Who Provides Long-Term Care?

Most long-term care is provided informally (or unpaid) by family members and friends. Paid long-term care services are provided formally by a wide variety of trained professionals, with the largest share coming from the "direct care workforce", including home health aides, certified nursing assistants, and personal care aides.

This fact sheet is one in a series that provides basic information on the "who, what, where, when, why, and how" of long-term care. All the references accessed to produce this fact sheet are provided for further review.

Informal Caregivers

- Approximately **87%** of those who need long-term care receive that care from unpaid caregivers.[1]

- In 2009, **65.7 million** people in the U.S. served as unpaid caregivers to an adult or child. Of these, **43.5 million** provide care to an adult age 50 and older.[2]

- Unpaid caregivers for adults age 50 and older are **predominantly female** and **50 years of age** on average.[2]

- **72%** of caregivers are White, **13%** are African-American, and **2%** each are Hispanic or Asian-American.[1]

- Unpaid caregivers of adults age 50 and older spend an average of **19 hours** a week providing care and do so for an average of **4 years.**[2]

Formal Caregivers

- Of the **3.2 million** direct care workers providing care in 2008[3]:
    - **1,470,000** were Nursing Aides, Orderlies and Attendants
    - **922,000** were Home Health Aides
    - **817,000** were Personal Care and Home Care Aides.

- **Between 70% and 80%** of paid long-term care is provided by direct care workers.[3]

- Approximately **46%** of direct care workers provide care in institutional settings. The remainder provide care in home and community settings.[4]

- By 2018, home and community-based direct care workers are likely to outnumber facility workers by nearly **2 to 1**.[3]

- In 2007, the rate of turnover among nurses was **49%** and **71%** among direct care workers.[5]

- The ratio of geriatricians to older persons is **1 to 2,128**. By 2050, this ratio will increase to **1 to 6,250**.[6]

- Only **2,000** of the estimated 78,500 nurse practitioners licensed in the U.S. provide care in nursing homes.[7]

- **312,000** registered nurses and **297,000** licensed practical nurses worked in long-term care facilities in 2006.[8]
- Currently, **42** states allow some form of consumer direction of personal assistance services.[9]

Sources

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