



NEWS RELEASE

Contact:

Christine Baksi, Communications Director
Pennsylvania Homecare Association
(p) 717-975-9448 ext. 22

Pennsylvania Homecare Association Educates Direct Care Workforce, Family Caregivers with Free, Online Training

July 12, 2010 (Harrisburg, PA) – In Pennsylvania, where more than one in five people are age 60 and older, personal care and home health aides are one of the fastest growing occupations, and the workforce that will provide critical in-home care to help more Pennsylvanians age at home and remain independent.

Addressing the growing need to train and prepare this workforce, known as direct care workers, as well as family caregivers, the Pennsylvania Homecare Association (PHA), in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Aging, Office of Long-term Living and Long Term Living Training Institute, has launched a series of free, online video courses that cover issues relevant to the training needs of individuals who provide in-home care and services for seniors and people with disabilities.

“The direct care workforce is critical in our efforts to rebalance Pennsylvania’s long-term living system. As we expand ways to provide our residents with the option of staying in their homes rather than entering nursing facilities, it is incumbent upon us to give workers the tools they need to provide high quality service and supports,” said Secretary of Aging John Michael Hall.

A total of 27 courses are available online, each covering important educational topics from Alzheimer’s and dementia care to working with families and supporting consumer independence. Each video combines compelling footage and re-enactments with well-researched guidance for professional and family caregivers. The videos are built from first-hand accounts of families, seniors, people with disabilities and direct care workers. The video content was developed and approved by a team of experts including homecare provider agencies and advocates for people with disabilities.

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The video courses come on the heels of newly enacted state regulation of the homecare industry that went into effect on June 30. For the first time, agencies and registries that provide non-medical care in the home, including assistance with activities of daily living such as bathing, grooming, meal preparation and transportation, must be licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Health. Under the regulations, homecare agencies must demonstrate staff competencies in areas such as basic infection control, universal precautions, emergencies, confidentiality and consumer control.

“The video courses cover many of those key competencies, which in turn promotes consumer protection and a workforce that is prepared for industry growth,” said Vicki Hoak, PHA Executive Director.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry, an additional 30,000 home health and personal care aides will be needed by 2016. Research conducted by the University of Pittsburgh shows the rate of homecare use in Pennsylvania will increase from 750,000 clients to more than two million by 2030. Nationally, the home health and personal care aide employment rate is projected to grow by approximately 50 percent over the next eight years.

“Working in tandem, homecare regulations and additional training options for the direct care workforce, helps ensure consumer protections at a time when more seniors and their families are choosing home and community-based services for their long-term care needs,” said Hoak.

PHA created a new website called “My Learning Center” for the video courses. According to Hoak, the online format makes learning more accessible and convenient for thousands of professional and family caregivers. “The web removes the barriers of time and place, which is so important for workers and caregivers whose office is the home. Aides, attendants and family caregivers can access the videos anytime, anywhere,” she said. Hoak also noted that after an easy registration process, learners can access all of the courses, manage their own progress and take a brief quiz to obtain a Certificate of Completion.

The video courses are free and available to all direct care workers and family caregivers at www.learningcenter.pahomecare.org.

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The Pennsylvania Homecare Association is a statewide organization of homecare and hospice providers. PHA members, more than 400 strong, provide quality care and serve as advocates for their patients and clients on a variety of healthcare related issues. PHA and its members work hard to improve professional standards and ensure access to quality homecare throughout the Commonwealth.

Attachment: Video Course Titles