

## OASIS Alert

### Direct Care: OLDER PERSONAL AND HOME CARE AIDES LOOKING AFTER ELDERLY

Labor market faces an aging workforce in short supply.

The U.S. will have 1.2 million direct-care female workers who are 55 years and older by 2018, comprising 30 percent of the country's direct-care workforce. This increase -- rising from 22 percent in just 10 years -- is among the projections made by technical assistance provider **PHI** on employment demographics for directcare workers.

Meanwhile, there is a projected 46 percent increase in demand for personal and home care aides by 2018; a 35 percent increase is expected for all direct-care workers, according to the study. In contrast, an alarmingly low growth rate of the female population aged 25-54 will decline from 14 percent in 1998 to 2 percent by 2018.

Nursing home assistants, home health aides, and personal and home care aides comprise direct-care workers.

The research figures reveal one thing of concern about the home care sector's future: tight labor resources + aging workforce = dilemma. "Older women are increasingly providing frontline services and supports for frail elders and people with disabilities to live independently and with dignity," noted PHI president **Steven Dawson**.

The U.S.'s entire workforce continues to grow dramatically from 3.2 million to 4.3 million workers, not to mention that these workers are also aging. Because of this, older women are expected to be more prevalent in the direct-care workforce, said PHI in a news release. A shortage in human resources further threatens the sector with a widening gap between people over 65 and women aged 24 to 44.

Despite these projections, wage -- not age -- might force the workers to look for better job opportunities elsewhere. For instance, the normal median hourly wage for personal and home care aides was \$9.22 in 2008, but these workers got a mere \$7.31 as a real median hourly wage, reports PHI.

Dawson urged national and state lawmakers to "work together to ensure that directcare jobs, which are primarily funded through public dollars, are quality jobs that attract a stable, compassionate workforce." He added that these workers play an important role in supporting elders to live independently and to continue to have meaning in their lives through healthy relationships and activities.

Females make up 90 percent of the whole direct-care workforce. While only 18 percent were aged 55 years and over in the overall female workforce, 22 percent of directcare workers were that age in 2008. Among this percentage, 28.1 percent are personal and home care aides.

Dorie Seavey, PhD, director of policy research at PHI, led the study by analyzing data from the **U.S. Census Bureau**, Current Population Survey (CPS), 2009, Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) Supplement, and applying the information to the **Bureau of Labor Statistics** Employment Projections Program.

Check out graphical representations of the study's results at the Chart Gallery of the PHI at [phinational.org/policy/chart-gallery](http://phinational.org/policy/chart-gallery).