Caregiver Careers WASHINGTON

Workforce spotlight

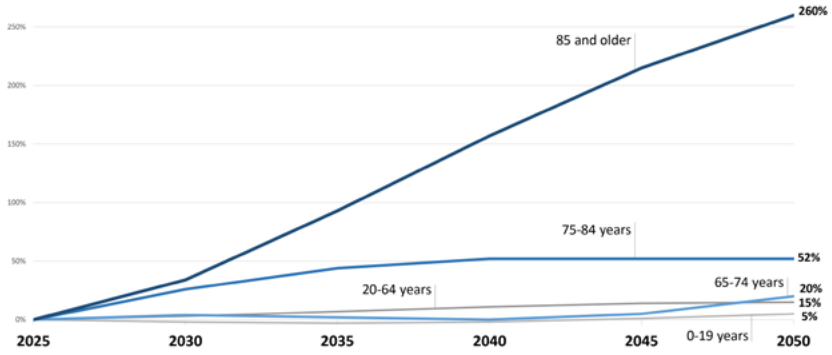
OCTOBER 2026

Strengthening the Workforce

Washington's 2026 Long Term Services and Supports Workforce Report offers a clear picture of how care needs are changing across the state. The report is required by House Bill 1694 and helps us understand the growing need for long term services and supports among older adults, people with disabilities, people with dementia, and individuals served by the Developmental Disabilities Administration.

The report shows that the number of people who need Medicaid funded LTSS is expected to increase by more than 50% by 2050. The number of adults age 85 and older will grow sharply. Adults with LTSS needs will increase from about 400,000 to nearly 600,000. These changes reflect natural population growth and the changing needs of Washington residents.

Washington's Population is Aging



By 2050, the number of Washington residents aged 85+ is projected to grow by over 400%, highlighting a major shift toward an aging population and increased demand for Long Term Services and Supports.

The LTSS workforce is growing too, but at a slower pace. Direct care workers continue to face challenges such as low wages, high workloads, and competing demands at home. The report helps us understand where the gaps are and where support is needed.

This is where the work of the Workforce Development team becomes important.

How Workforce Development Team is Responding:

- Workforce Navigators providing one-on-one support to prospective caregivers.
- High School Home Care Aide Program to grow the next generation of caregivers.
- High School Incentive Pilot to support new and current HCA programs.
- Transportation Pilot to help caregivers and clients with stability of care.
- Technology Stations Pilot to increase access for prospective caregivers in rural locations.
- Statewide marketing to increase recruitment and retention of caregivers.

Why This Matters

The report helps us understand the need. Our work helps people thrive. Washington's LTSS system is changing, and we are working to improve support for caregivers so they can continue to meet the needs of our communities

Read the 2026 Long-Term Services and Support Annual Report.

Building Momentum for the Year Ahead

For the first time in two years, the Home and Community Living Administration's Workforce Development team gathered in person. The team used the time to reconnect with leadership, celebrate progress, review active projects, and set priorities for the coming year.

The gathering also recognized executive leadership's commitment to sustaining the team. Leadership secured funding through at least December 2027 using existing Money Follows the Person project funds that are required to be used. By prioritizing these funds specifically for the team's critical workforce development work, leadership has ensured the team can continue developing practical solutions to strengthen the caregiver workforce and support access to home and community-based services across Washington.

Workforce Development Team (left to right): Carly, Julie, Stephanie, Steve, Yan, Stacy, Sarah, and Naomi

Celebrating Recent Progress

Over the past year, the team has advanced initiatives that help people enter, remain, and grow in caregiving careers.

Highlights include:

- Completing phase one of the caregiver transportation pilot, which explored ways to address transportation barriers for caregivers.
- Helping dispel myths and clarify requirements related to hiring 16- and 17-year-old caregivers in certain settings, particularly graduates of the High School Home Care Aide program.
- Growing the High School Home Care Aide program to 11 contracted schools statewide.
- Helping 175 new caregivers move into employment through support from the Workforce Navigators.
- Expanding caregiver recruitment and recognition through radio advertising, with 5,340 spots aired.
- Marking the first anniversaries of the Caregiving in Action newsletter and CaregiverCareers.com.
- Strengthening collaboration with internal and external partners.

Advancing Current Work

The team also reviewed several projects now underway and identified opportunities to build on recent progress.

Current work includes:

- Launching the technology stations pilot to reduce technology barriers for prospective caregivers in rural communities. The stations will provide access to computers and related resources needed for training, credentialing, job applications, and employment paperwork.
- Completing contracts for phase two of the caregiver transportation pilot.
- Supporting Rural Health Transformation projects that build workforce capacity in rural areas.
- Implementing incentive programs to grow and sustain the High School Home Care Aide workforce.
- Refining visual and video resources that help prospective and current caregivers understand career-growth opportunities.

Continue to next page

Continued from previous page.

- Supporting additional services for immigrant communities in Eastern Washington.
- Supporting the King County Village pilot, which is developing community-based, culturally responsive approaches to recruit, prepare, and connect caregivers with older adults in communities facing caregiver shortages.
- Expanding remote caregiving options to all Medicaid-contracted home care agencies.

Setting Priorities

Team members brought several potential projects forward for prioritization, planning, and feedback from leadership. The group developed project charters for several priorities and identified additional projects for the upcoming work queue.

Priorities for the coming year include:

- Building a framework for the High School Home Care Aide employment pipeline.
- Developing an employer webinar on hiring minors.
- Gathering feedback on potentially removing age barriers for hiring youth in certain caregiving settings.
- Repackaging the Supervisor Retention Toolkit to make it easier to use and share.
- Supporting caregivers who do not drive.
- Sharing results and lessons from the transportation pilot.
- Improving caregiver and client matching.
- Testing new caregiver recruitment approaches.
- Creating an orientation for the High School Home Care Aide program.

"This gathering gave us time to recognize how far the team has come over the last few years, learn from one another, and focus our energy on the work that will make the greatest difference for caregivers, employers, and the people who rely on home and community-based services," said Stacy Graff, unit manager.

By bringing staff and leadership together, the Workforce Development team built shared momentum for the year ahead and for a caregiving workforce that is more accessible, sustainable, and responsive to Washington communities.

Workforce Navigators

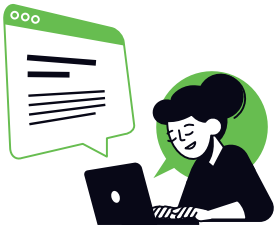
Have questions about becoming a caregiver? Get free support anywhere on your caregiver journey.

Julie Gardner
Central & Eastern Washington
Julie.gardner@dshs.wa.gov
360.280.1480

Naomi Spector
King County & Northwest Washington
Naomi.spector@dshs.wa.gov
360.764.6320

Yan Heng
Pierce County & Southwest Washington
Yan.heng@dshs.wa.gov
360.584.7532

Strengthening Caregiver Pathways Across Tribal and Rural Communities



Many rural and Tribal communities face barriers like slow internet or limited access to computers, making it difficult for people to complete caregiver hiring, onboarding, and training. The Technology Station Assistance Project helps remove these barriers by providing shared technology stations rooted in trusted community spaces. The station will promote equal accessibility and support prospective caregivers as they move through the application, training, and certification process in an efficient, timely, and holistic manner.

Our Workforce Navigators discussed this opportunity with six interested Tribal nations, underserved, and rural communities this quarter. The Asian Pacific Cultural Center has signed its contract, and the Quileute Tribal community is now working through contracting.

The project supports the goals of Money Follows the Person by improving access to care to support transitions from institutions to community settings, and strengthening trust-based partnerships with Tribal nations and underserved communities. These community-centered stations aim to grow the caregiver workforce, reduce stress for people pursuing certification, and expand fair access to home and community-based services across Washington state.

Let's Connect

Looking to bring the Home Care Aide Program to your high school? Reach out for more information.

Carly Seagren
High School Liaison
Carly.seagren@dshs.wa.gov
360.725.2634

Connecting Students to Meaningful Careers

In August, Carly attended the Washington Association for Career and Technical Education conference in Spokane to share information about the High School Home Care Aide Program. She hosted a table and spent two days talking with teachers, CTE directors, and educators from across the state. Many attendees were interested in the program's structure. Educators shared that students are looking for opportunities that are practical, meaningful, and connected to local job needs. The High School Home Care Aide Program gives students a pathway to build skills, consider a future in caregiving, and prepare for a career that serves their communities.

Supporting Caregivers Through Free Transportation

The first review of Phase 1 shows good results. The pilot offers rides for eligible caregivers traveling to and from client visits. Caregivers said the pilot helped remove transportation barriers, and clients shared positive care experiences. Eighty-five percent of caregivers said the pilot made them more likely to keep working.

Phase 2 moves the pilot into full operations from September 1 through June 2027 and will support up to 100 riders each month. Updated measures will help track how the pilot is working and guide future decisions. Read the report.

Caregivers interested in participating in Phase 2 can complete the registration. Some may use the support only on days when they do not have a car, while others may use it part of the week to keep their schedule steady. The goal is to make caregiving easier and help people stay in the field.

Please email caregivercareerswa@dshs.wa.gov for questions or comments.