



# Home Support Workers: HR Strategies

RESEARCH AND CONSULTATIONS TO HELP  
CANADA MEET ITS FUTURE CHRONIC  
HOME CARE NEEDS.

## Project Overview 2009- 2010



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## Project Goal

To improve Canada's ability to meet the projected demand for formal home care services for older persons.

## Objectives

- 1) Increase key stakeholders' knowledge of the human resources (HR) issues affecting home support workers in Canada;
- 2) Engage key stakeholders in a discussion of strategies to improve recruitment and retention of home support workers in Canada, thereby increasing their awareness of the range of issues and options; and
- 3) Promote and enhance opportunities for collaboration amongst stakeholders of human resources planning in home and community care to improve recruitment and retention of HSWs.

## Project Activities

- A literature review of priority issues impacting HSWs in Canada.
- A scan of literature and websites to identify recruitment and retention strategies in Canada, Australia, the USA and selected European countries.
- Analysis of existing data sets for insight into HSWs' job satisfaction and working conditions.
- Consultations with key stakeholders in 4 provinces: Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario and Saskatchewan.

## Why is this Research Important?

The demand for home care services\* in Canada is projected to increase due to the aging of the population and fewer adult children available to provide informal support. The availability of human resources to meet the growing demand for care services is of increasing concern to both health care planners and human resource policy makers. According to the Canadian Home Care Association (2008), "the number one challenge concerning home care that provinces face is health human resources- recruitment, ongoing education and retention of trained staff" (p.xix). This project will examine human resource strategies in several jurisdictions and present issues and insights for human resource planning.

\*This project is interested in home support workers (HSWs) of clients aged 65+. HSWs assist clients with various tasks including personal care, light house work, meal preparation, and grocery shopping. There are various titles for these workers across Canada, including community health worker, health care aide, continuing care assistant and personal support worker.

## Key Issues

A literature review conducted in the fall of 2008 identified four key areas with potential impacts on recruitment and retention. While the relative importance of issues varies between jurisdictions, participants of a pilot consultation in British Columbia (March 2009) confirmed that these key areas are generally representative of the issues. Attention to the following factors may help retain workers and make the occupation more attractive to new workers.

### Compensation

A livable wage and parity with counterparts in continuing care and in other jurisdictions; attractive benefits packages; reimbursement for mileage and time spent travelling between clients; guaranteed hours.

### Education and Training

Cost and entry requirements; adequate preparation for the demands of the job; continuing education opportunities; transferability of local credential outside of home province; resources for on-the-job training and mentoring.

### Quality Assurance

Adequate standards for home care programs and worker performance; continuity of care; practice qualifications; adequate supervision and accountability.

### Working Conditions

Accommodating workloads; time off; limited stress; attention to safety; opportunities for engagement with peers; relationships with clients; valuing of the worker and occupation by health system, clients, their families and the public.

## Strategies

Known provincial-level strategies in Canada include funding to increase wages, funding for education programs, bursaries, curriculum review and development, marketing and awareness campaigns and funding to increase transportation allowances. Examples of strategies at the regional health authority level (British Columbia, the focus of the pilot phase of this project) include shift rotations and guaranteed hours, a safe client handling policy, working with colleges to fund additional seats and providing meeting time for home support workers to interact with their peers on a regular basis.

**Please contact us for more information**

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Project updates will be made available on our website:

[www.msvu.ca/mdcaging/](http://www.msvu.ca/mdcaging/)



Production of this document has been made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada.

The support of our project partner, the Canadian Home Care Association, is gratefully acknowledged.

