



ELDER CARE CRISIS: **How to Find & Hire Quality Home Health Aides**

A comprehensive report on the rapid increase in demand for home health aides, the challenges of hiring in this field and methods for consistently sourcing the necessary talent

In this white paper you'll find:

- ✓ Current Statistics on Home Health Aide Hiring Trends
- ✓ Survey Data on Home Health Career Satisfaction
- ✓ Popular Work Perks & Benefits That Attract Job Seekers
- ✓ New Tactics/Technology to Source Talent & Expand Candidate Pools





Who's taking care of Grandma?

The future for many American workers of tomorrow will be taking care of the many retiring American workers of today.

Elder care jobs (like home health aides and personal care aides) are expected to be among the fastest growing occupations in America. That's according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), which forecasted **employment in this field will grow 41% from 2016 to 2026**, much faster than the average for all occupations and representative of approximately 10% of the total 11.5 million jobs that will be added to the economy during the next decade.ⁱ

As the Baby Boomer Generation (generally considered those born between 1946 and 1964) continues to age and develop increased need for care, workers providing that care will be particularly valuable, with **5 out of the top 10 fastest growing jobs occurring in this sector** (including home health aides, personal care aides, nurse practitioners, medical assistants and nursing assistants).

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Also fueling this demand is the recent surge in popularity for what’s called “aging in place” – wherein elderly Americans are now opting for in-home/at-home healthcare instead of going into medical facilities. Still a relatively nascent concept in healthcare, **this new trend of “going to the patient” will require tremendous amounts of both skilled and unskilled labor** – but based on recent research, there is not enough available of either.

In short – people are getting older, and the people trained, willing or interested in caring for them are getting fewer. How can hiring managers and recruiters find the right talent supply to fill this impending demand? And once they find them, will they be able to entice them with the right benefits/pay?

This whitepaper provides an overview of the explosive new market of home health aide recruitment, discusses creative methods to engage candidates and shares best practices for targeting what might likely be the most important labor pool in a generation.

Growth prediction for Elder care jobs between 2016 and 2026:

41%



The skills that matter

According to PHI National, a non-profit that works to improve long-term services and support for elders and individuals with disabilities, home healthcare work (regardless of occupational title) typically involves assistance with daily tasks such as eating, dressing, and bathing. In addition, personal care aides provide social support to help older adults and people living with disabilities remain active in their communities. Home health aides and nursing assistants (often without formal medical certification) can also perform certain clinical tasks under the supervision of a licensed professional.

This is an important distinction, as there are hierarchical and technical variations to typical home health care workers. According to AARPⁱⁱ, these can include:

LEAST SKILLED

Personal Care Assistants (PCAs) are not licensed and have varying levels of experience and training. They serve as helpers and companions – providing conversation, bathing and dressing, neighborhood walks, light housekeeping and meals. Wages for these and other home healthcare services can be considerably higher in tight markets and urban areas.

Home Health Aides (HHAs) monitor the patient’s condition, check vital signs and assist with the necessary parts of daily living, including bathing, dressing and using the bathroom. HHAs also provide company, do light housekeeping and prepare meals. HHAs are trained and certified, and requirements differ from state to state.

Licensed Nursing Assistants (LNAs) observe and report changes in the patient, take vital signs, set up medical equipment, change dressings, conduct range-of-motion exercises, offer walking assistance and administer some treatments. All medical-related tasks are performed as directed by a Registered Nurse (RN) or Nurse Practitioner (NP). **According to the BLS, the LNA profession specifically is expected to grow by 11% from 2016-2026.**ⁱⁱⁱ

Skilled Nursing Providers (SNPs) meet federal standards for health and safety and are licensed by the state. They manage, observe and evaluate a patient, and provide direct care that nonmedical and home health aides cannot – including administering IV drugs, tube feedings and shots; changing wound dressings; providing diabetes care; and providing caregiver and patient education. **Texas, California, and Ohio have the highest number of SNPs, according to recent data.**^{iv}

Registered Nurses (RNs) hold a nursing diploma or associate degree in nursing (ADN), have passed the NCLEX-RN exam administered by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) and have met all the other licensing requirements mandated by their state’s board of nursing. **The national pass rate for the NCLEX-RN exam is 89%.**^v RNs provide direct care, can assist doctors in medical procedures, offer guidance to family members, operate medical monitoring equipment and administer medications.

MOST SKILLED



Who run the world?

It's often problematic to narrow a candidate search too much, and good hiring managers look outside of stereotypes to find talent. However, in the case of home healthcare professionals, there is overwhelming historical evidence for what comprises the "typical" worker. According to PHI^{vi}:

9/10

home healthcare workers are women, and their median age is 45.

56%

While people of color make up 25% of the total U.S. workforce, they comprise more than half of the home healthcare workforce. Women of color represent 56% of the field.

Over 25%

of home healthcare workers were born outside the United States. (But nearly 90% are U.S. citizens.)

More than half

of home healthcare workers have completed no formal education beyond high school. Because home healthcare requires little education, experience, or training, it is an accessible occupation for workers who encounter educational or language barriers when seeking employment.

1/5

home healthcare workers is a single mother.

Training day

Most training for home health aides takes place on the job under the guidance of experienced nurses or supervisors. Generally, **aides must have completed at least 75 hours of training in areas such as nutrition, patient care, vital signs, infection control and personal hygiene**, according to the BLS.^{vii} Afterward, they'll be expected to pass a skills competency evaluation or a state-administered examination to work as a home health aide.

Various states may have additional certification requirements, such as a background investigation. Although a college degree is not required, home healthcare training programs are available at community colleges.

Underpaid and undervalued

Despite recent movements across the country to raise the basic minimum wage (and some successes by teachers and retail workers), income for US home health aides over the past decade has either remained stagnant or barely kept pace with inflation. Traditionally, especially in professions that rely on unskilled or semi-skilled labor, hiring managers have not been inclined to raise salaries if they felt their candidate pool could be easily replenished with cheap talent. The result is that **23% of home healthcare workers live below the federal poverty line**, and these consistently low wages have created huge industry turnover which has made it difficult to constantly fill open positions.^{viii}

Burnout and fatigue are consistent complaints among home health aides, and the inherent stress of the profession can pose an endemic obstacle to finding new candidates willing to put up with long hours and often difficult patients. Some home health aides also receive as few as two weeks of on-the-job training before going out into the field, causing confusion and frustration for even the most energetic and enthusiastic candidate.

In short? Home health aides often feel (and often are) undervalued, unappreciated and underpaid – not the kind of word-of-mouth that gets a ton of candidates in the door.

LIFE SUPPORT

2017 Median Pay for Home Health Aides and Personal Care Aides
\$23,130 per year (\$11.12 per hour)

Typical Entry-Level Education
High school diploma or equivalent

Work Experience in a Related Occupation
None

On-the-job Training
Short-term on-the-job training

Number of Jobs needed to be filled, 2016
2,927,600

Job Outlook, Projected Growth 2016-26
41% (Much faster than average)

Employment Growth, 2016-26
1,208,800

Survey says: the life & job satisfaction of a home health aide

While BLS data and employment metrics are helpful gauges of the home healthcare industry strength, there is no substitute for direct feedback from the workers themselves. [Nexxt](#), a recruitment media company, recently launched a **comprehensive market survey to 2,400 home healthcare workers nationwide**. Of those who identified as home health aides or personal care aides, 64% of respondents reported working full time and 28% part time, aligning with national BLS data. Digging into the numbers a bit more, a clearer picture emerges of the typical home health aide worker and their day-to-day experience:

45%

currently work in-home or hospice care, followed by 33% who work in a nursing home or extended care facility

56%

(The majority) do NOT receive benefits from their employer

40%

of respondents work day shift

36%

have worked in the field for 15+ years

It takes a special type of person to choose to become a home health aide (or work in healthcare in general), and unsurprisingly 85% of the Nexxt survey respondents said that they entered the field because of a desire to help people and make a difference. A bit contradictory in the survey results however (especially considering the high turnover in the industry), was that despite 70% of respondents claiming the salary is lacking in home healthcare, the majority (67%) reported being satisfied with their career. ^x

This survey shows that turnover might be decreased if wages were increased, but given the unlikelihood of that happening on a broad scale anytime soon, hiring managers will still have to get creative when it comes to attracting new recruits. But how can they connect in a meaningful way with an audience that is in-demand and highly mobile?

I want you to want me

Word is out among home healthcare workers that their career is sought after. According to the Nexxt survey, **77% of home health aides/personal care aides believe their profession is “in-demand”** among their peers. When employees know they have choices, two things happen – they become more susceptible to offers luring them away from their current employment, and competitors ramp up their efforts to recruit them. This leads to a tremendous amount of mobility in the space, with companies sometimes offering signing bonuses or increased benefits to stand apart. The environment also creates a buyer’s market, and hiring managers need to go on the offensive if they want to connect with candidates.

Gone are the days when hiring managers can simply post a single job advertisement and wait for the flood of applicants, especially in a market when the candidates know they are a rare commodity. Think of it this way – if you’re selling water in a drought, you’re not going to chase down people to make a sale.

So how can a hiring manager compete in such a frenzied environment? As with all elusive prey, smart hunters need to increase their methods of capture. And if everyone is sending emails, there is a tremendous opportunity to capitalize on the other major form of communication – text messaging.





New phone, who 'dis?

Based on responses in the Nexxt survey, **35% of home health aides/personal care aides prefer to communicate with a recruiter or potential employer via text message.** It makes sense, considering how mobile these workers are and how busy their day-to-day life can be. Text messages have an amazing open rate of 97% – think about it, when was the last time you ignored a personal text message? Global phone usage is expected to surpass the 5 billion mark by 2019 with no signs of stopping.^{xi} In 2017, the average mobile user spent a total of 5 hours on their phone each day.^{xii} **Email, which only sees an average 23% open rate, is opened on mobile devices 56% of the time.**

The average response rate with text campaigns is 15% within the first hour, and after the initial response, texting allows for a more streamlined way for recruiters to connect with a large volume of qualified candidates at once. (It also encourages conversations with candidates without overwhelming a hiring team.)



Do more *better*

While unique elements like SMS Text Campaigns will help hiring managers stand out from the competition, there are best practices for recruiting home health aides that are necessary just to compete.

Write a Clear Job Description Outlining the Position & Benefits

Everything from hours and shifts to benefits and perks will be crucial elements to a candidate. A job as a home health aide is hard – outlining details can help find the positives that balance out some of the less than desirable parts of the role. It might also open your eyes to some of the reasons the position is difficult to hire for and retain. Don't forget to reevaluate as time passes to ensure you're meeting industry standards.

Make Use of Omni-Channel Recruitment Campaigns

Instead of using one, tired method to appeal to these candidates, make use of an omni-channel campaign that includes a variety of methods. These tactics could include text recruitment messages, emails, retargeted job ads, and traditional job postings. Using a mixture of tactics ensures that your message and job postings are reaching the largest pool of qualified candidates possible. They're especially useful when recruiting for positions, such as home health aides, who tend to move on to new opportunities quickly.

Look for Mixture of Hard and Soft Skills

As the saying goes – hire for attitude, train for skills. Home health aides often require less hard skills (medical training, certification, etc.) and more soft skills (listening skills, empathy, etc.), so make sure the job description is weighted correctly so you're sourcing the right type of candidate.

Source Unique/Niche Talent Pools

When fishing, it's smart to go where there are not a lot of other anglers. The same applies to seeking out candidates, and smart recruiters often target less than obvious pools of potential talent. Rather than just focusing on home health aide specific job sites, think about locations like:

High School and Community College – remember, most home health aide positions require little or no schooling.

Referrals from Former or Current Employees – employee-referred candidates are three times more likely to be a good match for the job because your employees give these candidates detailed, accurate information about the job requirements and working conditions. In fact, according to a Nexxt survey, 71% of HR professionals believe that employee referrals are the best resource available for finding quality candidates, yet only 7% of job seekers use them to find jobs.^{xiii} As a result, candidates are likely to proceed with the selection process only if they feel it's a good fit.

Niche Communities – tight-knit communities tend to have common interests, and if a hiring manager is able to marry the job description/benefits to those interests they will likely reap big rewards. Networks like Nexxt allow recruiters to specifically target these communities and engage with select audiences to maximize impact.

Rethink Your Tactics

It wasn't long ago that paper ruled the hiring process, now the entire industry is taking it a step further with mobility and personalization. The definition of insanity is doing the same thing and expecting different results. Recruitment is a trial and error business, and the future belongs to those willing to experiment, adapt and evolve.

Remember...

There is no stopping this trend – Baby Boomers will continue to age and the elderly will continue to require care. By establishing a strong foundation for recruitment now, you will be building a network and pipeline that might last for another 20-30 years.

Nexxt brings companies a perfect blend of traditional recruitment methods coupled with new, innovative tactics. Simply put, Nexxt helps you hire faster. From job boards to retargeting and SMS text recruitment tools, there isn't a talent acquisition challenge their solutions can't solve. **This is your brand. Take charge.**

HIRE FASTER with Nexxt.

nexxt

About Nexxt

Nexxt, a recruitment media company, is a dynamic employment solution catering to the next generation of hiring. For companies and agencies, Nexxt is a full-service recruitment marketing platform, providing a targeted method of sourcing the best people from a broader talent pool. For professionals, Nexxt is an employment solution, powering more than 50 niche career sites to make finding the perfect job easier. Nexxt combines predictive technology with multichannel marketing to a diversified talent network of nearly 60 million candidates on focused career sites, allowing recruiters and hiring managers to build custom campaigns and efficiently fulfill their hiring needs. To learn more and see what's Nexxt, please visit hiring.nexxt.com.

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