Caregiver vacancy rates, long a concern for Wisconsin long-term and residential care providers, have reached crisis levels. In the largest survey of long-term and residential care providers to date, responses from 689 providers revealed:

- High levels of caregiver vacancy rates in assisted living and nursing homes
- Major problems finding applicants and qualified caregivers
- Significant wage disparity between people working as trained personal caregivers and unskilled entry level workers taking jobs at gas stations, big-box stores, and fast food restaurants
- Lost admissions due to lack of caregivers
- An exodus of caregivers to jobs outside of healthcare
- Widespread use of overtime, double shifts and other strategies to fill scheduling gaps

The results of the survey, together with data from the Wisconsin Office of Caregiver Quality showing a decline in persons seeking or renewing certification as nursing assistants (CNA), expose a significant workforce crisis facing providers caring for people in need of long-term and residential care.
The Need for Caregivers!

- More than 87,000 Wisconsin residents live in 4,102 long-term and residential care facilities.
- Residents living in long-term and residential care facilities rely on an estimated 73,700 caregivers.
- The number of Wisconsin residents living in long-term and residential care facilities has grown 18% since 2003.
- In the next 30 years, the ratio of Wisconsin residents age 65 and older to the entire state population will grow from 1 in 7 to 1 in 4.
- By the year 2022 the need for personal care workers is projected to increase 26.4%.

Scope of the Crisis

- Average caregiver vacancy rates of 14.5%, with 1 in 4 providers experiencing rates 20% and higher.
- An estimated 11,500 vacant caregiver positions in Wisconsin long-term and residential care facilities.

1 in 7 Caregiving staff positions are unfilled ...why?

- More than 30% of providers felt they were unable to compete with other employers.
- Nearly 50% had no applicants for vacant caregiver positions.
- 70% said there were no qualified applicants for caregiver openings.
**Why Is There A Crisis?**

**Wage and benefit disparity**
- Providers reported a median hourly starting wage for personal caregivers of $10.75 compared to $12.00 for local, non-health care employers seeking unskilled, entry level workers
- 4 of 5 personal caregivers who took jobs outside of health care left for better pay, better benefits and/or better hours

**Caregivers are leaving**
- 56% of providers had personal caregivers leave for jobs outside health care
- An estimated 10,600 personal caregivers may have left for jobs outside of health care in the past year

**People are not seeking certification as caregivers**
- Between 2012 and 2015, 24% fewer people applied for CNA certification
- The number of people renewing their CNA certification declined by 5,431 between 2012 and 2015, a drop of 24%

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**How Providers Are Trying to Cope**

**Limiting admissions**
- 18% limited admissions in the past year, limiting access to long-term and residential care services to an estimated 5,335 individuals because of caregiver shortages

**Limiting benefits**
- More than 50% of providers do not offer health insurance to part-time staff
- 1 in 4 providers had at least 10 employees on BadgerCare Plus, the state’s Medicaid health insurance program for low-income persons

**Relying on current caregivers to fill open hours**
- 84% of the time providers use overtime, double shifts, and/or other strategies to fill open hours which are expensive and can lead to caregiver burnout
We all can agree…
- Wisconsin residents living in long-term and residential care facilities deserve to be treated with dignity and respect
- Residents depend on the caregivers who work in these facilities
- Caregivers are responsible for the care, service, support, and safety of residents
- The work of caregiving is often difficult and demanding
- Caregivers are special people – it’s not a job everyone can do

The research validated what we’ve been hearing from providers:
- Caregiver vacancy rates are reaching crisis proportions, with as many as 11,500 openings across Wisconsin
- The median starting wage for personal caregivers is $1.25 per hour less than the wage non-health care employers are paying for unskilled, entry level workers
- Caregivers are leaving because they can get better pay, better benefits, and/or better hours from non-health care employers
- People simply aren’t applying for caregiver jobs
- Providers rely on overtime, double shifts and other strategies to fill open schedules. These stop-gap approaches are unsustainable and ultimately counterproductive if they lead to caregiver burnout.

What must be done to assure there are enough caregivers?
- Increase the number of people entering caregiving careers
- Value the work of caregiving
- Recognize and celebrate career caregivers
- Reward the work of caregivers with competitive wages and benefits

For more information about The Long-Term Care Workforce Crisis: A 2016 Report, contact:
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Glossary
- Caregivers include registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, certified nursing assistants, persons with CBRF certification, resident assistants, and other direct and personal care workers
- Long-term and residential care providers include adult family homes, community based residential facilities, residential care apartment complexes, and skilled nursing facilities
- Assisted living includes adult family homes, community based residential facilities, and residential care apartment complexes
- Personal caregivers include certified nursing assistants, persons with CBRF certification, resident assistants, and other direct and personal care workers

Footnotes
1 Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Quality Assurance, State of Assisted Living – CY 2014, March, 2015
3 Wisconsin Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center, Wisconsin’s Future Population, Projections for the State, Its Counties and Municipalities, 2010 – 2040, December, 2013
4 Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Office of Economic Advisors, Wisconsin Long Term Occupational Employment Projections, 2012-2022, August 2014
5 Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Quality Assurance, Office of Caregiver Quality