

How NY organizations are training long-term care workers for value-based care

The long-term-care sector needs to retrain its workforce to meet the state's goal of shifting more Medicaid payments into value-based arrangements that reward providers for keeping people healthy and out of the hospital, said Scott LaRue, president and CEO of ArchCare.

His organization is one of 11 participating in the state's three-year, \$245 million Managed Long-Term Care Workforce Investment Program.

"This is the first meaningful tranche of funds to help reposition long-term-care workers to be successful in this new model of care," LaRue said.

Crain's spoke to ArchCare, as well as to 1199SEIU's Home Care Industry Education Fund and Montefiore Medical Center, to find out how the organizations plan to recruit and retrain staffers to work in skilled nursing facilities and home care. The state's goal is to teach these workers skills that will prevent avoidable hospital visits.

ArchCare, the health system of the Archdiocese of New York, will receive \$5.6 million in the first year. It has partnered with the Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing at New York University's Rory Myers College of Nursing to train some of its own 4,300 employees. But it is also offering training to workers from other nursing homes and home-care agencies.

Long-term-care workers will be trained to earlier identify the warning signs of deteriorating health, LaRue said.

Workers will be paid for their time attending training if they have to miss work, and state funding can cover employers' expenses to find workers to fill in for the trainees.

Each training program has a different structure, though their curricula often overlap. ArchCare will provide a combination of online and in-person courses for certification as a home health aide, nursing assistant and case manager. Course topics will include person-centered care, fall prevention and case management.

Workers in Arch Care's program will attain continuing-education credits for completing the courses, which help them maintain their licensure, but won't accrue credits toward a degree.

The union 1199SEIU's Home Care Industry Education Fund was the largest recipient, receiving \$21.5 million to provide training statewide. It is focusing on four areas: quality measurement, developing career pathways, behavioral health and workplace safety, said Sandi Vito, executive director of the union's Training and Employment Funds.

Because the union has previously provided training, some of its courses are already underway. Vito said it is working with CUNY, the Continuing Care Leadership Coalition and other experts to develop the courses.

Vito said workers need to improve how they communicate with a care team and learn to use technology as the long-term-care system evolves.

"More and more home health aides are being asked to report things using handheld devices back to care teams," she said.

It can be challenging for hospitals to manage patients' health once they're discharged, but home health aides can help with that task, said Dr. Scott Wetzler, vice chairman of psychiatry at Montefiore Medical Center, which will receive \$10.2 million for training in the city and the Hudson Valley. It has designed a 20-hour classroom course that will start next month.

"The home health aides are the eyes and ears of what's going on in this somewhat invisible population," he said. "We're trying to enhance their skill set." -J.L.