

Action Checklist:

Improving the Pandemic Response to Better Support
the Home Health Aide Workforce and the People They Serve

What can the Unions and Associations do?

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

Promote awareness of the essential role of home health care and home health aides and advocate for home health aides to be well-supported, financially secure, respected, prepared, and protected so they can continue to fulfill their essential role of caring for patients in their homes

Mobilize and convene home health care organizations to articulate workforce needs during the process of pandemic planning and to share information and address cross-organization concerns in times of crisis

Represent the home health aide workforce at federal, state, and local emergency planning meetings (get a seat at the table)

MAJOR ACTION ITEMS



Improve Access to and Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Complement and supplement government acquisition and distribution of PPE and related supplies to home health care organizations and their home health aide workforce
- Assist home health care organizations in stockpiling supplies via bulk ordering systems administered by unions or industry associations
- Collect and disseminate best practices for PPE distribution
- Create and disseminate web-based videos and training for PPE donning and doffing and for implementation of safety protocols



Promote Additional Patient and Worker Safety Practices

- Establish a collaborative partnership to develop and disseminate strategies that help home health care organizations, and their home health aides, adhere to evidence-based health and safety protocols, rapidly identify and notify supervisors when an aide is infected and report worker safety concerns in a timely manner
- Help home health care organizations incorporate home health aide training and patient admission processes information on health and safety practices expected of patients and families, along with salient notification that adherence to those practices may be a condition for receiving service.



Improve Access to Vaccination and Testing and Adherence to Guidelines

- Coordinate with state and federal entities to establish and disseminate guidelines, standards, and mandates
- Work to promote uniform expectations regarding testing and vaccination and related requirements across health care entities including home health care, nursing homes, and hospices

- Identify trusted messengers for diverse audiences and develop and disseminate clear, consistent, and culturally sensitive messaging to encourage compliance and comfort with vaccination and testing guidelines
- Use multiple modalities and trusted messengers to promote vaccination information and testing recommendations (e.g., social media, town hall meetings, television, and radio public service announcements)
- Assist home health care organizations to facilitate access to local vaccination and testing sites/ supplies for home health aides



Address Financial Instability & Access to Work Issues

- Organize cross-organization collaboration to better communicate home health care needs to government entities
- Explore options for maintaining work when home health care census is low (e.g., adapting regulations so that home health aides can supplement nursing assistants and others working in nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, or other settings with a similar skill match)
- Collaborate with home health care stakeholders to test models that guarantee hours and pay for selected home health aides



Improve Communication & Emotional Support

- Facilitate union-organized, culturally specific, town halls to communicate preparedness information and allow room for feedback
- Facilitate union- and association-provided training in communications technology
- Develop and disseminate mechanisms to assist home health aides to establish email addresses
- Develop, and when appropriate, implement emotional support programs across organizations, especially to help smaller home health care organizations access such resources. Interventions might include peer or expert-led support calls or meetings, hot lines, bereavement groups, etc.
- Develop curriculum to prepare field supervisors and coordinators to support home health aides in times of crisis (e.g., communication skills, support strategies)
- Collect and disseminate peer-to-peer accounts of lived experience during a pandemic or other training resources about what to expect and how to cope during a pandemic



Support Training, Recruitment & Retention of Workforce

- Develop and disseminate infection control training resources
- Collaborate with home health care organizations in the development and implementation of training programs
- Support technology education and engagement
- Continue to advocate for fair pay to support well-being, recruitment, and retention of home health aides
- Help develop strategies to attract younger workers (e.g., providing educational benefits and counseling regarding career advancement)