

Innovations in Eldercare Workforce Recruitment and Retention

**HPGS Conference, “Navigating the Map of Aging”
September 11, 2025**

Moderator: Christy Nishita, Ph. D.

**Panelists: Ms. Dawn Meaney, Kendi Ho, Ph. D., Cullen Hayashida, Ph.D.,
Uyanga Batzogs, Ph.D.**



Direct Care Workers:

- **Are on the frontlines of healthcare**
- **Provide direct, hands-on assistance with ADLs and IADLs**

Job Titles:

**Home Health Aides, Personal Care Aides, Nursing Assistants
Orderlies & Psychiatric Aides**

Settings:



Facility Based



**Community
Based**



In Home

Vision:

- **An ample, dedicated, and well-trained direct care workforce providing person-centered and quality care**
- **A system that effectively utilizes recruitment, retention, and pathway strategies to strengthen its long-term care system**



Purpose of Panel Session:

- **Examine shortages and needs in our direct care workforce**
- **Identify innovative opportunities to strengthen the recruitment and retention of workers**
- **Propose action steps and opportunities to collaborate**

Data on Need:

- **Nurse Aides:**
Openings increased 78% (n=327) from 2019
- **Personal Care Assistants:** Increased 417% (n=146) from 2019



National Direct Care Worker Projected Job Openings, 2022 to 2032

Industry	Growth	%Growth	Separations	Total Job Openings
Home Care	738,100	26%	4,761,600	5,499,600
Residential Care Homes	78,900	12%	995,700	1,074,600
Nursing Homes	-11,900	-3%	630,800	618,900
Other Industries	56,100	5%	1,619,900	1,676,000
All DCWs	861,100	17%	8,008,000	8,869,100

*PHI. "Workforce Data Center." Last modified September 2024. <https://phinational.org/policy-research/workforce-data-center/>

RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES & RESPONSE STRATEGIES POST-PANDEMIC

Dawn Meaney
Regional Director
The Plaza Assisted Living



THE PLAZA
— Assisted Living

BARRIERS ENCOUNTERED

- Increased burnout and staff turnover
- Hesitancy around healthcare roles due to COVID risks
- Staff could work entry level non-healthcare roles and earn more \$
- Shift in work-life balance expectations
- Different candidate pool



STRATEGY #1: DEVELOP NEW POSITIONS

With the limited available talent in the job market,
new positions were created

MEDICATION AIDE

In 2022, we created a new curriculum and certification
passed through the Department of Health which yielded 55
Medication Aides.



NURSE SUPERVISOR

Leadership role for nurses as an entry way for management

STRATEGY #2: PROMOTE FROM WITHIN

Invest in developing existing Team Members & create **career paths**

Resident Care Aide

Certified Nurse Aide

Medication Aide

Nurse (LPN or RN)

Nurse Supervisor

Asst. Dir of Nursing

Director of Nursing



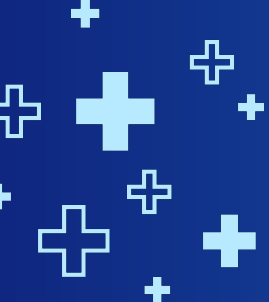


STRATEGY #3: PARTNERSHIP WITH SCHOOLS & PROGRAMS



PARTNERSHIPS	INTERNSHIPS	HIRES
• DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION • HEALTHCARE ASSOCIATION OF HAWAII • LANAKILA INTERNSHIP PROGRAM • GOOD JOBS HAWAII • HAWAII JOB CORPS CNA PROGRAM	22	27

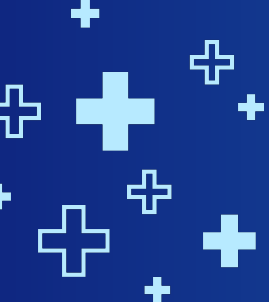




KEY TAKEAWAYS

Even though the pandemic is behind us, staffing challenges in healthcare are still very real. At The Plaza Assisted Living, we focused on supporting and growing our existing team, thinking creatively, and partnering with local schools and programs. These efforts helped us manage the shortages and, in the end, led to a stronger, more well-rounded team and organization.





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THE PLAZA

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Recruitment at Earlier Ages: High School Eldercare Curriculum

Christy Nishita, Ph.D.
UH Center on Aging

Eldercare Curriculum in the Schools

- Reach students early (middle school, high school)
- Change mindsets around aging
- Empathy-building
- Intergenerational Activities



DOE Teacher Externships/Training for Wider Dissemination



Call to Action: Developing Kupuna Workforce Innovation Hub



- **Work as an intermediary to connect schools with long-term care partners**
- **Develop work-based learning materials and opportunities**
- **Partner to create career pathways in aging**

Direct Care Worker Retention Strategies: Hawai'i and Other States

Kendi Ho, Ph.D.
Direct Care Worker Analyst
Center on Aging, UHM

Direct Care Worker Challenges: Nationwide

“Providers across the range of long-term support services (LTSS) settings...face a number of barriers, including the lack of societal value ...poor wages and inadequate benefits, and a lack of quality training and education that adequately prepare this workforce for the complex tasks that are required.” (Stone, 2017, p. 97).

Stone, R. 2017. Developing a quality direct care workforce: Searching for solutions. *The Gerontological Society of America*.

THE 5 PILLARS OF DIRECT CARE JOB QUALITY



Addressing Retention Challenges: Pathways and Lattices



Employer-led workplace training

Scope of practice: Within and Across

- Credentialed & Non-credentialed
- Addressing low compensation
- Building on competencies

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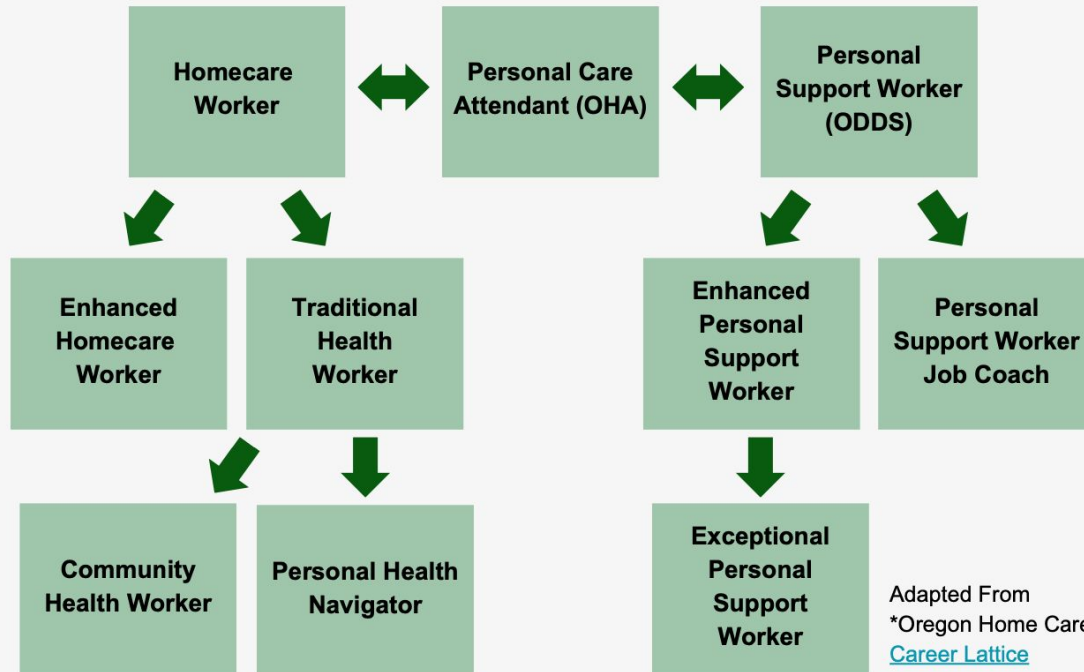
Addressing retention challenges: CNA+ Model



Advancing within CNA scope of practice:

- California (Ararat Nursing Home): Entry level to Senior Team leader
- South Dakota (Good Samaritan Society): Geriatric Specialist, Dementia Aide, Medication Aide

Lattice: Across Occupations



Adapted From
*Oregon Home Care Commission:
[Career Lattice](#)

Earn and Learn: Good Jobs Hawai'i and Registered Apprenticeships



Total Healthcare Apprentices Served, Fiscal Years 2020–2024



“Glidepath” (earn and learn) Health Association of Hawai'i (HAH):

- Current CNAs to LPN
- Wraparound services

<https://www.hah.org/hah-workforce-programs>

Registered Apprenticeships:

CNA and Home Health Aide

State Apprenticeship Agency: Construction industry (Hawai'i)

<https://www.apprenticeship.gov/apprenticeship-industries/healthcare>

Call to Action: Core Competencies

- Consider pathways and lattice models in your workplace
- Explore registered apprenticeships
- Support statewide core competencies efforts
 - Across facilities and community-based organizations
 - Education System: UHCCs and UH
 - Other models: Universal Care Worker (combining skill sets)

References

Katsutani, W., Kawamoto, K., Ho, K., Terada, T., Nishita, C.
(2025). *Strengthening Hawai'i's Long-Term Direct Care Workforce: A Strategic Plan*. Center on Aging at University of Hawai'i .

Downloadable from UHM Center on Aging Website:

<https://manoa.hawaii.edu/aging/kupuna-workforce-innovation-hub/>



IMPLICATIONS OF WORKFORCE SHORTAGE IN JAPAN:

STRATEGIES FOR

DEPOPULATION

1. HI TECH
2. FOREIGN WORKER
3. INCREASE FERTILITY
4. REDUCE YOUTH EMIGRATION
5. DEURBANIZATION
6. ACTIVE AGING
7. INCREASE RETIREMENT AGE
8. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
9. INCREASE WOMEN WORKERS
10. PROMOTE CHILD SUPPORT
11. PROMOTE MARRIAGE

1400 1500 1600 1700 1800 1900 2000 2100 2200 2300 2400 2500 2600 2700 2800 2900 3000 3100 3200 3300

SILVER EMPLOYMENT AGENCY IN JAPAN

- Targets: **60+** individuals
- **1,300** Centers in Japan
- Serving about **700,000** older adults
- About **30** types of work: housekeeping, gardening, gig/part-time work, menial & low skills
- Minimum of **10**/hours per week
- Average pay about **50,000 yen/month (\$350/month)** for supplemental income
- Benefits: Physical, social and financial wellness

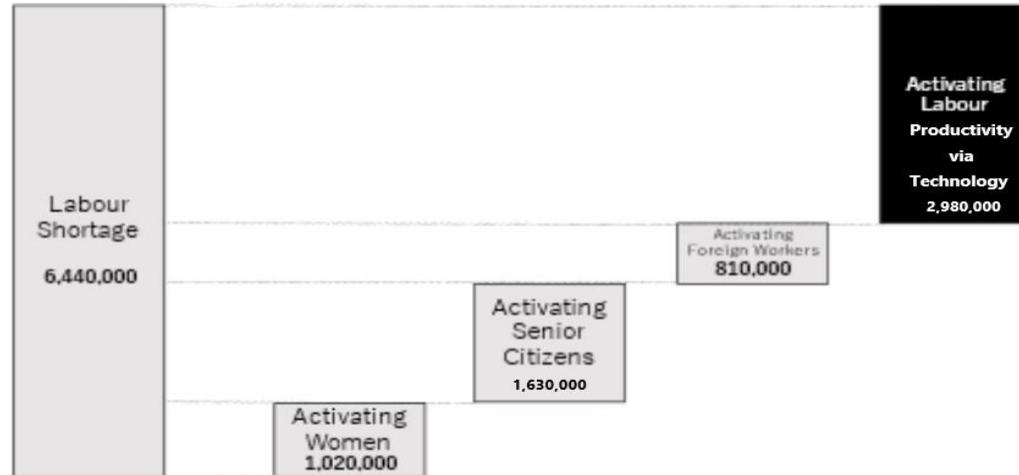
USA Programs

- **AARP National Job Creation program –**
- **Americorp/Peace Corps**
- **Elder Corp**
- **Senior Corps – Foster Grandparents/ Senior Companion/ RSVP – small stipend and transportation reimbursement**
- **Does not help Healthcare Workforce shortage directly**

IMMIGRATION

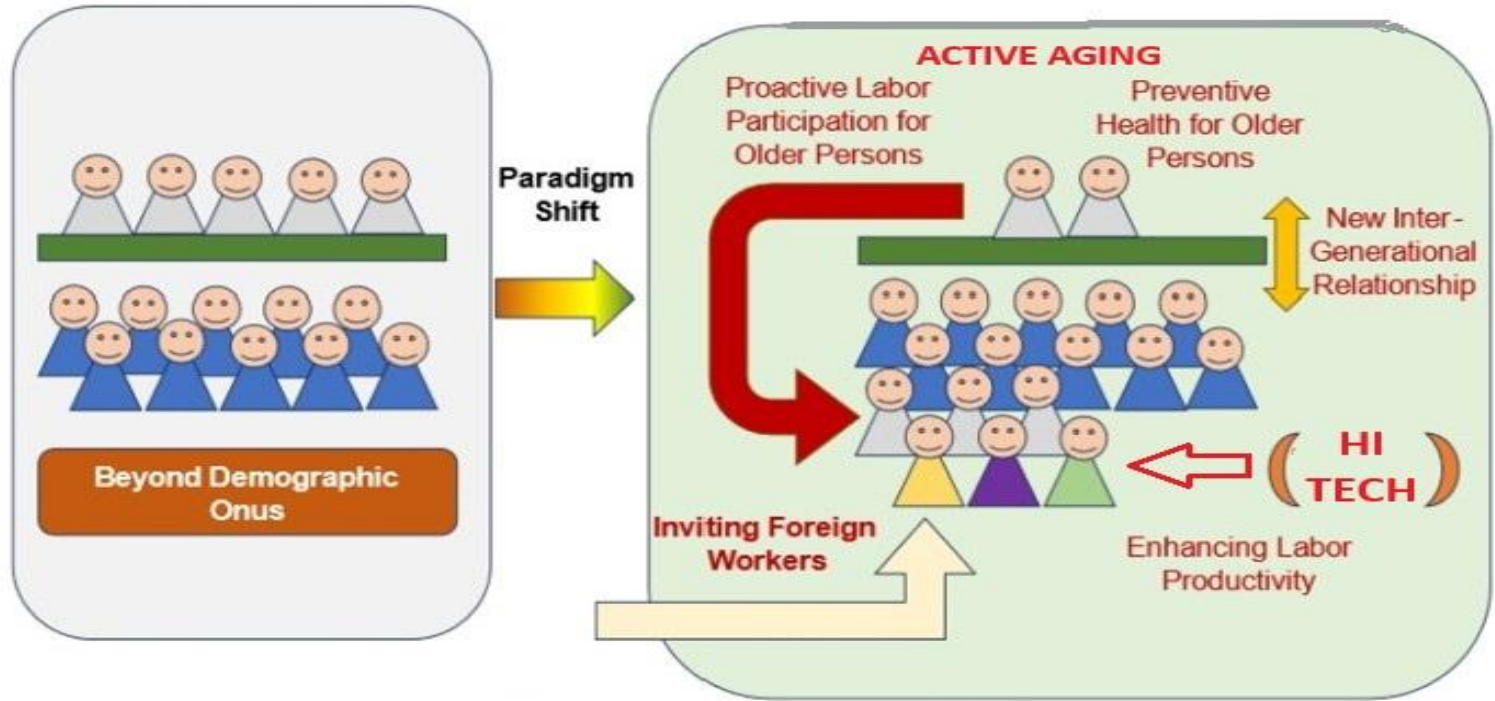
- Immigration is a partial solution being attempted in Japan
 - About 2 percent of Japan's workforce represents foreign workers
 - Japan needs a massive increase in foreign workers to assure economy sustainability
 - Transition: Language training, Housing, Cultural orientation,
 - Targeted Industries: Healthcare, construction, retail – convenience stores
 - Treated as “Guest workers”, not migrants for citizenship
 - Discrimination and Challenges: low pay, hard work, dirty work, harassment, controls
- Innovation: Standardization of job titles, levels of competencies, and training requirements; international training to improve healthcare delivery in sending countries.

Four Strategies Addressing the 6.44 Million Workforce Shortage by 2030



https://rc.persol-group.co.jp/thinktank/spe/roudou2030/files/future_population_2030_4.pdf

A MULTI-PRONG APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY



Source: Takeo Ogawa. Fukuoka ACAP Conference (March 2025)

Guest Workers from Mongolia with Quality Life, NGO & LLC



Senior Employment and Senior Center in Mongolia



Mongolian (Work & Travel) Current

What if you could help?

- Staffing Solution: Hire temporary foreign workers for your business
- Positive Local Impact: More taxes paid, competitive rent, support senior services in Hawaii & Mongolia
- Pilot Program in Hawai'i (since 2019): Beekeeping, laundry, candy manufacturing, macadamia nuts; 5 companies, 40+ workers, O'ahu & Hawai'i Island
- Support Provided: Quality Life team manages permits, visas, housing, orientation & translation
- Employer Pays: Wages, round-trip tickets, other fees

Lessons Learned (3 years)

- Employers: Need dedicated HR/manager to handle government documents
- Employees: Avg. age 35–45, strong home ties, mix of English skills, housing challenges

Outcome: A True Win-Win

- Employers: Reliable staff, low turnover, expansion each year
- Employees: Earn up to 3× home salary, support family, improve English, enjoy Hawai'i
- Organizers: Funds for Mongolia senior programs, cultural shift around active aging

Guest workers



Partner with us to expand into senior care services

Potential positions: Housekeepers, food prep, laundry staff

Ideal commitment: 3–5 staff per company

Start dates: April or October 2026

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Question to Panelists: “What is one near-term opportunity that we can take advantage of to improve recruitment and retention in Hawaii?”



Thank you, Mahalo, and Future Contact

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Implications of workforce shortages in Japan: Cullen Hayashida, cullen@hawaii.edu

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