

Advocating for direct care workers' education, training, benefits, wages and professional development so they may better serve people who are elderly and those with disabilities



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Coalition seeks to ‘Raise the Floor, Build the Ladder’ for caregivers

Forum focused on strategies for improving frontline healthcare jobs

Albuquerque, NM, Healthcare jobs are fast growing as New Mexico’s and the nation’s populations age. But will these be good jobs with clear paths for career advancement? The New Mexico Direct Caregivers’ Coalition (NMDCC) took on this question at its November 16 summit – “Raise the Floor, Build the Ladder.” The Summit convened national and New Mexico leaders, including employers who discussed advantages to both workers and employers of shifting employment and workforce strategies to "raising the floor and building ladders" for frontline healthcare workers.

The Coalition also led a discussion around developing a Good Jobs Code for the healthcare sector. The Summit was hosted at CNM Workforce Training Center, in partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, Con Alma Health Foundation, AARP-New Mexico and the McCune Charitable Foundation.

The Summit built upon a successful statewide effort in April 2015 which convened policymakers, funders, employers and advocacy organizations to share strategies for frontline workers across several industry sectors. This year’s event focused attention on healthcare employers as the key leverage for improving the workplace and advancing supports for workers. The main purpose was to highlight and promote practices of employers who are doing “good” by their employees in the healthcare sector.

The Coalition seeks to advance a statewide “Good Jobs Code” that recognizes practices that improve employee retention, productivity and morale. “Labor markets are changing. Of the 30 occupations expected to have the largest growth in the next decade, 23 will require a high school diploma or less,” notes Adrienne Smith,

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the Coalition's President and CEO. "Jobs in industries like home healthcare, typically offer low wages, irregular hours, limited benefits and limited opportunities for advancement." The Summit seeks to explore strategies to turn this trend around as the need for workers grows.

Panelists included Elly Kugler, J.D., Field Director for Caring Across Generations; Diana Abeyta, Tribal and Northern Coordinator for the Office of Community Health Workers at the New Mexico Department of Health; Gene Varela, State Director, AARP-New Mexico; David Fresquez, Owner, Home Companion Care, LLC; Sandy Skaar, Owner, Self-Directed Choices, LLC; and Branda Parker, Executive Director, San Juan Center for Independence.

For more information on how to get involved in "Raise the Floor, Build the Ladder" activities of the Coalition, visit nmdcc.org or call (505) 867-6046.

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