

Office of the Care Workforce

Strengthening New Jersey's Care Industries

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Introduction

Background:

- The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted challenges in New Jersey's care sectors.
- These workers are vital to the state's economy, by supporting families in various care areas.

Challenges:

- Mentally and physically demanding jobs at low wages.
- High turnover rates and difficulty in raising wages.



Urgency and Importance of Supporting New Jersey's Care Workforce

Direct Care Worker Shortages:

- Over 185,600 positions needed between 2016 and 2026.
- 16% wage increase needed to afford basic needs.
- Home Health Aide Decline: Between 2017 and 2023, New Jersey experienced a 15% reduction in the number of home health aides.

Childcare Worker Shortages:

- Median wage of \$12.59 in 2019, contributing to workforce shortages.
- Education penalty: Early educators with a bachelor's degree in New Jersey face a significant "pay penalty," earning nearly 40% less than their ~~18~~ counterparts with similar education.

Community Health Workers:

- For community-based workers like doulas, poor working conditions, low wages/ reimbursement rates and limited infrastructure hinder workforce development.

Origins and Initiatives

Office of Care Workforce:

- Initial recognition by state leaders of the need for support for care workforces.
- Built on NJDOL's participation in the Interdepartmental Planning Group (IPG) and the First Lady's Nurture NJ initiative.
- Aimed at strengthening career pathways and employment opportunities for care workers.

Key Efforts:

- Partnership with the IPG to secure Preschool Development Birth-to-Five Grant(PDGB5).
- Establishment of early care and education apprenticeship pilot(funded by PDGB-5).
- Participation in the Direct Care Workforce Technical Assistance project led by DHS (funded by Direct Care Workforce Strategies Center).
- Partnership with Department of Transportation to support transportation for maternal health staff and families experiencing pregnancy or post partum.
- Coordinating a Needs Assessment with Rowan University for the Office to help with strategic planning.

Strategic Focus

Key Sectors:

Child care, maternal health, and direct care for individuals with disabilities and seniors.

Goals:

- Support industry connections and field-building.
- Develop education/career pathways with work-based learning opportunities.
- Increase compensation and expand skill sets for experienced workers.
- Support career entry for new care workers and field-building.
- Develop education/career pathways with work-based learning opportunities.
- Increase compensation and expand skill sets for experienced workers.
- Support career entry for new care workers.
- Raise awareness about work rights and employer obligations

Industry Partnerships Model

Overview:

Core approach to connect stakeholders and deliver targeted support.

Benefits:

Demand-driven, aligns resources, focuses on specific industries, driven by business leader priorities.

Key Roles:

Business Champions, Business Leaders, Convener, Community of Public Partners.



Initiatives

New Jersey has implemented a range of initiatives across various state agencies to strengthen its care workforce, encompassing sectors such as direct care, child care, health care, and public health. Key programs and efforts from NJDOL include:

- **Cultivating Access, Rights, and Equity (CARE) Grant Program:** [nj.gov](https://www.nj.gov)
- **Pathways to Recovery:** [Rutgers University](https://www.rutgers.edu)
- **Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs:** [nj.gov](https://www.nj.gov)
- **Workforce 55+ Program:** [Find Help+1middlesexcountynj.findhelp.com+1](https://www.findhelp+1middlesexcountynj.findhelp.com+1)



Target Employers and Organizations

Child Care:

Nonprofit and for-profit centers, home-based professionals, Head Start, Early Intervention Supports.

Maternal Health Care:

Hospitals, home visitors, community health centers, doulas, lactation consultants.

Rehabilitation and Senior Care:

DHS Institutions, home health agencies, memory care centers, assisted living.



Needs Assessment Overview



- **Goals:**

- Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to identify gaps and opportunities.
- Analyze existing initiatives within NJDOL and relevant state agencies.
- Develop strategies to support and grow care economy efforts.
- Explore establishment of a worker voice council and or integration into existing councils.

Next Steps

Integration:

- Creating NGO pilot for care workforces
- Creating MOU with DHS around apprenticeship supports and extension

Research:

- Use comprehensive needs assessment to create Strategic Plan to identify gaps and opportunities.
- Analyze existing initiatives and programs within and across state agencies.

Coordination:

- Transportation pilot with DOT and GoTrenton for maternal health staff and pregnant and post partum individual
- Explore the office's role in councils that support the workforce and worker voice.



Contact Information

[nj.gov/labor/ careworkforce](https://nj.gov/labor/careworkforce)



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