

## The Direct Care Alliance National Credential for Personal Assistance Workers

Personal assistance workers are a crucial link in our health care system, helping elders and people with disabilities stay at home and maintain their independence and quality of life by assisting them with essential activities of daily living. Yet these workers—and the employers and consumers who depend on them—have a problem. With no national credentialing or training requirements for personal assistance work, personal assistance workers have no way to demonstrate their professionalism and skill.

### The Direct Care Alliance has developed a solution to that problem.

In the second half of 2010, the DCA will introduce a “gold standard” national credential for personal assistance workers. Developed with generous support from the Ford Foundation, the credential tests for the skills and knowledge personal

#### The credential tests for the following areas

- **Understanding the Role of the Direct Care Worker**
- **Ethics and Integrity**
- **Judgment and Interpersonal Skills**
- **Personal Care Knowledge and Skills**
- **Health Related Knowledge and Skills**
- **In-Home and Nutritional Support**
- **Safety and Emergencies**
- **Knowledge of Consumer Specific Needs**

tional specialty credentials in topics such as dementia care, geriatrics, and working with independent adults with disabilities.

The DCA’s new credential meets Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE) standards. It will boost the professionalism of this workforce, which will benefit:

- ▶▶ Workers, by giving them a way to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. That should help them earn the respect they deserve, and will hopefully open the door to career advancement opportunities and increased wages.
- ▶▶ Consumers, by giving them access to better qualified workers and a reliable way to judge the skill level of those they hire.
- ▶▶ Employers, who can gain a market advantage by hiring workers consumers will want to hire.

care workers need to do their job well. The criteria were developed by personal care workers and vetted by people with disabilities and employers who hire personal assistance workers.<sup>1</sup>

After a pilot test in March 2010, the program will be modified as needed and rolled out nationwide.

The long-range plan is to build on this entry-level credential with addi-

- **National Advisory Council Members**
- *as of February 2010*

- John Booker, President, National Association of Direct Care Workers of Color
- Terry Bucher, President, Florida Professional Association of Care Givers
- Susan Chapman, Ph.D., RN, Center for Personal Assistance Services
- Judy Clinco, Board Chair, Arizona Caregivers Association
- Tracy Dudzinski, Vice Chair, Wisconsin Direct Care Association
- Dennis Fitzgibbons, Executive Director, Alpha One
- Priscilla Gonzales, Director, Domestic Workers United
- Amy Hewitt, Ph.D., Senior Research Director, Institute of Community Integration, University of Minnesota
- Gloria Horton, Executive Director, Visiting Nurse Plus, Inc.
- Gail Hunt, President and CEO, National Alliance for Caregiving
- Karyne Jones, President and CEO, National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc.
- Kathy Kelly, Executive Director, Family Caregiver Alliance
- Jane Lipscomb, Ph.D., University of Maryland
- Robyn Stone, Ph.D., Executive Director, Institute for the Future of Aging Services

- **For the Direct Care Alliance:**

- Vera Salter, Ph.D., Professional Development Director
- Leonila Vega Esq., Executive Director

#### Footnote

<sup>1</sup> The Direct Care Alliance has a contract with HumRRO, a national non-profit personnel and consulting firm, for the design, job-analysis and testing of the credential. HumRRO has completed many projects in the health and long-term care field, including a credential for the American College for Health Care Administrators. Amy Armenia, an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Randolph-Macon College, is conducting an evaluation of the program.

**To learn more about the DCA’s National Credential for Personal Assistance Workers, contact Vera Salter at [Vsalter@directcarealliance.org](mailto:Vsalter@directcarealliance.org) or (347) 907-3080**