



Home Support Workers: HR Strategies

WHY I BECAME A HOME SUPPORT WORKER:
RECRUITMENT IN THE HOME HEALTH SECTOR

**Project Results
2009- 2010**



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About the research

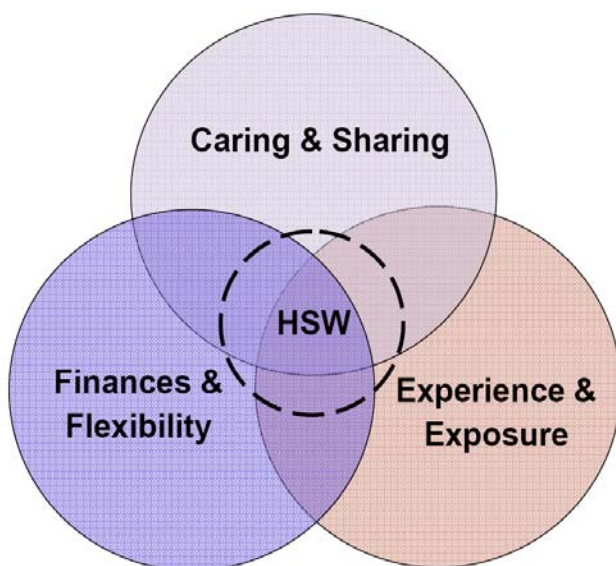
As part of the Home Support Workers: HR Strategies Project, a fraction of the Home Support Workers from that project were chosen in order to assess the factors that attract individuals to employment as a Home Support Worker. (For further information please refer to the NEXUS Home Care Research website <http://nexushomecare.arts.ubc.ca>.)

Who were the participants?

- ◆ Home Support Workers from three Provinces across Canada (British Columbia, Ontario, and Nova Scotia) who provide “non-professional” home care services* (e.g., non-medical services) to clients over the age of 65, for 5 years or less.
- ◆ Face-to-face, in-depth interviews were analyzed and case studies were developed to illustrate key themes that emerged from Home Support Workers.

What we found

Key themes that emerged from the study include those outlined in the diagram below. These themes arose frequently during the analysis of the interviews and in many cases, several or all of the themes were evident and overlapped in each of the workers. (See overleaf for case study examples from each theme.)



- ◆ Many workers described enjoyment in working with people as the *main* reason for choosing home care service work.
- ◆ Workers often came from other interactive jobs, such as hairdressing, to pursue home care work.
- ◆ For many workers, they reported needing a job, and home care work was available.

*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.

Home Support Worker Case Studies

Case Study 1: Caring & sharing

Although she loves the work, Naomi struggles with the rapid health decline that her clients experience, especially those with dementia. The emotional impact of the work requires a variety of stress management techniques; in her words, “it is tough.” This emotional impact, however, is outweighed by the satisfaction that Naomi derives from her clients and the caring nature of the profession.

When asked what she does not like about her job, Naomi replies, *“There’s nothing I don’t like. I enjoy it. I really enjoy it.”*



(Naomi, NS, age 55, 1.5 yrs as HSW, Canadian born)

Case Study 2: Finances & flexibility

While studying and working in Canada, Renit’s mother fell gravely ill. This encouraged Renit to return home to India to provide care for her



mother. Renit provided care for her mother for five months, until she passed away.

Upon returning to Canada, Renit decided to put into practice the training she had previously completed as a care aide. Although Renit was interested in a caring profession since she was a small child, she notes, *“I got lots of experience from my Mom. That’s why I want to help other people.”*

Renit also discussed the flexible nature of the position and described her schedule as follows: *“It is like my own. Like when I want to. So, my kids are not that little...but still I want to stay with them.”*

(Renit, BC, age not given, 1 yr as HSW, born in India)

Case Study 3: Experience & exposure

Shelby has been working in the home support sector for three years. Her exposure to this type of work, however, began at the age of 15, when she worked at a camp for youth with disabilities. Throughout her childhood, Shelby’s mother also operated a live-in care facility for adults with disabilities. This early exposure to community-based health care inspired Shelby to volunteer in the facility, and to later become a Home Support Worker. She currently works full-time as a Home Support Worker for elderly clients, in addition to a part-time job working with children with autism.

Due to her extensive exposure to this type of work at a young age, Shelby reports feeling extremely comfortable and confident in the work she does.

In her words, *“I love [working with elderly clients]. I absolutely love it.”*

(Shelby, ON, 28 yrs, 3 yrs as HSW, Canadian born)



Policy implications of research results

Proposed strategies for agencies and governments to enhance recruitment of Home Support Workers:

- ◆ Recruit new workers to home care sector: focus on attracting former caregivers of family members who are re-entering the labour force, as well as workers from other helping professions.
- ◆ Invest in marketing activities that highlight the value of the work done by Home Support Workers, as well as the positive rewards received by the workers.
- ◆ Provide appropriate and affordable training to attract new recruits, including bursaries and financial support.
- ◆ Develop strategies to achieve a comprehensive remuneration package inclusive of wage and benefits, as well as guaranteeing hours of work.

Proposed improvements in Immigration, Health, and Technology:

- ◆ Enhancing the Live-In Caregiver program through Citizen and Immigration Canada may increase the number of care workers and become an eventual recruitment source for home care agencies.
- ◆ Improving health promotion policy may lead to better health among the older population and curtail the projected demand for home care support in the future.
- ◆ Adapting advances in technological devices to enhance independence among older populations with disabilities may reduce reliance on human resources to deliver care needs.

Please contact us for more information

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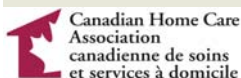
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Project updates will be made available on our websites:

www.msvu.ca/mdcaging

<http://nexushomecare.arts.ubc.ca>



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