A Closer Look at Home Care Occupations

By Sarah Pilipaitis, CT DOL Economist

Every two years, the Connecticut Department of Labor produces long-term occupational projections. The 2012-2022 projections show that two of the fastest growing occupations in terms of percent and net change come from the Home Health Care industry. The fastest growing occupation in Connecticut in the ten-year timeframe by net change is projected to be Personal Care Aides with a growth of 38.1 percent and 8,846 jobs. Nearby on the list of fastest growing occupations in Connecticut is Home Health Aides with a projected growth rate of 38.1% and 3,195 jobs from 2012 to 2022.¹ The rise in these two occupations warrants a closer look at what each of them entails.

The care of the elderly, convalescents, or persons with disabilities has been trending to more services being performed at the patient’s home. The reasons for this are often financial as well as patient-preference. The past decade has seen a decrease in both the employment and number of establishments of nursing care facilities in Connecticut. As of 2012, there were 234 privately-owned nursing care facilities in the state with 37,301 employees.²

The need for receiving home health care varies on an individual basis. Not every elderly or disabled person will require personalized attention. Likewise, consumers of home care can come from any age group and from those in convalescence. However, the demand for home care comes primarily from the older and disabled population. A look at the 2010 Census data reveals the make-up of these groups in Connecticut. Of Connecticut’s 3,574,097 residents, there are 506,559 (14%) that are above the age of 64. Similarly, of the 2,843,949 people who are 5 years and older, 18,300 (6.4%) are in the childcare workers group. This group is one of the ten fastest growing occupations in Connecticut, by net change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Employment 2012</th>
<th>Projections 2022</th>
<th>Net Change</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
<th>Average Annual Wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Care Aides</td>
<td>23,244</td>
<td>32,090</td>
<td>8,846</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>$24,476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Nurses</td>
<td>35,985</td>
<td>41,234</td>
<td>5,249</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>$75,929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive</td>
<td>34,526</td>
<td>38,644</td>
<td>4,118</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>$39,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food</td>
<td>26,728</td>
<td>30,736</td>
<td>4,008</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>$19,629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Salespersons</td>
<td>53,799</td>
<td>57,267</td>
<td>3,468</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>$22,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General and Operations Managers</td>
<td>31,160</td>
<td>34,422</td>
<td>3,262</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>$21,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Health Aides</td>
<td>8,251</td>
<td>11,446</td>
<td>3,195</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>$28,023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare Workers</td>
<td>18,300</td>
<td>21,167</td>
<td>2,867</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>$21,947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners</td>
<td>17,804</td>
<td>20,555</td>
<td>2,751</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>$22,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers</td>
<td>26,358</td>
<td>28,895</td>
<td>2,537</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>$57,221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ The rise in these two occupations warrants a closer look at what each of them entails.

² The need for receiving home health care varies on an individual basis. Not every elderly or disabled person will require personalized attention. Likewise, consumers of home care can come from any age group and from those in convalescence.
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Managing Editor: Jungmin Charles Joo
Associate Editor: Sarah C. Pilipaitis

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Connecticut Department of Labor
Sharon Palmer, Commissioner
Dennis Murphy, Deputy Commissioner

Andrew Condon, Ph.D., Director
Office of Research
200 Folly Brook Boulevard
Wethersfield, CT 06109-1114
Phone: (860) 263-6275
Fax: (860) 263-6263
E-Mail: dol.econdigest@ct.gov
Website: http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi

Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development
Catherine Smith, Commissioner
Ronald Angelo, Deputy Commissioner
Christopher Bergstrom, Deputy Commissioner

505 Hudson Street
Hartford, CT 06106-2502
Phone: (860) 270-8000
Fax: (860) 270-8200
E-Mail: decd@ct.gov
Website: http://www.decd.org

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Nursing Care Facilities in Connecticut

383,882 (13%) have a disability.³

As the demand for home care rises, it becomes increasingly important to better understand the industry. There are numerous job titles that home care is reported under. In terms of occupational classifications, the key way to distinguish among them is whether or not the in-home care provided is health-related versus assisting with daily living activities. The two main occupational titles given are Personal Care Aide and Home Health Aide.⁴

**Personal Care Aide**

The Occupational Information Network (O*NET) gives the following description of a Personal Care Aide: Assist the elderly, convalescents, or persons with disabilities with daily living activities at the person’s home or in a care facility. Duties performed at a place of residence may include keeping house (making beds, doing laundry, washing dishes) and preparing meals. May provide assistance at non-residential care facilities. May advise families, the elderly, convalescents, and persons with disabilities regarding such things as nutrition, cleanliness, and household activities.

**Employment**

The primary sector that employs this occupation in Connecticut is Education and Health Services, comprising 96.8% of personal care aides.⁵ Within this sector is an industry titled Services for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities (NAICS code 624120). This industry comprises establishments primarily engaged in providing nonresidential social assistance services to improve the quality of life for the elderly, persons diagnosed with mental retardation, or persons with disabilities. These establishments provide for the welfare of these individuals in such areas as day care, nonmedical home care or homemaker services, social activities, group support, and companionship.⁶

Over the past decade, Connecticut employment for this industry has more than tripled. In the first quarter of 2003, the average monthly employment was 4,432. Ten years later it grew to 13,665 workers. The number of establishments in this industry has also experienced a sharp rise. There were 165 businesses reported in this industry in the first quarter of 2003. By 2013, the figure jumped to 359 businesses in Connecticut.⁷

**What You Need to Know If You Want to Be a Personal Care Aide**

The faster than average projected growth rate of this occupation is great news for jobseekers interested in this line of work. Important skills to hold for this job are: active listening, service orientation, critical thinking, social perceptiveness, monitoring, speaking, coordination, writing, active learning, and instructing. The educational
requirements are typically a high school diploma. Depending on the employer, some previous experience may be necessary. Reliable transportation is also highly important in this field.8

**Wages**

As of the first quarter of 2013, the average wage of a personal care aide in Connecticut falls well below the statewide mean wage for all occupations of $26.16 per hour. The statewide average hourly rate for personal care workers is $12.05, making the average annual salary $25,069. The labor market area with the highest average wage is Torrington at $13.91 and the Danbury labor market area has the lowest earnings at $10.92 per hour.9

**Regulation**

In Connecticut, the Department of Consumer Protection oversees homemaker-companion agencies. There are currently 449 actively registered homemaker-companion agencies registered with the Department—a requirement to do business in the state. All agencies are mandated to conduct a comprehensive background check of all of its employees before they are hired and have them sign a criminal history form.

Homemaker-companion agencies must have a written contract or service plan signed by both the agency and client. The contract or plan shall:

1. provide a list of the anticipated services to be provided by the agency to the client, the term and cost of said services, a clear definition of the employee, provider and client employment relationship, safeguards for securing personal client information, a list of provider job categories such as “live-in” or “daily call,” and job duties;
2. contain the homemaker-companion agency policy for the acceptance of gratuities and gifts by the homemaker-companion agency’s employees and independent contractors on behalf of the client; and
3. contain a process for the client to file a complaint with the homemaker-companion agency. A process shall be made available for individuals other than a client to file a complaint.10

Clients must be given a contact phone number and address for the agency and an authorized representative to discuss their care. Also, each client must have a file where the caretaker keeps extensive details on the care provided.

Nationally, the United States Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division has adopted regulations for domestic service in private homes under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1935. Home health aides and personal care assistants, also known as direct care workers, must be paid the minimum wage and overtime (over 40 hours per week) with certain exceptions. When the work is performed in Connecticut, the Connecticut minimum wage would apply. In 2014, the minimum wage in Connecticut is $8.70, increasing to $9.15 in January 2015, $9.60 in January 2016 and $10.10 in January 2017. Exceptions are those direct care workers defined as providing companionship services under the FLSA (which Connecticut has used since 1977 for domestic service) or live-in domestics who would be exempt from overtime but not minimum wage.

On January 1, 2015, third party employers of companions must pay the minimum wage and overtime.11

**Home Health Aide**

The Occupational Information Network (O*NET) gives the following description of a Home Health Aide: Provide routine individualized healthcare such as changing bandages and dressing wounds, and applying topical medications to the elderly, convalescents, or persons with disabilities at the patient’s home or in
a care facility. Monitor or report changes in health status. May also provide personal care such as bathing, dressing, and grooming of patient.

Employment

The primary sector that employs this occupation in Connecticut is Education and Health Services, comprising 98.8% of home health aides. Within this sector is an industry titled Home Health Care Services (NAICS code 621610). This industry comprises establishments primarily engaged in providing skilled nursing services in the home, along with a range of the following: personal care services; homemaker and companion services; physical therapy; medical social services; medications; medical equipment and supplies; counseling; 24-hour home care; occupation and vocational therapy; dietary and nutritional services; speech therapy; audiology; and high-tech care, such as intravenous therapy.

Over the past decade, Connecticut employment for this industry has also been on the rise, although at a slower pace than Services for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities. In 2003 quarter 1, there were 177 businesses reported in this industry. As of 2013 quarter 1, there are now 218 business units in Connecticut reported under this industry.

What You Need to Know If You Want to Be a Home Health Aide

The projected growth rate of 38.7% for this occupation is encouraging for jobseekers interested in this line of work. Important skills to hold for this job are: service orientation, active listening, social perceptiveness, critical thinking, speaking, monitoring, complex problem solving, coordination, and judgment and decision making. The educational requirements are typically a high school diploma.

The State of Connecticut requires all home health aides to complete a nurse aide training program of no less than seventy-five hours and a competency evaluation program. There are currently 118 approved programs offered throughout the state. The following is what the training program covers in both lecture and clinical settings:

1. Communication skills;
2. Observation, reporting and documentation of patients status and the care or services furnished;
3. Reading and recording temperature, pulse and respiration;
4. Basic infection control procedures;
5. Basic elements of body function and changes in body function that must be reported to an aide’s supervisor;
6. Maintenance of a clean, safe and healthy environment;
7. Recognizing emergencies and knowledge of emergency procedures;
8. The physical, emotional, and developmental needs of and ways to work with the populations served by the home health care agency, including the need for respect for the patient, his or her privacy and his or her property;
9. Appropriate and safe techniques in personal hygiene and grooming that include: bath (bed, sponge, tub or shower), shampoo (sink, tub or bed), nail and skin care, oral hygiene, toileting and elimination;
10. Safe transfer techniques and ambulation;
11. Normal range of motion and positioning;
12. Adequate nutrition and fluid intake; and
13. Any other task that the home health care agency may choose to have the homemaker-home health aide perform.

Once the training program is complete, the trainee must complete the competency evaluation. Under the supervision of a registered nurse (whom must possess a minimum of two years nursing experience, with at least one in home health care), the above skills are tested through performance of the tasks and by written or oral examination.

Depending on the employer, some previous experience may be necessary. Reliable transportation is also highly important in this field.

Wages

Though slightly higher than a personal care aide, the average wage...
of a home health aide in Connecticut is still well below the statewide mean wage for all occupations of $26.16 per hour. The average hourly rate statewide for home health aides is $14.09, making the average annual salary $29,300. The labor market area with the highest average wage is Danielson at $16.90 and the New Haven labor market area has the lowest earnings at $12.89 per hour.17

Regulation

In Connecticut, the Department of Public Health oversees home health care agencies. There are currently 104 licensed home health care agencies registered with the Department- a requirement in order to do business in the state. The Public Health Code of the State of Connecticut details extensive regulations that all of the agencies must abide by. They cover everything from services performed to personnel specifications. As far as the employees are concerned, the agencies are required to keep records that at a minimum include:

1. Educational preparation and work experience;
2. Current licensure, registration or certification;
3. Written performance evaluations;
4. Signed contract or letter of appointment specifying conditions of employment; and
5. Record of health examinations.18

At the national and state level, home health aides are covered under the same regulations as personal care aides.

Conclusion

The home care industry is on the rise in Connecticut. The Personal Care aides and Home Health Aides occupations lead the long-term projections in both net change and percent change. The increasing demand for home services will create many job openings over the next ten years. The challenge ahead will be to maintain a supply of workers for this field that pays lower than average and is highly regulated.19

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labor Market Area</th>
<th>Average Annual</th>
<th>Average Hourly</th>
<th>Entry Level (hourly)</th>
<th>Mid-Range (hourly)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>$29,300</td>
<td>$14.09</td>
<td>$10.29</td>
<td>$11.25 - $16.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgeport-Stamford</td>
<td>$29,644</td>
<td>$14.25</td>
<td>$10.01</td>
<td>$10.58 - $16.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danbury</td>
<td>$27,428</td>
<td>$13.19</td>
<td>$10.17</td>
<td>$11.50 - $15.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartford</td>
<td>$30,110</td>
<td>$14.47</td>
<td>$10.81</td>
<td>$12.03 - $17.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Haven</td>
<td>$26,820</td>
<td>$12.89</td>
<td>$10.59</td>
<td>$11.17 - $14.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New London-Norwich</td>
<td>$26,861</td>
<td>$12.91</td>
<td>$8.89</td>
<td>$9.30 - $14.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterbury</td>
<td>$32,579</td>
<td>$15.67</td>
<td>$11.50</td>
<td>$12.10 - $16.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torrington</td>
<td>$32,488</td>
<td>$15.62</td>
<td>$12.87</td>
<td>$12.94 - $18.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Employment and Wages (QCEW)</th>
<th>2Q 2014</th>
<th>2Q 2013</th>
<th>CHANGE 1Q</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Drift Indicator (1986=100)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading</td>
<td>109.7</td>
<td>106.9</td>
<td>2.8 2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coincident</td>
<td>109.7</td>
<td>109.3</td>
<td>0.4 0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmington Bank Business Barometer (1992=100)**</td>
<td>127.6</td>
<td>127.0</td>
<td>0.6 0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia Fed’s Coincident Index (July 1992=100)***</td>
<td>AUG 156.84</td>
<td>AUG 152.42</td>
<td>JUL 4.42 2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Seasonally adjusted)</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>156.84</td>
<td>152.42</td>
<td>4.42 2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>157.71</td>
<td>153.10</td>
<td>4.61 3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: *The Connecticut Economy, University of Connecticut **Farmington Bank ***Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia

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The Connecticut Economy’s General Drift Indicators are composite measures of the four-quarter change in three coincident (Connecticut Manufacturing Production Index, nonfarm employment, and real personal income) and four leading (housing permits, manufacturing average weekly hours, Hartford help-wanted advertising, and initial unemployment claims) economic variables, and are indexed so 1986 = 100.

The Farmington Bank Business Barometer is a measure of overall economic growth in the state of Connecticut that is derived from non-manufacturing employment, real disposable personal income, and manufacturing production.

The Philadelphia Fed’s Coincident Index summarizes current economic condition by using four coincident variables: nonfarm payroll employment, average hours worked in manufacturing, the unemployment rate, and wage and salary disbursements deflated by the consumer price index (U.S. city average).