



The Maine Personal Assistance Services Association is a coalition of people employed to provide assistance to persons with disabilities and elders. Maine PASA is organized to empower workers, to build opportunities, to respect human dignity and to improve the quality of our jobs.

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Annual Event Gets High Marks and Attendees Get Recognition and CEUs

Maine PASA hosted its 2nd conference in Lewiston on November 14th. There was side-splitting laughter, applause, involved discussions, words of thanks and conversations, good food, door prizes, a relaxing massage, and a clear message: Direct care, direct support and personal assistant work requires skill and personal commitment and the people who do this work deserve respect, recognition, support, and need to take care of themselves.

Presenter Ed Latham, former CNA, RN, educator and humorist, demonstrated the stance needed to show yourself and others what direct care and support work is all about. When you tell them you're a CNA and they reply "Oh, I couldn't do that," you confidently say, "You're right. You couldn't." (Remember that expression and head nod Ed demonstrated? Go ahead, give it a try.)

The day-long program, Building Our Capacity and Valuing Our Work, was organized by the Maine PASA development team, a group of direct caregivers and direct support professionals working with the support of a federal grant. The members of this group were recognized at the opening of the day. The program was a successful demonstration of Maine PASA's purpose and vision. Here is what some participants told us: "Thank you. I needed that. (I'll give it back.)", "Very enjoyable. Great learning experience.", "Great workshops.", "I loved this seminar.", "This was awesome. Wonderful presenters, wonderful, wonderful workshops."

Spotlight on Direct Care and Support Workers

by Linda Davis, PCA and Conference Attendee

When I filled out the form to attend the Maine PASA conference in Lewiston last month, I wondered if it would be worth losing a day's pay. I vaguely remembered registering to be a member of the Maine PASA, mostly because it was free. Anytime a group of people join forces to benefit me, I have always felt the cause was worthwhile. So, on November 14, I found myself one of four other HRM employees sitting around a table at the University of ME, Lewiston.

I did not have to wonder long. As speaker after speaker told us, this organization was founded to help anyone who works in the direct care, support, and personal assistant field. That's us. One thing was stressed all day: whether you clean houses, empty commodes, bathe, dress, get meals or do shopping for consumers, you need to start referring to yourself as a professional. If we don't value ourselves, how can we expect those in power positions to support us with better benefits and wages?

At the last session, "The Value of an Association," the group decided there were many reasons Maine PASA is needed. Some are that it gives us opportunities to learn what is happening in our field, how we can impact the changes, and what effect policy changes have on us. While one person may not make a difference, many with the same concerns do. The association can bargain for better salaries and benefits. Associations provide a forum for workers to exchange information and stories, to understand teamwork, to reduce the isolation the job so often entails, and to make workers aware of what is happening in the field.

What did I learn? For one, that in our jobs as PCA's we hold the dignity of a human life in our hands. We were encouraged all day to value the gift we have to give, and to name ourselves Professional caregivers. One PCA from Iowa said "My Ph.D.? I preserve human dignity." And probably the most important lesson was to keep your sense of humor. Norman Cousins said it best: "An adequate share of humor and laughter represents an essential part of the diet for a healthy person." This day made me proud to be a PCA/homemaker for Home Resources of Maine. When the opportunity comes again, I won't have to wonder if the day will be worthwhile.



Ed Latham presents at the 2nd Annual Maine PASA Event



Rod McInnes receives a massage from John Moulton at the Maine PASA Event

Fall Events in Maine Highlight Direct Caregivers, Direct Support Professionals and Personal Assistants

- The Maine Long-term Care Ombudsmen and Maine Health Care Association co-sponsored a very well attended program in Augusta on September 23rd. A nomination and award program was recognize five direct care workers: Barbara Colby, CNA, Alzheimers Care Center, Gardiner; Tamara Ehler, RN, Oceanview Nursing & Residential Care, Lubec; Trent Gay, CRMA Woodford Street, Portland; Lorraine Langlois, LPN, St. Marguerite D'Youville Pavillion, Lewiston; Tina Linscott, CNA-M, Falmouth by the Sea, Falmouth.
- The Maine Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services sponsored the 16th annual event for direct support professionals in Bangor October 15-16. Maine PASA presented a workshop at the event, sponsored a display table and recruited new members.
- LD #1090 work is carried over: Resolve, To Promote Recruitment and Retention of Direct Care Workers in Long-term Care in Maine. Sponsor: Senator Beth Edmonds. A survey to assess the need to set a wage floor (\$8.25) for direct healthcare, workers and the potential cost to the State.
- Legislative Request: "An Act to Enhance Home-based Supportive Services to Promote Independence for Maine Citizens." Sponsored by Beverly Daggett. This bill proposes to improve the quality and availability of home-based supportive services for Maine seniors and citizens with disabilities in order to promote greater independence. The bill proposes increases in the availability of consumer-directed home-based supportive services when this service option is appropriate.
- Maine State Employees Association (MSEA) co-presented with Alpha One on the topic of consumer directed options for personal assistance services and the potential for organizing workers under MSEA and SEIU (Service Employees International Union) to ensure State sponsored benefits for personal assistants and solidarity with consumer-employers.
- Maine PASA recognized: The Eastern Maine Chapter of the National Gerontological Nursing Association (NGNA) extended a proclamation of welcome to Maine PASA for the November program and collaboration on projects of mutual interest.
- NEW GRANT! Maine was one of only 5 states awarded a grant to study the impact of health insurance and other human resource services on the recruitment and retention of direct services workers. The 3 year grant will provide incentives and support for a targeted group of employers in home and community based services to enroll in the newly created Dirigo Health Program and the Employer of Choice program. This grant will also support the development of the Maine PASA website and member participation in grant activities. For more information contact Maine PASA.

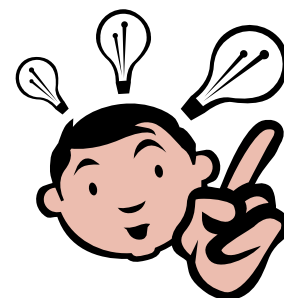
A Call For Stories

Maine PASA would like to feature stories about people who are direct caregivers, direct support professionals and personal assistants on our website. We want to recognize the people who do the work, be able to tell others about the work, the dedication and the true value of these jobs, and the people who do them. If you know a co-worker or friend who is employed to provide assistance or direct care to an elder or person with a disability who you think does a great job please write and tell us about what they do. Why would you want this person helping you or caring for your family member? We would like to hear about your work too. What can you say that would help to recruit someone to be a direct care, direct support or personal assistant? Please send your stories to Elise Scala (scala@usm.maine.edu or Maine PASA, P.O. Box 1881, Portland, ME 04104). Please include your phone number so that we can notify you if your story has been selected for inclusion.

Think About It

Maine PASA's mission and purposes are to...

1. Form a coalition by bringing diverse members of the workforce together around a mission of opportunity, respect, empowerment, human dignity and quality.
2. Empower workers by providing a place to share common goals.
3. Build opportunities for members to gain knowledge and skills to attain personal and professional goals.
4. Improve the quality of our jobs by promoting recognition of workers and the value of their work as a professional based on caring and quality.



Tell us how Maine PASA can recognize direct care support and personal assistants!

What Would You Like an Association to Do for You?

“Maine PASA should.....”

(top 5 responses from Annual Event survey)

1. Provide a job seeking service.
2. Provide a place to meet and talk to other people who do similar work.
3. Build support for improved wages and benefits.
4. Offer programs for work related training.
5. Build public awareness of the value of assistant/support and direct care work.

And what is Maine PASA planning to do?

(top 5 responses from Annual Event survey)

1. Our new website, www.maine-pasa.org, is being developed to provide a place for people to learn about direct care, support and personal assistance work, the people who perform the work, opportunities for employment, education and training, policies that affect jobs and services and links to the state and national experts.
2. Maine PASA is making the transition from a grant funded project to a non-profit organization. The structure and functions of this organization will support worker involvement and will build public support for the mission and purpose of the association and for its members.
3. Maine PASA will support members to attend meetings and to participate in the Direct Care Worker Coalition, the Workforce/Dirigo Demonstration Grant, the Maine Joint Advisory Council, and other policy and practice initiatives in the Maine that need input from direct care and support workers.
4. Maine PASA will continue to produce the newsletter, speak to groups, recruit members and plan events of interest to members and workers statewide.
5. Maine PASA will communicate with state and national leaders on issues and initiatives that can contribute to the recruitment and retention of direct caregivers, direct support professionals and personal assistants and efforts to improve the quality of jobs and quality of care, and recognize the people who work in this jobs.

Announcing the Maine PASA website!!

*Currently under construction!
Coming to a computer near you!*

www.MainePASA.org

How to Become a CNA

by Susan Tucker, PCA

Sandy River Home Resources

I became a PCA two years ago for Sandy River Home Resources. I never thought I had the confidence in myself to do this kind of work. But I gave it a shot because I had been out of work for seven years. I was a stay-at-home mom with a special needs child, who receives home based services himself. I was going through a rough time in my life along with my son. I had been looking at applying for other positions. This work happened to fall in my lap. I went through the training and took the exams required by the State.

My friends and some of my family said “Oh it’s a lot of hard work” and “Oh by the way you’ll never make it.” Well, I can say it now. They are opening wide and inserting a foot in their mouths. I’ve met many people in my journey as a PCA. Sometimes you go into someone’s home just for a one-time deal and feel like you’ve known your client your whole life.

Having the experience of being a PCA for more than 2 years and now studying to become a CNA, I can say that this type of work is not for everyone. It takes someone special. If you work for an agency, ask your administrative support staff when and where CNA classes are being offered.

I was lucky to have asked and gotten a good answer, and my classes are held at Pine Point Nursing. There was one other place they were offering CNA classes - Sedgewood in Falmouth. Some agencies might help you with reimbursement for the course. If Adult Ed is involved, the course is free. You only pay for your books. The facility puts on an open house and you get to ask questions and get a tour of the facility. You pick up an application to become a CNA student candidate. You may need to have an interview and take a competency test to get into the program. If you pass the test, they will call you. If you do not work for an agency and are considering becoming a CNA, check for courses at your local adult education program or community college.

This is a 150-hour course. You need to pay attention in class and read the chapters that are assigned. Do the review questions in the back of each chapter. Participate in labs and clinicals is a must in order to succeed. You must pass all quizzes and take a final exam for the State. You must also register with the State. But if for some reason you decide you do not want to become a CNA and have been in the course, you can get 20 hours of credit towards becoming a PSS (Personal Support Specialist). Then all you would need is another 30 hours of course study to qualify for your PSS.

I will graduate in December 2003 with a CNA certificate. They will be starting another CNA class in January 2004 at Pine Point Nursing in Scarborough. The person to contact is Anne Arrenstein, RN. She is the CNA instructor.

National News

- **Direct Care Clearinghouse**

This national newsletter and website provides reliable, current information related to direct care. Tune in and be informed:
<http://www.directcareclearinghouse.org>

- **Boosting Care Quality Through Workforce Development**

Nov. 7, 2003 - A recent paper, "Why Workforce Development Should be Part of the Long-Term Care Quality Debate" (Robyn I. Stone, Steven L. Dawson, and Mary Harahan), argues that workforce development activities to help direct-care workers participate effectively in long-term care settings should be integrated into all quality improvement efforts. To read a copy of the paper, go to:
http://www.directcareclearinghouse.org/r_art_det.jsp?res_id=62910

- **House and Senate Pass DSP Recognition Resolution**

The Direct Support Professional Recognition Resolution, a concurrent resolution, was passed this fall by both houses of Congress. To read the resolution, go to <http://directcare.c.tep1.com/maabHmf2plea997MUe/>. For details on the resolutions or other aspects of ANCOR's national advocacy campaign, go to <http://directcare.c.tep1.com/maabHmf2plfa997MUe/>



You're Invited to Join Us!

Are you a CNA, PCA, HHA, DSP or PSS? Do you provide direct support or care for an elder or a person with a disability? Contact us for more information!

Maine PASA, P.O. Box 1881, Portland, ME 04104

Voice: (800) 268-6612, TTY: (207) 228-8440, Email: scala@usm.maine.edu



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Editorial: Am I A Professional?

by Roberta Record, PCA and Maine PASA member

Dear Readers,

I have been pondering and talking with people about the word *professional*. I asked the question, is a person doing direct care and personal assistant work, making between \$7.50 and \$9.00 per hour considered a professional? I went to the dictionary and found these definitions:

Profession:

1. A calling or occupation requiring specialized knowledge and advanced education.
2. The body of persons engaged in such an occupation.
3. A principal calling, vocation, or employment.

Professional:

1. Characterized by or conforming to the technical or ethical standards of a profession.
2. Participating for gain or livelihood in a sport or activity often engaged in by amateurs.
3. A person who is expert at his or her work.
4. Having a particular profession as a permanent career.
5. Engaged in by persons receiving financial return.
6. Following a line of conduct as though it were a profession.

Professionalism:

1. Professional character, spirit or methods.
2. The conduct, aims or qualities that characterize or mark a profession or a professional person.
3. The following of a profession for gain or livelihood.

While participating as a Maine PASA representative in a meeting of professionals discussing the problems of challenging behavior of people with dementia I ponder this question of professionalism. It is very important to be a professional.

Direct care, support and personal assistant workers have a lot at stake in taking care of vulnerable people and assisting people with disabilities to live independently. I acquired specialized training to do this work. I am required to follow technical and ethical standards. I go into peoples' homes/lives who need my help and they expect me to be an expert. I do this almost everyday and have been for years. There are thousands of people who do this work. I get paid for the work I do, by my employer who expects me to uphold standards of conduct. For the rewards I get, you might say it is a calling for me. I know the education and learning I gain on the job have deepened my life, and made me the caregiver I am today. Maybe that is why my friends refer to

me as a professional. As I spend time with other Maine PASA members, listening to them describe their work with adults and children with developmental disabilities and mental illness, I hear that they are professionals too.

What standards do others place on "professionalism" and direct care work? Does it depend on the specialized training? I have attended training that was shallow from lack of experience of the "teacher". I have also attended sessions that were so intense that it was difficult to internalize the information and use it. I have watched co-workers suffer the stress of poor training. Yes, we need to stress the importance of education, apprenticeship, and ongoing training to build and support quality, and professionalism, so that people can feel successful in this noble work. For centuries caregiving has been a part of the family function. Now that science has stretched the length of life with its joys and tragedies, people are living full lives with accommodations of medical and personal care, and are being helped by strangers, by employees. We need to take human care of this function. Human dignity and liability are at stake. This is why we can no longer see it as a "simple" role done by caring and available women. We must acknowledge the many skills the caregivers have acquired, pay for that skill, and not take them for granted, trivialize them or diminish the value of their work.

I have respect for the people I assist, and I work hard to show this in my work. Struggling to live on low wages, not having my own health needs covered because I don't have insurance, being treated as less than a "professional" makes me have to work hard to maintain my self-respect. I regain strength through the individual encounters I have with the people who depend on me every day. How does the public view me, and the thousands of caregivers and personal assistants working in Maine to support our elders and people with disabilities in the community?

I am a PCA. The people I assist, their families, the public, and my employer need me to be professional. They expect me to be professional. I would appreciate being valued for the work I do, for the difference I can make, and for viewing the work I do as a profession. Perhaps we need to start by getting others in the caring and support profession to acknowledge us, the front line caregivers, aides and assistants as part of the profession, as professionals.

2nd Annual Maine PASA Event Photos



Maine PASA member Kim Hale and Jennifer Gillespie, National Academy for State Health Policy and Technical Assistance for the Real Choices grant



Our Door Prize was made by one of our own Maine PASA supporters!



Maine PASA members met with guests from Florida, Connecticut, Vermont and Washington, DC associations at the Maine PASA Pre-Event Dinner



Maine PASA member Trish Richard and presenters Patsy Harris and Anita Bolster (left to right)



Maine PASA members and presenters discuss the value of associations