

Executive summary

Senate Bill 774, passed during the 2015 legislative session, directs the Oregon Home Care Commission (OHCC) to adopt a statewide plan to increase the workforce available to provide in-home services to seniors, people with physical or intellectual/developmental disabilities, and individuals experiencing mental illness. The OHCC, with the assistance of the Worker Classification-Workforce Development Committee, is charged with investigating potential strategies to increase the workforce and report findings to the Legislature on or before November 16, 2015.

Increasing the home care workforce is urgent for multiple reasons. The senior population is the fastest growing population in the world. From 2009–2020, it is anticipated the senior population in Oregon will increase by 57 percent. There is already a shortage of workers available to provide assistance to individuals living at home, which will become even more pronounced as the population ages and the ratio of available workers decreases.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Labor’s Final Rule published in 2013 extends minimum wage and overtime protections to home care and personal support workers under the Fair Labor Standards Act. The change in federal law, and anticipated fiscal impact, has prompted the Department of Human Services to implement changes to its Medicaid in-home services programs. As a result, additional homecare and personal support workers will be needed.

The increasing number of children eligible for services under the Community First Choice State Plan Option under Medicaid (commonly referred to as the K Plan) has resulted in the need for additional personal support workers to provide in-home and community supports and services.

Finally, the OHCC is implementing the new Homecare Choice Program, created with the passage of Senate Bill 1542, that enables private pay individuals to purchase in-home services through the OHCC registry. The OHCC is required to build and strengthen the home care workforce, both for those participating in Medicaid in-home service programs and those paying privately for services.

The Worker Classification-Workforce Development Committee’s report includes:

- a) Ways to remove barriers for new home care workers (as defined in 410.604) to enter the workforce;
- b) Ways to increase the number of home care workers on the registry maintained by the OHCC;
- c) Strategies for creating a career ladder/lattice for home care workers; and
- d) The feasibility and benefits of certifying home care workers.