

CNA PAY *Act*

Low pay and poor-quality jobs are precipitating a care crisis.

As a result of low pay, insufficient staffing levels, limited training, and limited on-the-job support, nursing home employers can neither recruit nor retain qualified nursing assistants.

Nursing assistants earn near poverty wages.

- CNAs earn a median hourly wage of \$11.51, meaning half of the workforce—literally hundreds of thousands of nursing assistants—earn less than this hourly wage.
- As a result of part-time hours and erratic scheduling, yearly earning average just \$19,000.
- Over the last decade, real wages adjusted for inflation, have decreased by 7 percent.

Erratic hours lead to insufficient income while also disrupting lives with unscheduled overtime.

- Less than half of nursing assistants work full-time throughout the year.
- More than half report working more than 40 hours per week sometime in the last year, due to inadequate staffing exacerbated by high turnover.

Family income is often supplemented by public assistance.

- Nearly one in five (17 percent) nursing assistants live in a household below the federal poverty level.
- About half (49 percent) live in households with incomes below 200 percent of poverty.
- Medicaid, food stamps, and cash assistance provide additional support for one in three (38 percent) nursing assistant households.

There are multiple reasons why nursing assistants are undervalued and underpaid.

- There is little accountability for how nursing homes spend public funding (Medicare and Medicaid) that pay for the majority of residents' care.
- Gender and racial discrimination contribute to both the composition of the nursing assistant workforce and to the continuation of low wages in this field. The workforce is majority women (91%) and the majority (53%) is African American, Latino, or other racial/ethnic minorities.
- Nursing assistants are considered “entry level” but they play a distinctive “resident care” role, providing the majority of hands-on care in nursing homes.

Rising Demand and Increased Acuity of Nursing home residents.

- The cumulative growth in the number of women and men over the age of 85 will exceed that of the working-age population by more than 10 times over the next 45 years, creating a “care gap” crisis.
- 50 percent of nursing home residents have Alzheimer’s disease or other dementias.
- The population of those with Alzheimer’s disease will grow from 5 million to an expected 14 million by 2050.

Low wages lead to high turnover and vacancies.

- In 2012 annual turnover rate: 52 percent
- In 2012, nearly 50,000 nursing assistant jobs were vacant.
- 75.6 percent of nursing homes fail to meet CMS-recommended nursing assistant staffing levels
- Typically, aides have no more than five minutes per resident to engage in conversation or other relationship-building activities that support not just quality care but meaningful and dignified living.

Short staffing, turnover and vacancies undermine care and lead to high injury rates.

- In 2014, nursing assistants were among the top six occupations (police officers, correctional officers, fire fighters, construction workers and truck drivers) with more than 300 injuries per 10,000 workers.
- Nursing assistants lose the greatest number of workdays as a result of injury.
- Nursing assistants were 3.5 times more likely to be injured than the national average.