

September 27, 2004

[name]
[agency]
[address]
[city, state zip]

Dear [name],

The concern for the availability and quality of long term care for elders and people with disabilities in Maine is rising. So are the costs and the challenges for providers. As you know, the cost of labor—the direct care workforce—is a significant part of the cost. As we watch reimbursement rates lag, demand for services increase, and dependence on a low wage workforce increase, questions abound about what can be done. What can be done to reduce labor costs without reducing staff, services and wages? Will reducing staff turnover help? Which programs are most effective?

The Institute for Health Policy at the University of Southern Maine's Muskie School of Public Service has received funding from the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Maine Governor's Office of Health Policy & Finance to study what works and what doesn't work in recruiting and retaining direct care/service workers. We are writing to invite you to participate in this important project.

Letters are being sent to all home care and home health agencies in Maine and the first fifty respondents will be selected to participate. The study will involve the collection of data through interviews, surveys and personnel reports. Activities involving data collection will be confidential and compensation for employee time to complete the surveys will be funded through the grant. The study will examine both worker and agency factors that may influence turnover and help with recruitment and retention of direct care and direct service workers. During the study period we expect the State to offer the DirigoChoice program to small businesses in Maine. If you elect to enroll in the Dirigo Health program, we will help you evaluate the impact that a health insurance benefit has on retention of direct care staff. In consideration for the cost of extending this health insurance option to direct care workers, the grant will also fund the Employer of Choice program for your agency and evaluate the impact on retention.

The attached flier provides additional details about the project including the benefits to participation. We hope you will join us in this effort to begin to solve the direct care worker shortage.

Please contact Lisa Marie Lindenschmidt for more information at (voice) 780-4843, (TTY) 228-8440, or (email) LMLinden@usm.maine.edu.

Thank you,

Elise Scala, Project Director
Lisa Morris, Research Director