



Maryland
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR



Annual Report 2024

DIRECT CARE

PROGRAM

WORKFORCE INNOVATION



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The Honorable Wes Moore, Governor
The Honorable Pamela Beidle, Chair, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk, Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee

Re: [Maryland Senate Bill 307](#); MSAR 13034

Dear Governor Moore and Chairs Beidle and Pena-Melnyk:

The Maryland Department of Labor is pleased to provide the following update related to the implementation of the Direct Care Workforce Innovation Program. Passed during the 2021 Legislative Session, the program provides matching grants that create and expand upon successful recruitment and retention strategies that address the range of potential barriers to increasing the number and availability of direct care workers. Grantees have established relationships with direct care employers who have committed to offering interviews, on-the-job training, or job placement upon the completion of training. This clear connection to employment has had a positive impact on the recruitment and retention of direct care workers.

Over the last year, grantees utilized funds to test creative strategies, such as bolstering supportive service offerings like transportation assistance, childcare vouchers, and stipends, which have led to a stronger and more stable workforce. In 2024, the program placed 249 workers into direct care jobs earning a median rate of nearly \$17.76 per hour. These workers provided care to more than 1,300 individuals. Over 85% of employers express satisfaction with the employees hired from the program. As the State continues to experience increased demand for healthcare professionals, this program can continue to help recruit, train, and retain a high-skilled direct care workforce.

Best Regards,



Portia Wu
Secretary

Background

Pursuant to §11–1402 of the Labor and Employment Article, the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL) is to administer the Direct Care Workforce Innovation Program (DCWIP), which was passed into law by the Maryland General Assembly during the 2021 Legislative Session. The purpose of the program is to help create and expand upon successful recruitment and retention strategies that address the range of potential barriers to increasing the number and availability of direct care workers across Maryland.

The statute allocates at least \$250,000 of State funds annually for MD Labor to disburse as matching grants for the DCWIP. Grants may be awarded for a maximum of \$50,000 and matching contributions may be either monetary or in-kind.

Grant funding should be utilized to develop and implement creative strategies that bolster the recruitment and retention of direct care workers, while providing in-demand training and supportive services. For the purposes of the fund, the following chart defines “Direct Care Worker.”

OCCUPATION	JOB DESCRIPTION	REQUIRED CERTIFICATION	CERTIFYING AGENCY ¹
Geriatric Nursing Assistant (GNA)	GNAs are Certified Nursing Assistants who have passed the GNA National Nurse Aide Assessment Program (NNAAP) exam, which allows individuals to work in long-term care facilities, as well as other acute care facilities.	Geriatric Nursing Assistant and Certified Nursing Assistant certification	Maryland Board of Nursing
Home Health Aide	Home Health Aides monitor the health status of an individual with disabilities or illness, and address their health-related needs, such as changing bandages, dressing wounds, or administering medication. They work under the direction of offsite or intermittent onsite licensed nursing staff. Aides provide assistance with routine healthcare tasks or activities of daily living, such as feeding, bathing, toileting, or ambulation. Aides may also help with tasks such as preparing meals, light housekeeping, and laundry depending on the patient’s abilities.	Certified Nursing Assistant certification	Maryland Board of Nursing
Nursing Assistant	Nursing Assistants provide or assist with basic care or support under the direction of onsite licensed nursing staff. They perform duties such as monitoring the health status, feeding, bathing, dressing, grooming, toileting, or ambulation of patients in a health or nursing facility. Nursing Assistant duties may include medication administration and other health-related tasks. This category includes nursing aides.	Certified Nursing Assistant certification	Maryland Board of Nursing

Personal Aide	Personal Aides provide personalized assistance to individuals with disabilities or illness who require help with personal care and activities of daily living support (e.g., feeding, bathing, dressing, grooming, toileting, and ambulation). Personal Aides may also provide help with tasks such as preparing meals, light housekeeping, and laundry. They work in various settings depending on the needs of the care recipient and may include locations such as their home, place of work, out in the community, or at a daytime nonresidential facility.	N/A	N/A
Psychiatric Aide	Psychiatric Aides, which includes psychiatric orderlies, work under the direction of nursing and medical staff to assist mentally impaired or emotionally disturbed patients. They may assist with daily living activities, lead patients in educational and recreational activities, or accompany patients to and from examinations and treatments. They may also restrain violent patients.	Certified Nursing Assistant certification	Maryland Board of Nursing

Direct care workers typically serve older adults and individuals with disabilities, who often are also the most medically-complex. The state’s aging population and greater demand to receive care in-home has led to an increased need for direct care workers across the state. According to PHI’s Workforce Data Center, which provides real-time, state-level data specific to the direct care workforce, Maryland will experience a 15% growth in all direct care job openings by 2032.¹

Since the program began, 441 workers have enrolled in training and 329 have completed training. Two hundred forty-nine workers have been placed into direct care roles earning a median hourly wage of \$17.76. Eighty-nine percent of employers express satisfaction with the individuals hired from the program. Over 1,300 patients have received assistance from these workers trained through the program.

Application Process

MD Labor released a call for proposals on January 29, 2024. The opportunity was also shared with relevant stakeholder groups. Nine proposals were received and reviewed and seven proposals were awarded funding. Grants began in June and July of 2024. A brief description of each funded project can be found below along with updates on grantees who were funded in previous solicitations.

Grantees

Updates on the Summer 2022 Competitive Grant Solicitation Grantees

Dr. Masica Jordan, LLC

Dr. Masica Jordan, LLC successfully completed their grant with MD Labor in October 2023. Their project focused on making healthcare roles more accessible and relevant for underserved, underrepresented, and marginalized communities. Workers were trained to become Personal Aides through a 40-hour core training course that included instruction on cultural and linguistic competence, blood borne pathogens, and complete CPR/First Aid training. In addition, students received

¹ PHI. “Workforce Data Center.” Last modified September 2024. <https://phinational.org/policy-research/workforce-data-center/>.



access to supportive services such as one-on-one success coaching and transportation assistance. The project included 10 partners, representing businesses, higher education, and workforce development organizations. Dr. Masica Jordan, LLC successfully trained 50 individuals and placed 47 individuals into employment earning a median wage of \$21 per hour. Ninety percent of the participants retained employment six months after placement, and 80% were still employed at the twelve month mark. In addition, 100% of employers that participated in the grant reported satisfaction with the quality of individuals trained. Dr. Masica Jordan, LLC was awarded additional funding through the Winter 2024 DCWIP solicitation to continue their outstanding work.

Updates on the Fall 2022 Competitive Grant Solicitation Grantees

Dwyer Workforce Development

Dwyer Workforce Development (Dwyer) successfully completed their grant in July 2024. Their project sought to increase training completion rates among direct care workers by providing intensive supportive services to training participants. In response to the overwhelming need for reliable childcare, Dwyer partnered closely with the YMCA to fill this gap. Participants received full access to the childcare services provided by the YMCA while in training. Thirty seven participants started training, 33 completed training, and 30 were placed into employment. Retention outcomes will be reported in the coming months. Dwyer was awarded additional DCWIP funding to continue supporting individuals who are interested in becoming CNAs/GNAs.

Health Tech Alley

In 2024, Health Tech Alley (HTA) focused on employer-based, on-the-job training programs. HTA has collaborated closely with the Maryland National Capital Homecare Association (MNCHA) to engage employers in the direct care field. Through this partnership, HTA launched a Talent Pipeline Management Pilot that involved several MNCHA members, such as Chesapeake Potomac Home Healthcare, Family Choice Healthcare, and Nurse Lynx. HTA also partnered with the University of Maryland Medical Center to implement a CNA-to-Patient-Care-Technician training program. The DCWIP grant allowed HTA to provide stipends and supportive services for participants while enrolled in training. HTA has served

a total of 30 individuals, 19 of whom successfully completed training. To date, 13 individuals have secured employment in indirect care roles, earning a median wage of \$18 per hour. HTA expects to complete their grant by the end of 2024, and MD Labor will receive final outcome data in 2025.

Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare

The Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare (BACH) seeks to address unemployment, underemployment, and healthcare workforce shortages in the Baltimore region by identifying healthcare career pathways and connecting residents to skilled jobs. Using DCWIP funding, BACH is providing stipends and supportive services to individuals who are training to become CNAs/GNAs. These supports include removing barriers to participation such as transportation assistance, uniforms, and stipends for childcare. BACH partners with most of the major hospital systems in Baltimore, including MedStar Mercy, Johns Hopkins, and LifeBridge Health. As of December 2024, 58 students have enrolled in training, 41 have completed training, and 21 have been placed into employment earning nearly \$18 an hour. BACH will continue to assist graduates with employment opportunities in 2025.

Adventist Home Assistance

Adventist Home Assistance (AHA) continued to use DCWIP funding to help increase retention rates among newly hired CNAs by providing stipends to address common barriers such as transportation and licensing fees as well as providing access to new uniforms. In 2024, Adventist hired 93 CNAs who are making a median hourly wage of nearly \$20. Ninety-three percent of AHA's hires report receiving meaningful recognition, indicating a strong culture of appreciation. AHA provides consistent engagement with team members to address and resolve concerns promptly, contributing to overall satisfaction and retention. AHA will continue to use DCWIP funds to support new hires in 2025.

Spring 2023 Competitive Grant Solicitation

Bon Secours Baltimore Community Works, Inc.

Bon Secours Baltimore Community Works, Inc. (Bon Secours) continued their efforts in 2024. In addition to CNA training, students were able to earn the Medical Technician certification. Funds were used to provide an individualized approach for each student that focused on recruitment, training, barrier removal, and job placement. Of the 10 students to receive training, nine students completed, and eight were placed into employment making a median hourly wage of \$17 an hour through their employer partners such as Greater Baltimore Medical Center, Johns Hopkins, and University of Maryland Medical Center. Bon Secours will continue to provide access to support services such as case management to each student one year post graduation.

The Arc Montgomery County, Inc.

As one of the largest employers of Direct Support Professionals (DSP) supporting people with disabilities in Maryland, the Arc Montgomery County is using DCWIP funding to evaluate and pilot career advancement and laddering programs. Through this work, the Arc Montgomery County will utilize proven strategies that will lead to opportunities within the current DSP structure for upward mobility and increased wages. In 2024, key meetings were held with the Arc Montgomery leadership as well as the 11 current DSPs who are participating in the project to improve the program. Incorporating worker voice into the evaluation and pilot program will help ensure programs meet the needs of both the employer and employees. The grant will continue into 2025 as the team continues to finetune a proposal for implementation to share with the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration as well as with The Arc and other providers of disability supports across Maryland.

Winter 2024 Competitive Grant Solicitation

Dr. Masica Jordan, LLC

Dr. Masica Jordan, LLC was awarded DCWIP funds in 2024 to continue their efforts to train personal aides. Their project will build upon the strong employer relationships established during their first DCWIP grant and will provide training to 30 individuals. Participants will earn their CPR certification, receive supportive services, and earn a stipend while they are in training. As of December 2024, 17 individuals enrolled in and completed training. All participants have been placed into employment.

Asian American Center of Frederick

The Asian American Center of Frederick (AACF) was awarded funding to train 24 CNAs. AACF will focus on targeting underserved populations such as immigrants and English language learners by equipping and empowering them to become independent and self-sufficient in their communities and workplace. Partners like Hagerstown Community College, Dwyer, and Frederick Health Hospital will play an important role in programming. Along with CNA training, participants will receive career management services, interview preparation, text books, barrier removal such as transportation assistance, and stipends. Training began in October of 2024, with 17 individuals enrolled.

Mental Health Association of Maryland, Inc.

The Mental Health Association of Maryland, Inc. (MHAMD) was awarded funding in 2024 to provide CNA/GNA training to 17 individuals. They have partnered closely with BACH, the Community College of Baltimore County, and LifeBridge Health. Along with CNA/GNA training, participants will be offered additional training on topics that include mental health, substance use, managing aggression, and stress management. Individuals who successfully complete the program will be given a stipend to purchase scrubs or other items they may need to begin employment. Training commenced in August 2024, with 14 individuals enrolled. As of December 2024, 11 individuals have completed training.

Dwyer Workforce Development

Dwyer was awarded DCWIP funds in 2024 to continue their program to train and support an additional 50 individuals to become CNA/GNAs. Dwyer has partnered with Chesapeake College, ItWorks Learning Center Inc., and Health Focus, Inc. to deliver training and supportive services that will enable participants to enter the healthcare industry. Along with training, Dwyer takes a person-centered approach and offers a range of supportive services such as employment assistance, transportation assistance, and childcare stipends to each participant. Dwyer spent the early months of the grant planning, and training will begin in February 2025.

Maryland Regional Direct Services Collaborative, Inc.

The Maryland Regional Direct Services Collaborative, Inc. (the Collaborative) was awarded funding in 2024 to train 32 CNAs. They have partnered with the Beacon Institute and CNA Simulation, and will provide a virtual clinical skills simulation that prepares direct care workers for clinical excellence in the workplace. The simulation is intended to supplement the in-person CNA training. Participants will also receive transportation stipends. Upon training completion, the Beacon Institute will offer participants access to their job board, which they may continue to access as they advance within the field. The Collaborative will also cover the costs for participants to join the National Association for Health Care Assistants, which will provide access to continued education. The Collaborative has recruited their first cohort and training is slated to begin in January 2025.

Classroom 2 Community, Inc.

Classroom 2 Community will partner with the Primary Care Coalition, Prince George’s Community College, and Montgomery College to provide CNA training to 30 individuals. To ensure students are adequately prepared for CNA coursework, the opportunity to enroll in an academic bootcamp will be offered. Students will receive stipends while in training. Training began in September 2024 with 44 individuals enrolled. As of December 2024, 20 individuals have completed training and 19 have been placed into employment.

The Primary Care Coalition of Montgomery County Maryland, Inc.

In partnership with the Cambridge Nursing Academy, the Primary Care Coalition of Montgomery County Maryland, Inc. (PCC) received funding in July of 2024 to provide training to 11 CNAs. By providing workforce development opportunities to skilled immigrants, PCC also seeks to improve healthcare access and reduce health disparities for individuals in Montgomery County. PCC has partnered with the Ethiopian Community Center to provide supportive services to their participants, such as coaching, tutoring, travel stipends, English as a Second Language classes, childcare, and direct connections to employment. PCC offers continued support post-employment through their “UpAssist” program, which allows participants to further their education and continue to advance on a career pathway. Recruitment is slated to begin in February 2025, and training will begin in April.

Future Plans

MD Labor awarded the full \$250,000 allocation in Fiscal Year 24. It is expected that the FY25 funds will be awarded as a result of a call for proposals scheduled for early 2025.

FY24 (July 1, 2023- December 31, 2024) Participant Outcomes for Active DCWIP Grantees

The number of individuals recruited to be direct care workers.	844
The number of workers enrolled in training	441
The number of participants who completed training.	329
The number of participants who earned an industry-recognized certification or credential.	181
The number of participants placed into unsubsidized employment as a direct care worker.	249
The median hourly wage of participants who were placed into employment.	\$17.76
The number of participants assisted by direct care workers through the program.	1,329
Employer satisfaction with direct care workers hired from the program.	89%

Because the DCWIP is focused on increasing the retention rates of direct care workers, in addition to statutorily required data, MD Labor is requiring grantees to report on certain retention measures. Grantees are required to report participant retention rates at 6 and 12 months post training. As of this report, Dr. Masica Jordan, LLC is the only grantee who has reached the 12-month retention mark. Ninety percent of Dr. Masica Jordan, LLC’s participants were still employed six months post employment and 80% were still employed 12 months post employment. Labor will continue to report on retention rates, as grants conclude and data becomes available.



Success Stories and Quotes from Participants

As reported by Bon Secours Baltimore Community Works, Inc.

London has always dreamed of being in the medical field, and obtaining her CNA/GNA certification was the first step in making her dream a reality. Throughout training, London was a model student, always eager to participate in class discussion, staying late after class to study her skills and displaying professionalism at all times. London shared with staff that she is proud of herself for not giving up even when faced with challenges and credited the support of her instructor for keeping her motivated. Following training, London earned her CNA license, passed both GNA exams, and received offer letters from three different health care organizations. London chose to accept an offer from Future Care's Irvington location. She started work in April of 2024, and is very excited for the opportunity.

Courtney is a dedicated mother who completed both CNA/GNA training at Bon Secours along with her daughter Kayla. Throughout training, Courtney made a point to encourage her classmates and even host study sessions at her home to ensure she and her classmates were successful. After receiving her credential, she successfully participated in Certified Medical Technician training at Bon Secours, thus gaining an additional certification. Courtney started working in a nursing home; however, her goal was to work in a hospital setting. With patience, determination, and the support of the Bon Secours team, Courtney secured employment at Greater Baltimore Medical Center. She is very excited about this opportunity to make a difference in patients' lives.



As reported by Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare

John entered BACH's CNA/GNA training after experiencing numerous barriers to employment and life challenges. Finding himself unemployed and in an unstable housing situation, the opportunity to participate in the CNA/GNA training was the opportunity he needed. John excelled in training, but just as clinicals began, he experienced transportation difficulties. BACH was able to assist him with reliable transportation so that he could complete clinicals. Thanks to this support, John was able to successfully complete training, obtain his CNA license, and gain employment earning over \$17 per hour with an anticipated increase after 90 days of successful employment.



As reported by Dwyer Workforce Development

Julia was working at a convenience store when she learned about Dwyer's CNA training program. Once she was accepted into the program, Julia was able to start her path to a stable career. Through intensive case management support, Dwyer was able to provide housing assistance, training, and employment placement along with holiday gifts for her kids. Julia has successfully held her CNA role for six months post graduation and has received glowing remarks from her employer.



Quotes from Employer Partners

In 2024, 85% of employers surveyed expressed that they were satisfied with the program. Below is a sampling of qualitative feedback from employer partners.

Health Tech Alley partner:

“ Workforce issues have been identified as the top concern among MNCHA members. Recruitment, retention, pay and benefits, career pathing, and regulatory compliance are central to the operations of homecare agencies. This partnership with Health Tech Alley represents an exciting step toward addressing these challenges. ”

BACH employer partner:

“ There is incredible satisfaction with our partnership with BACH in providing healthcare training opportunities for our hospital staff. As a workforce intermediary, BACH has been instrumental in coordinating efforts to enhance the skills and qualifications of our incumbents, ensuring that they receive top-notch training to advance their careers. Their ability to seamlessly connect our employees with high-quality training programs has not only benefited our staff but has also positively impacted the level of care we provide to our patients. BACH’s expertise, dedication, and commitment to workforce development make them a vital partner in our mission to foster growth and success in the healthcare field. We look forward to continuing this successful collaboration. ”

Conclusion

As the need for highly-skilled direct care workers increases in response to an aging population and greater demand to receive care in-home, creative strategies to bolster the retention of this critical segment of the workforce are needed. The DCWIP is poised to impact the number and availability of direct care workers across the state. In 2024, the greatest success of the program has been the continued incorporation of supportive services that has helped direct care workers attend and complete training. MD Labor looks forward to its continued work related to the implementation of this initiative and sharing the ongoing successes of the DCWIP in future reports.

