



August 1, 2024

Chiquita Brooks-LaSure
Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21284-1850
Administrator Brooks-LaSure

Dear Administrator Brooks-LaSure:

As one of many needed steps to significantly expand the long-term care workforce, including in nursing homes, we appreciate your work to establish a \$75 million national nursing home staffing campaign to increase the number of nurses in nursing homes. To help support these efforts, we take this opportunity to share several successful programs and strategies employed by LeadingAge state partners and our members to improve nurse recruitment and access to nursing assistant training. We believe the programs represented below can enhance CMS's \$75 million campaign as we know that the existing and growing need for nurses in nursing homes will not be met alone by this initial effort. We hope to work collaboratively with CMS on this and future initiatives.

Our experience demonstrates that traditional recruitment methods alone are insufficient to meet the growing demand for caregivers and nurses. LeadingAge workforce resources focus on diversifying recruitment methods to reach a broader pool of potential applicants as well as initiatives developed and executed by our members and state partners that have proven to be promising.

Public Outreach and Messaging

In 2022, LeadingAge conducted a thorough market analysis of potential aging services employees. It revealed positive perceptions of the aging services sector and a broad willingness to work with older adults. To support this, we have developed communication strategies, tested message themes and language, and identified the job attributes employees seek. While not specific to nursing homes, we have used the research findings to create profiles of potential employees by job category to craft engaging materials using the most effective language. We encourage CMS to review these resources and download the [Workforce Recruitment Communications Toolkit](#).

CaringGene:

Summary: A job search platform that explains career pathways in aging services and offers job placement support.

Website Excerpt: This innovative multi-media recruitment campaign, brought to you by the Iroquois Healthcare Association (IHA) aims to increase the applicant pool for healthcare career and training opportunities across New York State. It was born from the idea that some people are simply born to care for others but are not aware of the amazing opportunities waiting for them within the care sector. This initiative was originally funded through the New York State Department of Health to assist with long term care recruitment.

Building Pipelines

[Minnesota Long Term Care Nurse Loan Forgiveness](#)

Summary: The State of Minnesota operates a loan forgiveness program for nurses working in aging services (nursing homes, assisted living, home health, etc.) Annual repayment can reach up to \$6,000 per recipient, and recipients are eligible for up to four years (two 2-year terms).

Website Excerpt: The purpose of Minnesota's Health Care Loan Forgiveness program is to recruit and retain health care professionals to needed areas and facilities within Minnesota. Loan forgiveness is an important benefit for health care professionals as well as health care facilities and communities experiencing a shortage of access to primary health care services.

[Nursing Facility Workforce Incentive Grant Program](#)

Summary: The Minnesota Department of Human Services initiated an incentive grant program for staff working in nursing homes. Staff in these settings making less than \$30/hour are eligible for the incentive, which the employer may provide through a variety of channels, such as: recruitment or retention incentive payments, benefits programs, retirement contributions, education opportunities, childcare, transportation, housing, or other needs.

Website Excerpt: The total funding the legislature has provided for the nursing facility workforce incentive program is \$74,500,000. Eligible workers may receive up to \$3,000 per year from this workforce incentive program. Eligible nursing facilities may submit an application to DHS for the funding and must make the payment to eligible workers between October 1, 2023, and September 30, 2024. If there are funds still available for a second round of applications, another application for nursing facilities will be available in August 2024. The legislation requires each nursing facility to prepare an incentive payment distribution plan and submit it to DHS. The plan must specify the amount of money the facility expects to receive and how that money will be distributed for the workforce incentives for eligible employees.

[WisCap - Wisconsin](#)

Summary: A government funded opportunity to develop a workforce pipeline with low to moderate-income individuals. Provides training and wraparound services.

Website Excerpt: In 2022, WISCAP was awarded \$4.8 Million in funding from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Workforce Innovation Grant in collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) to

support sustainable workforce development solutions. WISCAP's network and LeadingAge Wisconsin have committed to utilizing these funds to increase Wisconsin's nursing workforce through the Nursing Skills Program by providing opportunities for at least 142 low to moderate-income individuals to upskill or reskill into a high demand nursing career. This program provides eligible Wisconsin residents with funding for tuition, transportation, childcare, and other school-related expenses. Participants receive individual support and wrap-around services from participating Community Action Agencies to ensure their success.

[HOSA Partnership - National Organization](#)

Summary: A student club to garner interest, experience, and certifications in health-related careers. Aimed at middle school, high school and college students.

Website Excerpt: HOSA is a global student-led organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services and several federal and state agencies. HOSA's mission is to empower HOSA-Future Health Professionals to become leaders in the global health community, through education, collaboration, and experience. HOSA actively promotes career opportunities in the health industry and to enhance the delivery of quality health care to all people.

Licensed Practical Nursing as a High School Course

Summary: Several high schools throughout the country have piloted Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) courses and/or LPN diploma programs, allowing students to graduate high school with their LPN or with the LPN program nearly completed, depending on state regulations. Investing in these early pipelines could greatly increase nursing school students, could offset the nursing instructor crisis, as well as expedite the road to practice.

Website Excerpts:

- [Rochester Schools in Minnesota](#) - Students have the opportunity to earn both their high school diploma and a diploma in practical nursing or an Associate of Applied Science in Information Technology within four years in the program model. Students will receive workplace experiences through job shadows, mentors, and a paid internship.
- [The Jones High School Medical Magnet in Florida](#) - The Jones High School Medical Magnet is a dual enrollment program offered through a partnership with Orange Technical College on the Jones High School campus. Students in the Medical Magnet program take advanced course work with hands-on experiences and will have the opportunity to complete the Practical Nursing program and take the National Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) examination.
- [Inlet Grove Community High School in Florida](#) - Students may become a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) upon graduation. Our students not only receive classroom instruction, but also have the opportunity to demonstrate a mastery of skills in a comprehensive nursing laboratory. In addition, students practice direct patient care in hospital and community settings under the guidance of professional clinicians.

Wraparound Support and Building Pipelines

[Kentucky HealthCorps, Public Health AmeriCorps - Kentucky](#)

Summary: The first of its' kind AmeriCorp program in healthcare. While this example includes a variety of positions within aging services, this type of program could be expanded to include newly licensed nurses, or experienced nurses willing to change settings to serve in long term care in exchange for loan repayment and/or special stipends.

Website Excerpt: Family Scholar House partnered with AmeriCorps to place KY HealthCorps members in nonprofit healthcare organizations in rural and urban areas across the Commonwealth. Positions range anywhere from CNA, and Dietary Aid, to Administrator-in-Training, Activities, & Social Services with so many others in between.

Thank you for the opportunity to engage and bring forward recruitment strategies and programs, particularly those with important incentives, that have experienced success. We welcome a continued dialogue about ways to address the critical shortage of nurses working in nursing homes.

Sincerely,



Katie Smith Sloan
President and CEO
LeadingAge

cc: Linda Couch, SVP, Policy and Advocacy