



**For Immediate Release:**

November 10, 2020

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## **Apprenticeships an opportunity to bolster hard-hit long-term care workforce**

**COLUMBUS, Ohio** – As Ohio and the nation celebrate National Apprenticeship Week, LeadingAge Ohio embraces apprentices as integral parts of the future long-term care workforce. National Apprenticeship Week is a nationwide celebration that brings together business leaders, career seekers, labor, educational institutions, and other critical partners to demonstrate their support for apprenticeship.

In 2019, LeadingAge Ohio, through partnership with the Ohio Association of Community Colleges (OACC), pursued registered apprenticeship opportunities in long-term care with five community colleges around the state. The goal of this effort was to create registered apprenticeships for State Tested Nurse Aides (STNAs) as pathways to higher-paying positions within the sector. These Department of Labor-funded apprenticeships offer hope both to recruit and retain quality staff, and were featured in well-publicized launches at [Sinclair Community College](#) and [Lorain County Community College](#).

“The enthusiasm around apprenticeships in long-term care is well-deserved; apprenticeships can inject essential new workers into a field that has been hard hit by the coronavirus pandemic,” stated Kathryn Brod, president and CEO of LeadingAge Ohio. “During this National Apprenticeship Week, LeadingAge Ohio encourages the state to strengthen its efforts in supporting apprenticeships in long-term care. These student debt-free opportunities fill critical jobs and lay the groundwork for a stronger workforce in the future.”

LeadingAge Ohio members have lauded the apprenticeships and the potential they offer in terms of meeting increasing demands for front line staff in Ohio’s long-term care facilities, as well as home- and community-based options.

“Our partnership with Edison State Community College in the STNA Apprenticeship Program allows for the integration of the education system with workforce development for earn-as-you-learn opportunities,” stated Kara Allread, senior vice president and chief administrative officer at Brethren Retirement Community in Greenville, Ohio. “Registered apprenticeships are one tool to help meet the high demand for front line caregivers and nothing can prepare a student quite like on-the-job experience. Apprenticeships are a tried-and-true method to help students enter the workforce with the skills they need to succeed and a pathway for future educational and professional opportunities.”

The pandemic has laid bare the already-existent workforce crisis in long-term care and home- and community-based services. A [2016 workforce study](#) of Ohio long-term care providers showed that 75% have fewer State Test Nurse Aides (STNA) and Direct Care Workers than planned, 60% had fewer Registered Nurses (RN) than planned, and 54% had fewer Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) than planned.

Ohio is home to the sixth largest population of older adults in the country, and by the end of this year, over half the counties in the state are projected to have more residents over age 60 than under age 20. [The governor's list of top jobs](#), released on August 3, lists the top three in-demand and critical jobs in the state as follows: 1 – Home Health Aides, 2 – Registered Nurses, 3 – Personal and Home Care Aides. Also on the list are Medical Assistants (7), Licensed Practical Nurses (10), and a number of other careers associated with serving elders.

Expanded apprenticeship opportunities can fill crucial jobs in long-term care and home- and community-based services, which represent the most in-demand fields in the state, and create a pipeline of new talent for the sector.

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*Founded in 1937, LeadingAge Ohio is a nonprofit organization that represents over 400 long-term care organizations and hospices, as well as those providing ancillary health care and housing services, in more than 150 Ohio towns and cities. The continuum of care reflected by the member organizations serve an estimated 400,000 elderly Ohioans daily and employ more than 35,000 persons statewide.*