

## Revitalizing Minnesota's direct support workforce

Minnesota faces a critical shortage of caregiver professionals who support people with behavioral health conditions, people with disabilities, older adults, people experiencing housing instability or homelessness, and people who are deaf, deaf/blind and hard-of-hearing. The workforce crisis, particularly in human services and direct support professions, is leading to the loss of independence, stability, health and dignity for many who rely on these workers.

State payment rates for many of these jobs have not kept pace with the needs of communities across the state. Although job vacancies for all sectors have reached record highs, even more severe and unprecedented shortages are occurring in the health care and social assistance sectors, with almost 40,000 vacancies in the second quarter of 2021. New investment will help sustain the life-saving supports these workers provide and prevent people from falling through the cracks.

### Proposals

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Governor Walz's budget includes the following proposals:

- **Incentives for workers in direct support, housing and behavioral health professions:** A new Workforce Incentive Fund will help providers offer benefits of up to \$5,000 per year for workers who join and stay in these critical professions. Benefits could include retention, incentive and bonus payments; loan or tuition reimbursement; and payment for child care and transportation costs. To qualify, workers must have worked in an eligible profession for at least six months and earn no more than \$30 per hour. *FY2023-25: \$139 million*
- **Higher payment rates for Personal Care Assistance and Community First Services and Supports:** An ongoing 5.4% rate increase for these essential services will help attract and retain qualified workers in the home- and community-based service industry. *FY2022-25: \$93 million*
- **Funding for behavioral health providers:** This proposal invests in ongoing funding for mental health, family and recovery peer training. Funding for the Cultural and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure Grant will also increase. A new mental health grant program will help providers cover costs related to supervising clinical trainees and licensing and exam fees. *FY2022-25: \$34 million*
- **Operational strategies for the direct support workforce:** This proposal enhances Direct Support Connect, a web tool that helps people find direct support workers. It also expands the Culture of Safety Initiative, aimed at improving safety and accountability in the Home and Community Based Services system while also improving workforce retention. *FY2022-25: \$3 million*

### Related information

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Governor's 2022 Revised Supplemental Budget Recommendations:

- [Workforce Revitalization for Human Services Frontline Workers](#)

Additional background:

- [2021 legislative changes that affect the direct care workforce shortage](#)
- [Personal care assistance](#)
- [Direct care workforce shortage webpage](#)