

OHCC Connections

Tips from the experts.



Episode 001: Introduction to new training requirements for homecare workers, personal support workers, and personal care attendants

August 17, 2021

Cheryl Miller: Welcome to the Oregon Home Care Commission's new podcast series, OHCC Connections. I'm Cheryl Miller, the Executive Director of the Oregon Home Care Commission. We are introducing this podcast to share information with people in Oregon who provide in-home services, the people who hire them and many others who have an interest in ensuring all people in Oregon have access to the services and supports they need. We are launching this podcast with a five-part series on the new training requirements for home care workers, personal support workers and personal care attendants. For this five-part series on training, I will be joined by our partners from Carewell SEIU 503 Training, Sarah Edwards and Whitney Taylor. Sarah is the director of Carewell SEIU 503 Training. Whitney is the curriculum development manager for Carewell SEIU 503 Training. Sarah, can you share more information about the topics we'll cover in this five-part series?

Sarah Edwards: Yes, absolutely. In this, our first episode, we'll provide an overview of how training is changing in Oregon and the value of training for workers and the individuals they support. The other parts of this series will provide information on what workers need to know, refresher requirements for existing workers, information on continuing education courses, and lastly, we'll address frequently asked questions.

Cheryl Miller: Thank you, Sarah. Let's get started with why we are talking about training and what is changing in Oregon. Whitney, can you give us an update on what is changing?

Whitney Taylor: Yes. Changes taking place now are the result of a new law that passed in 2018. The Oregon Legislature passed Senate Bill

1534 to direct the Oregon Department of Human Services to adopt new training requirements and training assessments. This change applies to homecare workers, personal support workers and personal care attendants. These requirements are intended to support workers who provide services and support to those who receive in-home services funded by Medicaid or Oregon Project Independence. These requirements start in phases. Currently, we are in the pilot phase. We began rolling out some pilots or voluntary versions of the training in early 2020.

Cheryl Miller: Sarah, for those who are new to this topic, can you explain what is currently required of individuals who do this work?

Sarah Edwards: Sure, I'd be happy to do that. So previously, workers were required to go through an orientation, and they had about 90 days to do that before becoming a provider. Workers also had access to voluntary training opportunities through the Oregon Home Care Commission, and the Oregon Home Care Commission also offered certifications, which provided workers with a path to higher wages. Senate Bill 1534 recognized that all workers and the people who hire them benefit if workers receive more training than what is currently being provided in the orientation. This includes family members who provide services for loved ones because they need support, too.

Cheryl Miller: When do workers need to sign up for this new training?

Whitney Taylor: Well, there are a few answers to that question, but the short answer is training is available now. We launched the new courses as a pilot or introduction last year, so workers can participate on a voluntary basis in this training now. By making this training available early, we've been able to get feedback and refine the courses.

Cheryl Miller: Whitney, can you also tell us a little bit more about the training that will be offered? You know, how long is the training, and do workers have to pay for it?

Whitney Taylor: Yeah, those are great questions, So first, I want to say that these courses are free to homecare workers, personal support

workers and personal care attendants. In fact, workers will actually receive a stipend payment for training but not orientation.

Cheryl Miller: Wow, that sounds great.

Whitney Taylor: It is. As to how the training is structured for both new and current workers, there are three sections of training, each four hours in length. These segments are presented in a variety of methods including in-person, online self-paced modules and live webinars.

Cheryl Miller: So if I heard you right, that's about a total of 12 hours of training. Is that correct?

Whitney Taylor: That's correct.

Cheryl Miller: Sarah, what kinds of things will workers be learning about during this training series?

Sarah Edwards: The training topics are safety and emergency measures, understanding requirements for providers paid with Medicaid funds, providing person-centered services, understanding how to support the physical and emotional needs of people who receive services and supports, managing medicines and providing personal care and help with activities of daily living.

Cheryl Miller: That seems like it will cover some great topics. Can you tell us who came up with this list? Did the individuals in Oregon who receive services have a say in this process, and what about workers?

Sarah Edwards: I'd be happy to explain that. After Senate Bill 1534 passed, a training workgroup was formed to determine the minimum training standards. The workgroup included lots of different folks, and they came from the Oregon Home Care Commission, community partners, stakeholders, advocacy groups, SEIU 503 who's the union that represents the workforce, homecare workers, personal support workers, personal care attendants, people who hire workers, and representatives from the Oregon Department of Human Services. The workgroup was really important because it included so many different perspectives. The workgroup identified topics to include in orientation and in core training, and what was

really great about this team effort is that we were able to put together topics that we all agreed would benefit workers just as much as the people who receive services and supports.

Whitney Taylor: Sarah, that's such an important point, and I'd like to share a bit more about that. So most critical, and what we all care about, is that training ensures the well-being, quality of life and safety of people who receive services and support, but just as important, taking part in training also improves job satisfaction.

Cheryl Miller: That's right. Those who complete the training often choose to remain in their careers longer. This is partly because it allows folks to strengthen their skills and be better equipped to handle the pressures and stressors that can come with this work. Being a homecare worker, personal support worker or personal care attendant is a professional career. Additionally, training is important for career development and advancement, just like the Oregon Home Care Commission's certifications that are available and really lead to a pathway of higher wages for workers.

Whitney Taylor: So true, and speaking of career development, there's another element of Senate Bill 1534 that we haven't mentioned yet. So, in addition to the new worker training series and the refresher training series, there will be a continuing education requirement for all workers. Every 24 months, all workers will need to complete 12 hours of continuing education courses.

Sarah Edwards: Continuing education is so important, and we're really excited about our continuing education program, and we're currently in the process of developing those courses, and we're going to share more about that in another episode.

Cheryl Miller: Now that we have talked a little bit about the value of training and what topics are covered, how can workers get started?

Sarah Edwards: That's a great question, Cheryl. We really encourage folks to go ahead and just start doing the training now to get it off their plate. To get started, you can go to our website, which is

www.carewellseiu503.org/training, but we'll also include that link in the show notes, so you can just click it from there.

Cheryl Miller: Thank you so much, Sarah and Whitney. Well, this brings us to the end of our episode. Join us next when we will talk about how this new training requirement impacts new workers. In the meantime, to learn more about Senate Bill 1534 in this podcast, please visit the Oregon Home Care Commission's and Carewell websites, which are linked in the show notes. You can also follow the Oregon Home Care Commission and Carewell SEIU 503 Training on Facebook. We appreciate everyone who takes the time to join our conversation through this podcast. We look forward to sharing more information with you. Have a good day.

Whitney Taylor: Thanks, Cheryl.