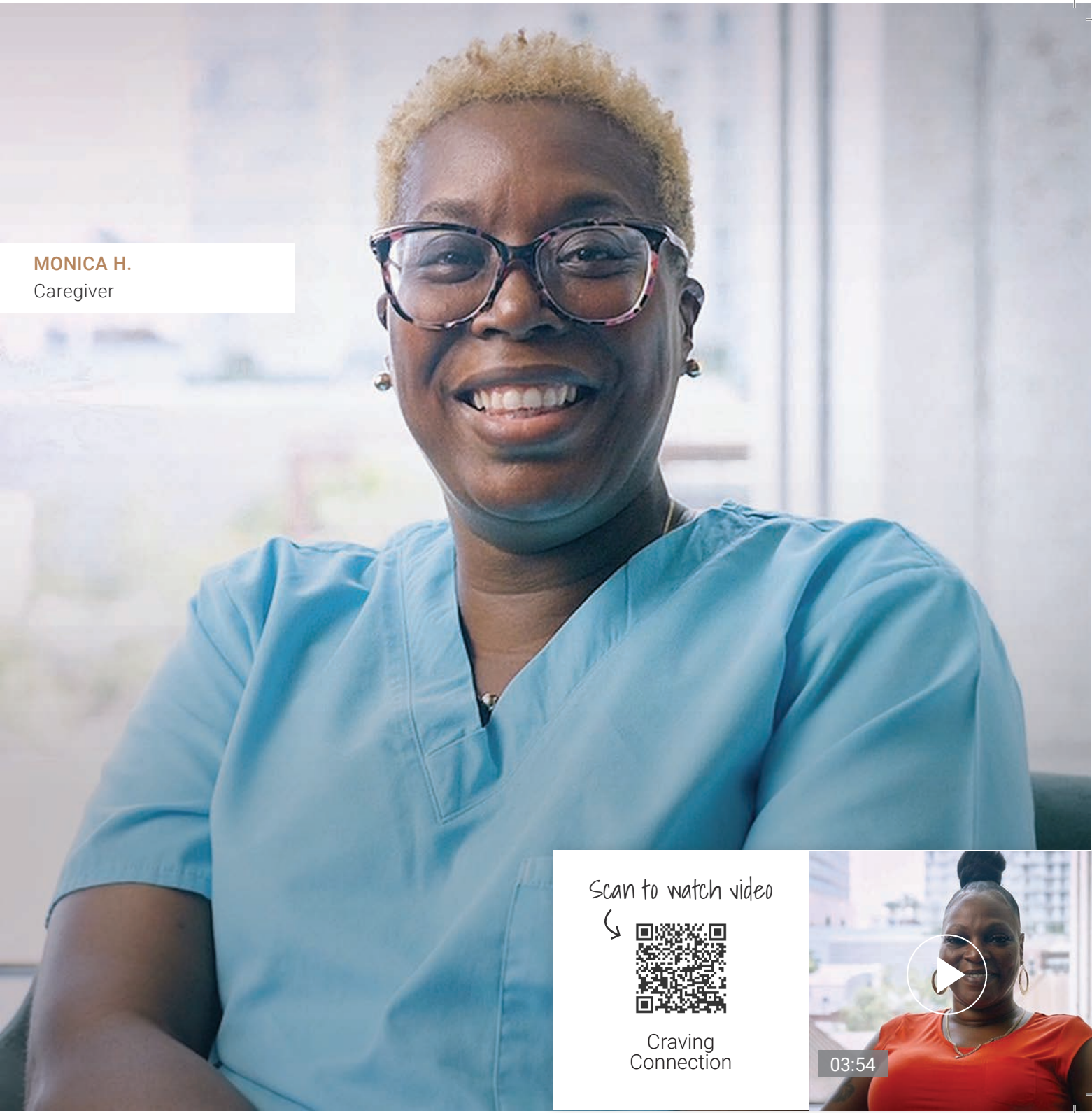
## PROVIDER ACTION

Never forget an important employee milestone and build a culture of connectedness, support, and recognition to strengthen relationships beyond the scheduler leveraging CoachUp Care. Listen to the McKnights Podcast, A Playbook for Reducing Turnover, for examples and ideas.



Direct care workers are often connected to the scheduler, not the company.

MONICA H.  
Caregiver



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Perception of the Boss

"I've had all kinds of caregiving jobs...  
you build a community of people."  
Soiya M.



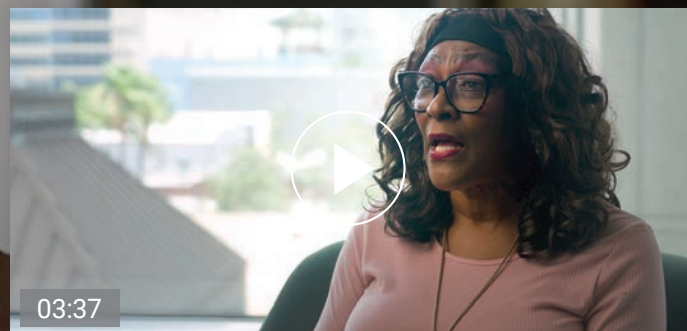
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Craving Connection



"Most caregivers love what they do, but they leave the job as financially they can't take care of their families."



### Struggling Financially

Juggling multiple jobs to make ends meet, often needing to work outside of care to pay bills.



"Make us feel like we are worth something"

7X

## Low Wages & Lack of Supportive Services

Direct care workers share their honest reflections on the challenges posed by low wages in the home care industry. Despite their love for the work, financial strains push some to juggle multiple jobs and work long hours to make ends meet. They express the need for fair compensation to sustain themselves and their families as the cost of living rises.

### PROVIDER ACTION

To bolster employee support, establish pathways for higher wages tied to acquired credentials and skills. Facilitate access to full-time hours and flexible scheduling while offering a range of supportive services, creating a comprehensive approach that helps to meet a direct care worker where they're at.

### POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

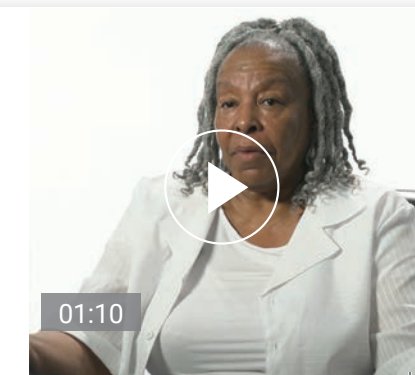
Support policies to stabilize the direct care workforce by addressing the benefits cliff, raising wages, expanding insurance, retirement, and healthcare benefits, funding supportive services such as transportation and childcare, and investing in education and career pathways.

Caregivers are seven times more likely to live in the poorest income category vs the average US population.

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Reimbursement Rate Unknowns





**MANAGING DEATH**

Antrell, a home care caregiver reflects on the emotional challenge of losing a client they've grown attached to, expressing limited agency support and coping alone.



01:14

**Antrell's Story**

Antrell discusses the downfall in home care - losing a client she gets attached to.

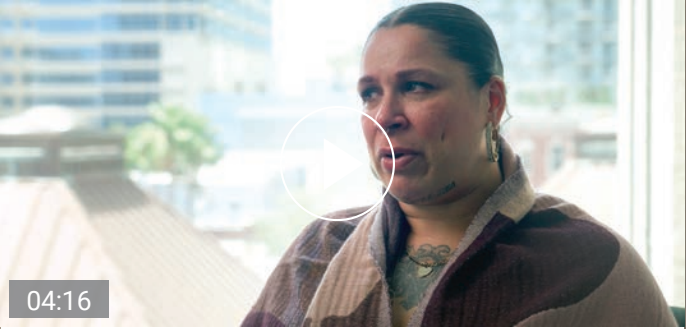


**PROVIDER ACTION**

To aid in coping with the loss of a dying client, agencies can provide grief counseling and peer support groups. Regular check-ins ensure open communication and prevent isolation, allowing caregivers to share their feelings, fostering a supportive environment during challenging times.

**DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BUY IT'S COVER**

Soiya embraces her life's calling as a caregiver, often facing judgment due to her tattoos. Despite appearances, she provides gentle care to those who see beyond her looks.



04:16

**Soiya's Story**

Juggling clients while caring for three children, one of whom has a terminal illness.



"Sometimes you miss out on the greatest story ever told because you look at the book."

Soiya M.





## Older Generations Thrive in Home Care

Embracing their roles as older home care workers, these individuals find deep purpose in giving back to the blessings they've received. Alongside the practicality of earning extra income, this line of work becomes a liberating escape from their homes, offering a fulfilling sense of freedom. The heartfelt joy they experience from serving clients resonates profoundly, infusing their journey with a sense of accomplishment and emotional satisfaction.

### PROVIDER ACTION

While many providers focus on the 'career caregiver' persona, it's important to recognize the existence of seven distinct direct care worker personas. Revise your recruitment and retention approaches to appeal to a wider range of employees. Access the persona study and explore the recruitment channels utilized by older generations to secure their care jobs, including [myCNAjobs](#) myCNAjobs.com.

### POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Eliminate obstacles for HCBS participants who are hesitant to work due to concerns about losing or reducing benefits and provide incentives to employers to hire older adults, people with disabilities, nontraditional workers, and underemployed individuals.



Download the 7 Personas of Direct Care Workers

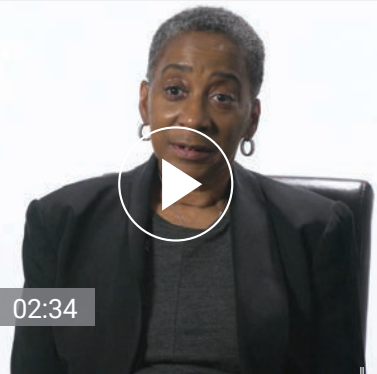


"I've been in home care for over 30 years.  
I'm gonna retire when God takes me."  
Mary is 80 years old!

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Older Generations In Care





# Inside the Choice: What Drives Home Care Workers to Stay or Go

In their heartfelt reflections, direct care workers express profound desires for the type of company they yearn to be a part of. They long for schedules that align with their needs, recommendations from peers, and the warmth of effective communication. A sense of unity and camaraderie within a team holds immense importance. Their souls long for recognition and the promise of growth, complete with fair wages and benefits. Caregivers also cherish companies with enduring commitment, where turnover is low, standards are elevated, and relationships with both clients and caregivers are treasured. They report being motivated by enticing company perks, incentives, and recognition for key milestones. Most importantly, the prospect of being matched with a client they genuinely connect with holds a special place in their hearts. Above all, they seek to be cherished, to find belonging, and to matter in a company where their essence is genuinely valued.

## PROVIDER ACTION

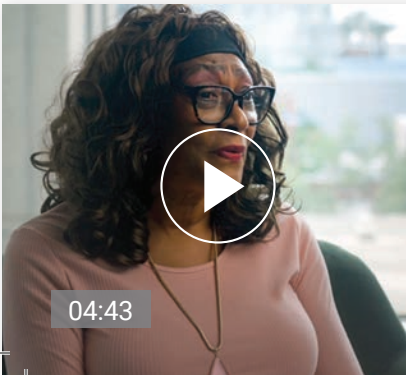


Build a virtual CoachUp Care community. On average, providers not only reduce turnover 4-6X, but they also increase revenue. Build strategies around the six Pillars of Direct Care Worker Job Retention.

## POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Prioritize professionalization, standardized training, higher wages based on earned competencies, increasing and investment in healthcare career pathways. Increase research on the ROI of direct care worker support.

"I want to work for companies that value their workers" Mary H.



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Choosing the Right Company



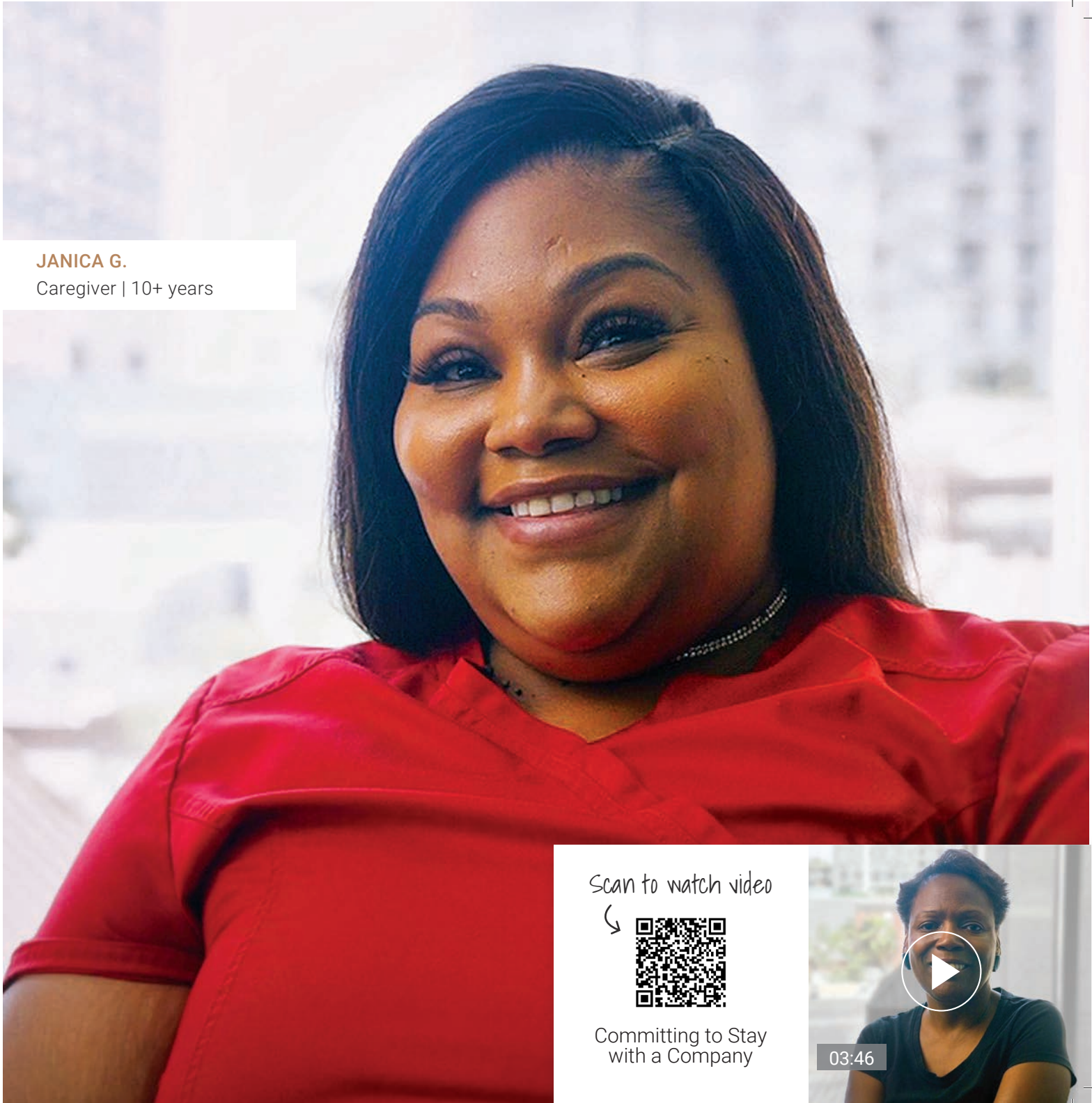
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Committing to Stay with a Company

JANICA G.

Caregiver | 10+ years





"Please listen to our voices to learn what our needs are - we love our work, but can't pay our bills."



Ideas for Washington

There has to be somebody after the nurses and doctors are finished with the patient that will love them and nurture them back to life.



Direct care workers bring their voices to Congress, advocating for improved wages as a means to attract more individuals to the field. They emphasize their role as nurturers, working alongside nurses and doctors. The workers stress the need for adequate compensation to cover the mental and physical toll of the job and suggest implementing background checks on patients for safety. Calling for more paid training programs, they emphasize their financial constraints.

They urge Congress to listen to their experiences and needs, shedding light on the complexities of caregiving that often go unnoticed. While expressing their passion for the work, they also highlight the challenge of making ends meet with current wages.

70%

of direct care workers desire more training.

Training, Education, & Professionalizing Caregiver Roles

The call to professionalize caregiving resonates as direct care workers seek recognition beyond being perceived as maids and yearn for respect. Enhancing training, better pay, and elevating the role from a job to a career are crucial steps to acknowledge their worth and establish caregiving as a respected profession.

PROVIDER ACTION

Prioritize individualized training beyond compliance to help employees achieve their goals, integrate employees into the broader care team, and foster a culture of understanding of a caregiver's role to set the employee and client up for success.

Join the Movement

Create more Home Health Aides via the MissionCare Collective scholarship fund.



POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

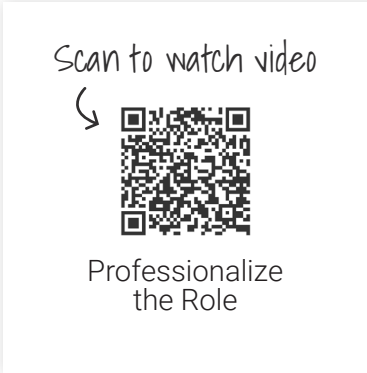
Fund career pathways and development opportunities for new entrants and experienced care workers, establish a standardized competency framework, enhance access to full-time schedules, invest in social determinants of health campaigns to get ahead of barriers before workers exit care, and invest in public education campaigns to improve the perception of direct care workers' vital roles.



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Our Future Is Bright



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Professionalize the Role



# One Voice. Many Stories.



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