

Pennsylvania: Forming Regional Coalitions in a Large State

The lead agency for the 40-member Pennsylvania coalition for the *Better Jobs Better Care* project, the Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly, divided the state into five regions in order to provide a local focus in the large state. In each region, a coalition led by a community agency recruited six long-term-care providers who tested interventions designed to support direct-care workers.

PRACTICE INTERVENTIONS

- Direct-care workers and managers in the five regional coalitions received training to create more supportive workplaces. Training consisted of:
 - Team building for 182 direct-care workers, using the Professional Care Management Institute's (PCMI) Key Solutions Team Building Training
 - A two-day training for 60 managers from 28 provider sites, conducted under contract with PCMI
 - A joint direct-care worker-manager team established to improve retention.
 - Coaching supervision for frontline supervisors

Following the training, direct-care workers and managers formed teams to jointly implement at least one culture-change intervention. A common focus was improving communication among all staff about consumer needs and preferences.

- Better Jobs Better Care-Pennsylvania awarded small grants to three regions to continue efforts to support direct-care workers.
 - The Indiana County region piloted a peer training where seasoned direct-care workers at three provider sites planned and taught a one-hour in-service on confidentiality.
 - The Lehigh Valley region started a local chapter of the Pennsylvania Direct-Care Worker Association and trained 10 new workers using a core curriculum developed by the *Better Jobs Better Care* coalition.
 - The Lackawanna region helped two providers incorporate their team project into organizational policy and share lessons learned with other providers in the region.

POLICY INITIATIVES

• The *Better Jobs Better Care* coalition helped create a statewide Direct-Care Worker Association in 2006 with a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. Its mission is to promote compassionate and quality care by providing education, advocacy and support for the state's direct-care professionals.

The coalition, through an advisory committee, contributed to the formation of the association by:

- Publishing Frontline Care, a magazine written by and for direct-care workers, from July 2004 to early 2005. The magazine was suspended due to poor advertising revenues.
- Holding two statewide conferences, one in November 2005 that drew more than 300 direct-care workers and a two-day conference in November 2006 for 235.
- Providing leadership training for direct-care workers.

At the end of the grant, the association had more than 300 members, and membership grew to 700 by 2009.

- Developed and tested a core curriculum to train new direct-care workers in basic skills applicable across all long-term-care settings. The curriculum applied students' life experiences and included participatory exercises and stories of hypothetical consumers.
 - Coalitions in three regions (Philadelphia, Lehigh Valley and Southwest Pennsylvania) tested the 60-hour curriculum. Class content was divided into person-centered skills taught by a social worker and direct-care skills taught by a nurse.
 - By 2006, two Area Agencies on Aging and a vocational-technical school had adopted the curriculum for personal-care worker training.
 - Building on its experience with the curriculum and under contract with Pennsylvania State University, *Better Jobs Better Care* convened stakeholders to establish core competencies for personal care home workers. These became the basis of a new competency exam and training program designed to prepare workers to meet new state regulations.
- Better Jobs Better Care-Pennsylvania staff served on the state Department of Labor's Direct-Care Workgroup to recommend ways to strengthen the directcare workforce. One recommendation was to create a career ladder for workers and entry-level core training with certification.