

OHCC Connections

Tips from the experts.



Episode 003: Refresher training for current homecare workers, personal support workers, and personal care attendants.

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Cheryl Miller: Welcome back, everyone, to the OHCC Connections Podcast. Thank you for joining us today. I'm Cheryl Miller, the executive director of the Oregon Home Care Commission. This podcast is Part 3 of our five-part series on new training requirements for homecare workers, personal support workers and personal care attendants. I'm joined again by our partners with Carewell SEIU 503 training, Sarah and Whitney. Please introduce yourselves.

Sarah Edwards: Hello, everyone. I'm Sarah Edwards, and I'm the director of Carewell SEIU 503 training.

Whitney Taylor: And I'm Whitney Taylor, the curriculum development manager for Carewell Training. Happy to be here. Thanks for having us.

Cheryl Miller: In our first episode, we talked about the training requirements and where it came from. In our second conversation, we discussed what the requirement looks like for new workers. Today, we're going to dive deeper into what this new requirement looks like for the current workforce. This is for our folks who are currently working as homecare workers, personal support workers or personal care attendants. Sarah, why don't you talk about the thought process that went into creating the training for an experienced workforce.

Sarah Edwards: Sure. We recognize that many members of this workforce of personal support workers, homecare workers and personal care attendants have been serving in their role for many years, and they've

accumulated lots of valuable knowledge and experience that goes way beyond any training that we could ever put together. But knowing that and needing to adhere to the topics that were outlined in Senate Bill 1534, we worked to put together a training that reiterates some basic information that maybe folks haven't thought about in a long time and provide support on some difficult issues, and gives them an opportunity to share what they already know with others.

Cheryl Miller: Thank you for sharing that. It must have been difficult to create a training for a diverse workforce with so many different experiences. Can you remind everyone what the training topics outlined in Senate Bill 1534 are?

Sarah Edwards: Absolutely. They 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: Thank you. Whitney, can you tell us how the requirements will apply to the existing workers who are already serving older adults and people with disabilities of all ages who live in Oregon, and give an overview of the training?

Whitney Taylor: You bet. So, existing workers will need to complete the refresher training series by March 31st, 2022. The refresher training series is made up of two segments. The first segment is eight hours of self-paced, online learning. These online modules are narrated and contain interactive elements like drag and drop, matching and knowledge checks to keep you involved along the way. Another important thing about the online modules is that they vary in length. Some are as short as 15 minutes so you don't have to set aside a big chunk of time. You can work on the training a little bit here and there. We're getting a lot of feedback from care providers who already completed the training that they enjoy the flexibility of the online modules because they can do the training whenever it works best for them, even if that is, you know, 6:00 a.m. in the morning or 11:00 at night.

Cheryl Miller: Yes. Homecare workers, personal support workers and personal care attendants can have very busy schedules so I can see how they would find the flexibility of the training helpful.

Whitney Taylor: The second segment of training, the refresher workshop, is a 4½ hour, interactive live webinar. The webinar is focused on communication skills and ways you can effectively communicate with consumers and build shared understanding. Care providers are telling us they really enjoy this training, especially because it gives them the opportunity to hear from other care providers and to bounce ideas off of one another.

Cheryl Miller: I can see how workers would appreciate that. Sarah, is there anything else about the requirement that may be different than what people are used to?

Sarah Edwards: Yeah. Actually, something else that's different is that this requirement recognizes that all care providers will benefit from and will need to take this training, and that includes family members who provide care for their loved one. We understand that many family members have been providing care for a really long time and have a wealth of experience. We want to honor that experience by making sure that they're supported.

Whitney Taylor: We know this is a big change for family care providers and we're seeing in the course feedback where people mention that they care for a family member, how surprised they are that they found the training really helpful.

Sarah Edwards: Yeah. And there are lots of ways in which providing care for a family member is really difficult, and when folks can go into the training with an open mind, they often realize that having additional tools can be really helpful.

Cheryl Miller: Wow, that's really wonderful to hear that you're getting that kind of feedback. Okay. Switching gears just a little bit, I'm sure many homecare workers, personal support workers and personal care attendants have already taken some training. Do past trainings count toward requirements?

Sarah Edwards: Workers who participate in the refresher training series as part of the pilot program will receive training credit when the training requirement goes into effect. Workers who have earned a certification through the Oregon Home Care Commission are exempt from the new training requirement, as long as they continue to meet those certification requirements. Those certifications are the professional development certification,(PDC), the enhanced homecare or personal support worker certification, exception personal support worker, ventilator-dependent quadriplegia or VDQ when it's available, and the traditional health worker.

Whitney Taylor: More information about career development and certifications can be found at the OHCC web site which we will link to in the show notes. However, I do want to mention that current workers will receive a stipend for each of the three training segments through Carewell Training. During the after-course survey, they will be asked how they would like the stipend to be sent to them, either digitally or with a physical card. You know, just one more reason to go ahead and take the training.

Cheryl Miller: Another question that I know has been circulating out there is, will there be assessments or tests and will workers and employers be able to see the results?

Whitney Taylor: There are knowledge checks within each of the courses to help the care provider assess themselves and their grasp of the information that was covered. If they feel like they didn't understand something, they can go back to it and re watch those slides or do those activities again. To the second part of your question, the answer is no, the knowledge checks are just for care providers and will not be shared publicly.

Cheryl Miller: I'm sure that will make workers feel better. After folks take the refresher training series, is that it?

Sarah Edwards: There's another element to the training requirement, and that's continuing education. As we mentioned in Episode 1, starting in 2023 all workers will need to complete 12 hours of continuing education

every 24 months. We are currently in the process of developing those courses and we'll share more about that in our next episode.

Cheryl Miller: Well, this is a great place to end this conversation. Whitney, for people that want to go ahead and get started on the refresher training series, where can they go to sign up for that?

Whitney Taylor: They can go to carewellseiu503.org/training/current-workers to get started and as always, we'll provide a link in the show notes so it's easier for people to get to that.

Cheryl Miller: We know this is a lot of information to absorb. We have all the details available on our web sites and in links to those and other helpful resources can be found in the show notes. We appreciate everyone who has taken the time to join our conversation through this podcast. We look forward to sharing more information with you about continuing education in our next episode.