

## Nursing Home and Assisted Living Oversight Working Group (NHALOWG)

### Staffing Levels Subcommittee

#### Meeting Summary

Monday, November 23, 2020, 3:00 PM via Zoom

#### 1. Opening Remarks

- Kate McEvoy, Co-Chair, convened the meeting, and asked the attendees to introduce themselves. She asked for a motion to approve the meeting summary of November 16. The motion was made, seconded and approved unanimously. She added that the issue brief that she prepared and sent to the subcommittee is a working draft, and additions will be made to it during the course of the subcommittee's work.

#### 2. Subject Area Presentations

- Barbara Cass (DPH): State regulations regarding staffing
  - Ms. Cass gave a PowerPoint presentation, which was sent to subcommittee members and is available on the website at [NHALOWG](#). She pointed out that the model has changed significantly over recent decades, and she underscored the importance of staffing.
  - Ms. Cass took questions from the subcommittee members. Rep. Cook, Co-Chair, asked about policies regarding non-compliance, and Ms. Cass detailed the review process, timeframes and enforcement mechanisms.
  - Rep. Hughes asked about staffing needs, and if current regulations are sufficient. Ms. Cass shared that DPH has a document detailing "Crisis Standards of Care," and they have daily meetings at DPH. Nursing homes have been asked to create both staffing plans and crisis staffing plans. COVID Recovery Facilities are being stood up again. DPH has an MOU with ConnectToCareJobs.com to connect job seekers with employers, and DPH has regular industry calls and recently convened a staffing summit. Rep. Hughes expressed her concern about staff safety and burnout, and the importance of thinking broadly and sustainably was highlighted.
  - Lindsay Jesshop from ADS asked about annual assessments of nursing homes. Ms. Cass shared information about the self-assessment process, and that each nursing home must have an emergency plan.
  - Zina Bennett, a CNA, shared that there had been layoffs prior to the onset of the pandemic, particularly affecting the 11-7 shift, which had doubled the workload. She added that the staff listed for a shift did not always match actual staff present. She asked how DPH determines what constitutes an adequate amount of CNAs. Ms. Cass explained how the survey process works and said that it's important to hear staff perspectives. Connecticut is a state that investigates anonymous complaints as well.

Ms. Bennett added that she did not feel like her colleagues' past complaints have been addressed, and Ms. Cass offered to continue the discussion offline.

- Kate McEvoy emphasized the importance of hearing about lived experiences, and that a fuller discussion will occur in future meetings, as the themes of expectations of staff and accountability are central.
- Jean Aranha of CT Legal Services noted the dissonance between the staffing crisis and staff layoffs. She asked how frequently a DPH plan of correction was addressing a staffing shortage. Ms. Cass said that there must always be sufficient staff to meet residents' needs. Rep. Cook commented that the residents' perspectives may not always match what is on paper, and their perspective is vitally important. Ms. Cass shared that residents are widely interviewed, and she offered to share the interviewing tool with the subcommittee. Ms. McEvoy said that that information would be posted to the website once received, as part of creating a chart book. She also asked that any additional questions for Ms. Cass be forwarded to Heather Ferguson-Hull, subcommittee administrator.

- Nicole Godburn (DSS): Medicaid nursing home rate methodology
  - Ms. Godburn shared an overview of how rates are calculated and how staffing factors into that. She noted that there will be a change to an acuity-based approach starting July 1, 2021. She added that DSS had presented this information to the committees of cognizance in February, and she said that she would send the link to Ms. Ferguson-Hull to be shared with the subcommittee.

### 3. Continued discussion of the five main topics for consideration:

- The discussion was embedded in the responses to the presentations that were given.

### 4. Continue to identify subject area experts to invite to present to the subcommittee

- Heather Ferguson-Hull read the list of recommended speakers. It was decided that invitations to present at the next meeting would be sent to Jeanette Sullivan-Martinez, President of the Statewide Coalition of Presidents of Resident Councils and Toby Edelman from the Center for Medicare Advocacy. Representatives from 1199's Training and Upgrading Fund and the Healthcare Career Advancement Program will be invited to a future meeting. Corey Geisman from 1199 will follow up on that.
- Rep. Cook said that she felt it was important to hear the Assisted Living perspective, and Heather Berchem of CALA agreed to email suggestions to the subcommittee.
- Liz Stern asked for historical background on staffing legislation. Rep. Cook said that although it would probably would not be ready for next week's meeting, she would work with Heather Ferguson-Hull on requesting a report from OLR.

- Sandy Arburr of Athena Healthcare reminded the group that including the perspectives of Therapeutic Recreation and Social Work had been discussed, and she will identify possible speakers, including Barbara Yard.
- Mag Morelli of Leading Age offered to share a summary of changes to federal nursing home regulations. Kate McEvoy noted that there are likely to be changes on the CMS level with the incoming presidential administration.
- Kathleen Dess from CALA talked about the importance of training and retention of staff, and that she had spoken with Congressman Courtney about the initiative to offer training in trade schools. She suggested the subcommittee invite him or someone from his office to present, as workforce issues are paramount. Rep. Cook said that there are already some partnerships between tech schools and facilities, and that the crux of the retention issue is pay. Rep. Hughes highlighted the systemic gender pay equity issue.
- Rep. Cook stressed the importance of hearing many perspectives, and she shared the email address [NHALOWG@cga.ct.gov](mailto:NHALOWG@cga.ct.gov) for people to submit their stories and opinions.

5. Next Meeting – Monday, November 30, 3:00 PM via Zoom