

Defining a Long-term Care Workforce Shortage Designation: A Conceptual Approach

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Objective/Issue

The literature that addresses the issue of long-term care (LTC) workforce shortages is limited. It generally lacks the specificity that could translate into policy actions and funding to address local workforce needs. In this policy issue brief, we describe a conceptual approach to constructing a LTC workforce shortage designation, similar in scope to existing Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) health professional shortage area (HPSA) designations.

Data/Setting

We review the challenges associated with available public data sets and describe methods to address them using the American Community Survey (ACS), 5-year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) file.

Design/Methods

We propose methods for defining the LTC workforce, estimating the demand for LTC services, and identifying local geographic areas using the ACS, 5-year PUMS file.

Results/Findings

We propose a series of quantitative indicators that could be used to designate a LTC workforce shortage and a process to evaluate and fund local LTC workforce investments.

Conclusions/Discussion

The United States faces a considerable shortage of workers in the long-term care sector at a time when the general population is rapidly aging. We present a conceptual model that could be tested for utility in designating geographic areas as experiencing a LTC workforce shortage and triggering investments to help local employers recruit and retain their workforce.

Key Words

Long-term care, workforce shortage