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## Issue Brief: Workforce Issues in LTC

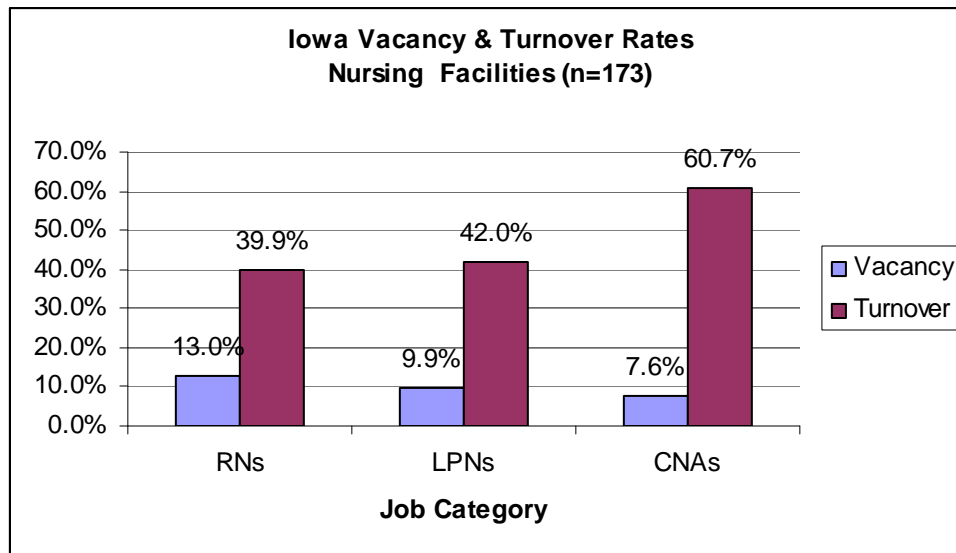
The long term care profession continues to face a significant workforce shortage. In Iowa, this shortage is specifically affected by the issues of labor retention and aging population. Current labor shortages in all health care settings are creating roadblocks to producing and sustaining a workforce for the future.

### Nurses (RNs and LPNs) and Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs)

A survey of nursing facilities in the United States by the American Health Care Association shows more than 95,000 vacant nursing positions: 15 percent for registered nurses (RN), 13 percent for licensed practical nurses (LPN), and 8 percent for certified nursing aides (CNA). Iowa's figures compare with 13 percent for RNs, almost 10 percent for LPNs and more than 7 percent for CNAs.

The national turnover rate for CNAs is 71.7 percent and for LPNs and RNs is 48.9 percent, respectively. Iowa's turnover rates are more than 60 percent for CNAs, 42 percent for LPNs, and nearly 40 percent for RNs. Of the 60 percent CNA turnover, 70 percent are related to high school and college students working the second shift as entry level positions. (See chart below for Iowa's data.)

Sixty-five percent of a nursing facility's cost is for nurses and certified nursing assistants. Iowa currently ranks 47 of out 51 in Medicaid reimbursement with an average daily rate of \$119 per day (\$35 day less than national average) for 24 hour care. The average RN salary is \$42,000 (\$52,000 national), and CNA salary average is \$22,000 (\$24,000 national).



### Nursing Home Administrators

Iowa has 687 licensed nursing home administrators of which 469 are currently employed in long term care. Of those currently employed in the field, nearly 40 percent are over age 55 and fewer than 5 percent are under age 30.

### **Therapists (Physical and Occupational)**

In Iowa, 94 percent of skilled nursing facilities report having difficulty in hiring or contracting for physical and occupational therapy services. Of these facilities, 72 percent said the reason for the difficulty was their rural location and their skilled nursing facility setting.

### **Initiatives and Recommendations**

#### **Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Homes**

- Encourage and assist with increasing participation in the national Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Homes campaign.

The Advancing Excellence campaign is reinvigorating efforts to improve the quality of care and quality of life for residents in America's nursing homes. One of the eight campaign goals, increasing staff retention, challenges participating nursing homes to measure staff turnover and satisfaction and to develop an action plan to improve staff retention. Currently 45 percent of Iowa facilities are participating in this national campaign.

#### **Data collection**

- Create a single, centralized statewide repository of data collection and analysis for health care professions.

#### **Pipeline development and education capacity building**

- Develop health career websites to supplement other sources of career and job information.
- **Create and support scholarships and/or loan repayment programs to provide incentives for nurses, administrators, and therapists to work in rural Iowa and in settings with higher vacancy rates. For skilled nursing facilities, incorporate this program with an exception process to the cost reports to obtain a federal match. (See page 3)**
- Fill nursing school faculty vacancies to increase availability of additional licensed practical nurses and registered nurses. Also evaluate health care professional degree programs in the colleges and universities for health care administration, physical therapy, and occupational therapy programs in Iowa to ensure availability to meet the needs of Iowa employers.

#### **Retention**

- **Utilize the developed innovative strategies that recruit, train and retain nurses and direct care workers and ensure the delivery of high-quality person-centered care. Implement a grant program through Department of Public Health for proven research-based approaches for employee retention in long term care organizations to implement these strategies (See page 3):**
  - **Peer mentoring and career advancement opportunities for direct care workers.**
  - **Person-centered care practices that respect the relationship between the caregiver and the recipient of the caregiver's support and assistance.**
  - **Leadership and coaching training for department heads, nurse supervisors and administrators.**

#### **Communication and coordination**

- Create a single state agency or department to oversee the comprehensive planning for addressing current and future health profession workforce issues including development of the state's health workforce agenda (i.e., Center for Health Workforce Planning in the Iowa Department of Public Health).

Developing and maintaining effective partnerships among key interest groups will be crucial to the success of these initiatives.