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Personal Care Credential to Boost Industry Professionalism

New York, NY – In an ongoing effort to increase professionalism in the direct care workforce, the Direct Care Alliance today announced its [national credentialing program for personal care workers](#) (PCWs). Developed by workers and vetted by people with disabilities and employers, the credential is expected to become the gold standard national credential for PCWs across the country.

On March 5, 2010, the Direct Care Alliance launched the pilot phase of the credentialing program in Portland, Maine. Additional pilot tests have been administered in Tucson, Arizona, and by the Pennsylvania Direct Care Workers Association. Workers who complete the pilot test will be among the first to receive the credential, which meets the standards of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence and will be rolled out nationwide later this year.

“A credential is the perfect next step toward identifying competencies and improving the working environment for PCWs and the services care-dependent individuals receive every day,” said Dr. Robyn Stone, Executive Director of the Institute for the Future of Aging Services at the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging.

The Direct Care Alliance’s credential was created and will continue to be developed with the guidance of a diverse advisory council of PCWs, employers and consumers. The long-term plan is to build on this entry-level credential with additional specialty credentials in areas such as dementia care, geriatrics, and working with independent adults with disabilities.

“As a home care worker I am excited at the potential of a national credential that will bring us respect as professionals,” said Brenda Nachtway, a hospice worker who hosted the pilot test at the Pennsylvania Direct Care Workers Association.

Leading up to its launch, the Direct Care Alliance will continue working with experts and allies to gain support for the program.

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"I have long believed in – and advocated the need for – voluntary credentialing as a means to higher wages for direct support workers," said Dr. Amy Hewitt, Senior Research Associate for the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota.

The Direct Care Alliance credentialing program is made possible through a generous Ford Foundation grant. For more information on participating in the program, please contact Vera Salter, Direct of Professional Development, at vsalter@directcarealliance.org or (347) 907-3080.

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The Direct Care Alliance is the national advocacy voice of direct care workers in long-term care. We empower workers to speak out for better wages, benefits, respect, and working conditions, so more people can commit to direct care as a career. We also convene powerful allies nationwide to build consensus for change.