Stories from the Frontline: How One State is Supporting Home Care Workers Through the Pandemic

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Agenda

• The Impact of COVID-19 on Home Care
• Washington’s State-Level COVID Response
• The SEIU 775 Benefits Group COVID-19 Response
• COVID-19 Impact Bargaining Wins
The Impact of COVID-19 on Home Care
The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened existing workforce shortages.
People of color in the home care workforce face disproportionate impacts from COVID-19.
Home care workers do not have enough personal protective equipment (PPE).
Home care workers should be recognized and prioritized in state responses to COVID-19.
Workers would benefit from hazard pay, strong paid leave polices, and other policy interventions.
Novel approaches to education and training are needed to protect workers.
Effective responses to the COVID-19 pandemic require increased funding.
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Washington’s State-Level COVID Response

Bea Rector, Director, Home and Community Services
Aging and Long-Term Support Administration
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
Where do clients receive care?

...some in nursing homes, but most in the community
Immediate Challenges

• Getting information out to workforce and provider networks about how to prevent exposure and spread

• Constant changing of public health information about the disease
Provider Guidance & Advocacy

• Partnered with Department of Health on home care guidance documents
  • Disseminated to providers
  • Translated into 13 languages

• When PPE was difficult to procure, provided guidance on alternative forms of PPE and other protections
PPE Dissemination

• Advocated for home care workers to be recognized on the Department of Health’s PPE priority tiering system

• Purchased and disseminated cloth face coverings and PPE
  • Continue to mail regular shipments of cloth face coverings and PPE (including surgical masks, gloves, gowns, face shields and N95 masks)
Remote Service Delivery

• Issued guidelines for remote service delivery, when appropriate
  • Telephonic/virtual reminders for and supervision of medication, bathing, personal hygiene, eating, wellness checks, behavioral interventions, etc.
  • Some tasks could be completed outside of client’s home, such as: meal preparation and food delivery, essential shopping and errands and laundry

• Personal care tasks that require hands-on assistance could continue to be done in person

• Case managers also reduced face-to-face contact, visiting with clients remotely when appropriate

• Telephonic assessments & care planning when possible
## Extra Payments to Home Care Workforce

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Payment Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>Spring 2020</td>
<td>$100 One-time payment of $100 for each client.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May-June 2020</td>
<td>$3/hr Additional $3 per hour for hours worked.</td>
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<tr>
<td>July-December 2020</td>
<td>$2.56/hr Additional $2.56 per hour for hours worked.</td>
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### How Did We Pay for It?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Provides a temporary 6.2 percentage point increase to Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP), which allowed for temporary rate increases and PPE</td>
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<td>• Funding for home-delivered and congregate meals</td>
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<tr>
<th>Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Funding for nutrition programs, supportive services and other programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Funding for procurement and distribution of cloth face coverings and PPE</td>
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Temporary Worker Qualification Changes

• Training and testing sites for home care workers closed due to COVID-19

• Temporary qualification changes:
  • Long-term care workers may provide services without completing a national fingerprint-based background check.
  • Basic training, certification, annual continuing education requirements are temporarily suspended.
Other Measures

- COVID training for providers
- Data tracking of COVID cases
  - Daily tracking of in-home clients confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19
- Working with CMS, securing flexibilities
Longer-Term Issues

- Continued & improved communications with providers
- Fit testing for N95 masks
  - Limited testing facilities
  - Difficulty educating providers on proper fit testing
- Compliance with wearing PPE
  - Which type of mask to wear when
  - Some caregivers forgoing PPE
Determine Lessons Learned to Inform Future Changes

• Communication strategies and Infection Control
• On-line training
• Virtual delivery of some services
• Expedited eligibility for client services puts home care more on par with nursing facilities under Medicaid
Thank you!

Bea.rector@dshs.wa.gov
COVID-19 Response

Supporting caregivers during the pandemic through benefits and partnership.

December 9, 2020
Confidential and proprietary information. For SEIU 775 Benefits Group Trustees and Employees only
SEIU 775 Benefits Group’s mission is to improve the skills, health and stability of the caregiving workforce through innovation and high-quality benefits and programs.
COVID-19 Challenges

Unique challenges faced by caregivers

• Limited information about the new virus, how to stay safe and how to care for their clients.
• Inability to practice social distancing at work.
• Lack of access to appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
• Reduced access to health care and other health resources.
• Loss of jobs/hours.
• Unable to complete critical caregiver training.
SEIU 775 BG Solutions
How we supported caregivers during this time

• **Trusted Source of Information:**
  o COVID-19 microsite.
  o Facebook live events featuring health experts and other caregivers.
  o Closely monitored deadline extensions, and worked with DSHS to ensure caregivers were given time to complete training.

• **Health and wellness resources:**
  o Extended continuous health coverage during the pandemic.
  o Campaigns to promote virtual care and behavioral health supports to caregivers.
SEIU 775 BG Solutions
How we supported caregivers during this time

• **Masks, personal protective equipment (PPE):**
  o Partnered with DSHS to distribute information about making face coverings and obtaining PPE, practicing remote care and staying safe at work and in the community.
  o #WeGotThisCovered, a multi-channel mask awareness campaign.

• **Classroom Safety and Education:**
  o Increased opportunities for remote learning.
  o In-person Basic Training following strict safety protocols.
  o Developed COVID-19 specific CE courses.

• **Job Matching:**
  o Promoted Carina and how to use it safely during the pandemic.
Live, Online CE Courses

COVID-19 webinars for all caregivers

- COVID-19 Basic Information.
- Infection Control: Coronavirus Precautions.
- Care Delivery Guidelines During the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Preventing Stigma Associated with COVID-19.
- COVID-19 and Caregiver Self-Care.
- COVID-19 and Behavioral Health Issues.
Your New Classroom Experience
Changes to the Classroom
A new safe and comfortable learning environment

- Temperature check and COVID-19 screening upon entering the classroom.
- Reduced class sizes.
- Markings on the floor and tables to help maintain 6 feet of distance.
- Sanitizing gel and wipe provided for use during class.
- Safety supplies provided.
- Mannequins used to limit physical interactions.
- Hand washing required upon entering the classroom and after using the restroom.
#WeGotThisCovered

Mask Awareness Campaign

- Email directing to an informative landing page.
- Animated videos and caregiver mask selfies featured on social media.
What Caregivers Are Saying

"Thank you for keeping information flowing to us during these uncertain times. I appreciate you and everything you do to keep bringing us benefits, coverage and safety!"

Deborah J.

“I’m a caregiver working from home. I learned PPE from this video, it was very helpful.”

Kongmy S.

“It’s a really easy system to figure out and navigate. It really helped me put myself out there, and it was a lot faster than a referral agency.”

Patrick M.

“Being an IP in the middle of nowhere during a pandemic, I feel alone, afraid of not meeting my deadline and scared at times to provide care to my client. I love that SEIU 775 Benefits Group mailed a Skills Reference Guide then followed up to help me walk through it. This phone call really set my mind at ease.”

Sandra B.
Thank You

Abby Solomon
Executive Director, SEIU 775 Benefits Group
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The workers on the frontlines of this pandemic are making extraordinary sacrifices every single day. They deserve leaders who will listen and work as hard for them as they are for their communities. As president, that's exactly what I'll do.

2h
COVID-19 Impact Bargaining Wins

• PPE supplied by the State, including masks, face shields, and gowns

• Hazard Pay of at least $3 an hour to all in-home caregivers from May-June, and $2.56 for July-December

• COVID Pay for workers at nursing home facilities with active cases

• Supplies reimbursement for cleaning supplies

• Extended healthcare coverage even if people have lost hours

• COVID pay (different from hazard pay) where members would get an additional differential for COVID-19 test+ care provided
Q&A Discussion

Please raise your hand or type your question into the chat box.