

# Many New Mexico Caregivers Lack Health Insurance

New Mexico Direct Caregivers Coalition

Nearly 47 million Americans, or 16 percent of the United States population, did not have health insurance coverage in 2005. Direct caregivers, including personal and home health care aides and certified nursing assistants--all of whom provide long-term care to America's elderly and/or disabled populations--have it even worse than the American average. **In the U.S., 25 percent of nursing home workers and up to 45 percent of home health care providers do not have health insurance.**

Family and professional caregivers throughout New Mexico also go without health insurance. Those who are offered health benefits through their employer often cannot afford to pay the employee portion of the premiums.

**Personal and home health care aides are the second fastest-growing occupation in New Mexico,** with a 58 percent increase projected between 2006-2016. This projected occupational increase means that by 2016, 6,190 jobs will be added to New Mexico's workforce alone. To meet the growing demand, benefits and improved conditions are essential for retaining existing and attracting new employees into the field. ***One of the most important incentives for retaining workers is health insurance.***

**Employers as well as consumers often pay the cost of direct caregivers' not holding health insurance.** The lack of health insurance for caregivers results in higher absentee rates, and higher-than-needed turnover. The cost of replacing workers is yet another cost that results in caregivers without health insurance. As a result, workplace shortages compromise the ability of employers to meet the state's need for high-quality services to persons with disabilities and those who are elderly.

**The availability of health insurance impacts quality of care.** Persons who are elderly and/or disabled consistently state that stable relationships with their caregiver(s) are the single most important component of high-quality care. Without affordable health insurance, caregivers may forgo medical attention when they need it, resulting in missed shifts and working when sick, compromising the quality of care.

**New Mexico caregivers need affordable health insurance. Quality care requires healthy direct caregivers. Those who dedicate their lives to providing care to our elderly and disabled citizens deserve quality care themselves.**

**To join the movement and to receive additional information, please contact New Mexico Direct Caregivers Coalition by email, phone, or mail or please visit our website at [www.nmdirectcaresupport.org](http://www.nmdirectcaresupport.org).**



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