

Samantha Dina:

So welcome everyone. I'm Samantha Dina. I'm the director of special projects at the Maine Department of Labor, and we are very excited to have all of you here today with us. A couple of quick notes. We are recording this session, so you will get a recording after this and you're welcome to go back and reference it or send it out to your friends and colleagues, but this will be recorded and distributed and we are going to spend the first half of our session doing a panel. So we'll hear from some panelists that we'll introduce in a second, and then the second half will really be open for questions and answers. So as you are listening to the panelists, please feel free to jot down your questions and you will have the floor for the second half.

So I wanted to give just a brief overview of who we are and why we're here today. So Caring for ME is a partnership between the Maine Department of Labor, Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Economic and Community Development, and several industry advisory partners that have come together with a goal of increasing awareness of the career opportunities in the direct care and behavioral health fields. These are essential roles to keep our Mainers healthy and provide great stepping stones to meaningful healthcare careers.

To inform this campaign we heard from over 700 workers that are currently in Maine in the direct care and behavioral health fields and ask them "Why they come to work every day?" "What keeps them in these jobs?" And heard overwhelmingly they're here to improve the quality of life of those around them. So we'll hear more about that today from folks that are in the field and really hearing the impact on the lives that they have of individuals around them and what keeps them getting up and going to work every morning.

So we're excited to have this event. This is our first event from the Caring for Me Campaign, hopefully we'll have some others and we'll see you all again, to hear from folks about the impact that they're having to share about their own career pathways and the experiences and opportunities that they leveraged along the way.

So we hope you leave today inspired by the great work of these folks in the direct care and behavioral health field and with the information that you need to explore these career opportunities. So with that, I'm going to introduce our moderator, Jess Maurer, who's the executive director of the Maine Council on Aging and one of our esteemed industry advisory partners for this campaign. Jess, I'll turn it to you.

Jess Maurer:

Excellent. I'm so excited to be here. Thank you for hosting and thanks everyone for joining. Maine is really in a moment of transition with our workforce. Every industry, as we've seen throughout news stories across Maine needs workers, but fields that involve caring, like home care group homes, assisted living, and nursing homes, when we can't find staff, people don't get the care they need and they sometimes have some pretty bad outcomes from this. But we just don't want anyone to fill these jobs. I think as Samantha was just saying, we want the right people to fill the jobs, people who want to be in the caring profession.

So the state of Maine, as you've just heard, has put a really big push on getting the word out about needing to find workers to fill care jobs in Maine, and this new one-stop shop website that I dropped into the chat that we'll be talking about in a little bit caringforme.org is a great way for potential workers to find more information about available jobs, job criteria, how to get access to free education, even earn while you learn opportunities and ways to advance your career pathway into other healthcare or care oriented jobs.



So today we're going to talk to some employers and former workers about these jobs, about the culture of care within these careers, opportunities that exist currently. So hopefully if you're interested in a caring career, you can get more information and certainly as Samantha said, you can ask questions of any of us at the end last 30 minutes of this session. The careers we're talking about here today. I will say we're all going to try not to use acronyms and if we do we'll, we'll try to correct that. But we're talking about behavioral health professionals, direct support professionals, personal support specialists, and certified nursing assistants generally.

So let's get right to the conversation. First, I want to introduce our speakers. We've got Renee Freudenberger, who is the director of training and professional development at for Woodfords Family Services. She has worked... Renee has worked in social services in Maine for 25 years. She is a master trainer for the statewide behavioral health professional program, a state faculty member of the American Heart Association, and is also a certified trainer in the Direct Support Professional College of Direct Support, which is pretty cool.

Next we'll have Angie Hunt, whose healthcare experience spans 42 years. Most recently serving as Chief Innovations Officer at The Cedars, a senior living community located in Portland, Maine. Over her 21 years of employment at The Cedars, she's held numerous position positions including chief operating officer, executive director, clinical services director, and rehabilitation services manager. She received her multi-level administrator license in 2008.

Then finally we have Cedric Mfuranzima, who is a former direct support professional, currently working as an interpreter for the Judicial Branch of the State of Maine. Cedric's mission is to advance and elevate direct support workers through education, advocacy and value creation. Cedric and his wife Jen, run an education business providing quality home care to community-based services members.

So we're going to start today... Just to talk a little bit about the kinds of jobs we're talking about. So I'm going to start with you, Renee. I'm going to ask you just to share a bit about Woodfords Family Services and the kinds of workers you employ and maybe a little bit about the kinds of work that they do.

Renee Freudenberger:

Sure, I'm happy to do that. Thank you and welcome everyone. So I do work for Woodfords Family Services and we provide support services to children and adults who have intellectual and developmental disabilities across Southern and Central Maine. We employ roughly 465 employees at this time whose goal is really to help our consumers, which is what we call the people that we serve, our consumers to live full and enriched lives that allow for choice and that are safe and sound. Our employees are really dedicated to that role and do a wonderful job in supporting our consumers. At any given time, we have several openings right now, actually, we have probably 40 openings within our organization at this time.

Jess Maurer:

What kinds of work do folks do? Just what's a daily...? A typical day in a worker at Woodfords?

Renee Freudenberger:

Yeah. So it depends on the program we employ... We do have some preschools, but today I'm here to talk about our direct support professionals and our behavioral health professionals. Both of those roles provide specific support to individuals. However, the BHPs, the behavioral health professionals provide support services to children across multiple settings and the direct support professionals provide similar services, but to adults.



Jess Maurer:

What kind of training would somebody need to take one of these positions?

Renee Freudenberger:

So each of those two roles have their own certification. So for behavioral health professionals, in order to acquire that behavioral health professional certificate, individuals are required to have a high school diploma or equivalent and be 18 years of age or older. Then once they've completed the training, they also need to have first aid and CPR and some bloodborne pathogen training. Then the sections that they can work in or the service areas that they can work in, there may be some additional education requirements, but for that certificate and for many of the roles that we have, our staff just need to have that high school diploma or equivalent and those certifications.

It's very much the same on the direct support professional side. Individuals need to be 18 years of age or older, have a high school diploma or equivalent, and then there are some additional trainings that they can complete that will expand the abilities and the roles that they can take on within the organization and the services they can provide as a result of that additional certification. So that might be an additional training as a certified residential medication aid so that they can administer medications to adults who are in need of that or additional training in providing work supports so that they can provide employment support services to adults who are working in the community.

Jess Maurer:

About how long would each type of training take for someone?

Renee Freudenberger:

That's a great question. So for the behavioral health professionals, the core training is 35 hours, and that can be done either live in the classroom or in a blended format that we offer, which is a certain number of hours of online modules and then two days of live classroom training. But it totals about 35 hours when you add in the CPR and bloodborne pathogens training. Direct support professionals need to complete 40 hours of training through the college of direct support. Then they also need to complete their first aid and CPR in order to get that certification and work as a direct support professional. Then all organizations, of course have additional trainings that their staff are required to complete. And the State of Maine has additional training requirements that folks need to complete and then re-certify over certain specified periods of time in order to keep them current with regulations and new evidencebased practices.

Jess Maurer:

Great, that's great. Well, I'm going to shift over to Angie now. Angie, if you wouldn't mind maybe sharing a little bit about The Cedars and talk about the jobs, kinds of care workers that you employ and what those care workers might do at The Cedars.

Angie Hunt:

Okay. Thanks, Jess. It's great being here with everybody today. So The Cedars is an older adult living community. We're a non-for-profit organization and we've been in the Portland community for 92 years. We offer housing services, we offer healthcare services and community-based services, and we employ probably approximately around 230 people in our organization. the other thing too is we have several entry level positions.



So in our assisted living we have a 30 unit assisted living, which supports a personal support specialist and also it supports a certified residential medication aid specialist. We also have assisted living memory who also supports those two entry level positions, positions personal support specialists, and certified residential medication aid. So a personal support specialist is an unlicensed person that's employed to provide assistance with daily activities for older adults. So this person will be under the supervision of a nurse and will have a... There's a plan of care or a service plan that's developed on each resident and basically will provide daily care to them like if they need to have help with showering, if they need bathing help, if they need dressing help and those type of activities. It's very relationship built and that's a really important aspect of your care, developing that report and relationship with the resident.

In assisted living memory the same thing with the personal support specialist and the certified residential medication aid, that's an unlicensed assisted personnel that is employed to provide safe medication administration. So they actually provide all the medications the resident receives throughout the day.

In our skilled nursing facility, which is 102 beds, we have two level of cares there. One is short-stay rehab, where people come from the hospital and they stay at The Cedars for a short amount of time to get skilled nursing care and to get rehabilitation services so they can return home independently and enjoy their community life. also the skilled nursing facility supports housing for us, it's 55 long-term care residents who actually live there.

So the two entry level positions there are a certified nurse assistant and a certified nurse assistant is actually the right hand person of the nurse. Okay. It's a very important job in that basically you're not only doing daily care, especially with people coming from the hospital, you're really observing their signs and symptoms every day, collecting those vital signs and making sure that their health remains well and making sure you have that dialogue with that nurse, that's really important. There's a lot of information that you learn medically about those residents. It's also too important to have that good relationship with the residents and with the patients.

In our long-term care, the CNA basically does a lot of the daily skills for that person to be in a nursing home. In the state of Maine, you have to be at a high level of acuity, meaning that you have to have extensive needs. So most of people that are in long-term care, they need maybe help and support when they eat. You might have to feed them, you have to do all of their dressing and bathing for them. Sometimes you have to help them with their mobility and their transfers and everything. So the certified nursing assistant just does that and also works with the vital signs, also works very closely with the nurse.

But the important thing in long-term care is really about the day-to-day living of the resident, and it's really important, you really get to know these people. They're tremendous people, you develop that relationship with them and you're empowered to let them live their day-to-day life the way they want to live. And you're providing care and medical care the way they want that medical care to be, that's really important. It's not about what we think, it's about what they think and we're just the catalyst to help this happen with them. So relationship building is incredibly important. And just one last thought before we talk more about this is that in long-term care, the residents are very... They get a lot of support and a lot of help, but it's really, really important that you allow them to give back because everybody needs purpose in life and that's what we're there for.

Jess Maurer:

It's the pay it forward concept.



Angie Hunt:

Yes.

Jess Maurer:

Thanks Angie. Can you tell me briefly... And you talked about three different kinds of workers, what kinds of training is involved for those workers?

Angie Hunt:

For somebody that wants to be a personal support specialist, it's a 50 hour program and it can be in a hybrid model and it's taught by trainers approved by the Department of Health and Human Research... Health and Human Services, sorry, I can't spit that out. Then it's 40 hours of this hybrid program and then there's a 10 hour clinical that goes with that, that's supervised by a nurse.

Then for the certified residential medication aid it is a 40 hour program. In that program you learn skills of safe medication administration, it covers the state of Maine regulations. You learn about the side effects of medication, the common medications that are used, and you learn a little of anatomy and physiology on that.

In the CNA program, they just changed this curriculum just recently. It's 130 hours, it's longer, it's 70 hours of theory and classroom kind of work. That could be done in a hybrid model too. It's 20 hours of a skill lab and 40 hours of clinical. A CNA can also go to a CNA, a certified nursing assistant medication tech. After a year of being a CNA, there is a course that you can take to give medications too, that's a 40 hour week course that has a 16 hour clinical that meets that.

Jess Maurer:

That's great. Tell me just briefly if are there opportunities for advancement if someone comes in one of these jobs to move to other jobs within the organization?

Angie Hunt:

Oh, yes. There's a lot of advancement. So one of the things is about a year ago, The Cedars adopted a model called "The household model," which is actually a model that's new to Maine and it's a model that's highly person centric and person directed.

In this model of care, it's really, really important that the CNA learns the etiquette of the household. A household is like a real home and it runs like a real home. So basically a person has to ring a doorbell to get in, you have to welcome them. So that whole etiquette needs to be learned. But we use blended workers. So the CNA, the certified nursing assistant, will come in and take a job or a personal support person or somebody that gives medication will come in and they're part of an interdisciplinary team.

There's permanent staff in these households. All right. And basically to blend the employee, the certified nursing assistant or the personal support specialist or the person that gives medications, they have a decision if they want to learn activities, do they want to learn housekeeping or homemaking or do they want... If you're a PSS, a personal support specialist, do you want to learn how to do medications? So we blend those roles and the reason why we blend those roles is so that we can provide that care in the moment to the resident. So we have people that are even social workers or activities assistants that are CNAs. So if a person wanted to go to the bathroom, they don't have to wait and hit a bell. So we all work together as a team. Then there is formal leadership roles in these households. There's a household coordinator, which is CNA, could be that formal leadership or a homemaker, a position that you can grow into.



Jess Maurer:

Nice. Thank you so much.

Angie Hunt:

Yeah, you're welcome.

Jess Maurer:

I'm going to turn now to Cedric and I'm wondering Cedric, if you can tell us about your career path and what was it like being a direct support professional?

Cedric Mfuranzima:

Hello, can you hear me?

Jess Maurer:

Hi, we can hear you.

Cedric Mfuranzima:

Yes. It started back in 2015 when I came here for the first time for college and I did some schooling in Massachusetts. Then I learned about a community of immigrants here in Southern Maine. So I came to visit, they told me about what the majority of them were doing for work. For me, it gave me curiosity. I was very curious, all of a sudden I said, "Maybe one day I'll come and dive into this industry and start getting to know what it is to be a direct support professional."

Fortunately, towards the end of my education, in Massachusetts, I learned about an acquaintance who was opening up a new service provider company, an agency, and they hired me as a direct support worker. My journey started from there and I became a house manager. From becoming a house manager, they gave me task of being a scheduler and eventually because of my background in school, also did more work in business development and company-wide activities.

But really the cream of my experience was as a direct support worker where imagine coming into a field for the first time and you are lucky that it's the first initial step in your journey, becoming a direct support worker set you up for more things, more responsibilities, a much wider understanding of the self. Because let's say you are in, like myself, I was in a new country and there was no better way of learning about myself like looking at somebody else I was helping. Like, "What is it they need?" That means I need that tool. Basically you slowly learn to build your own personality through the work. So that's been my journey.

A little bit forward after my direct support work worker sort of career, my wife and I, we open a small business here in Poland where we educate and train direct support workers or people who are interested to work in this field. The main certificate we provide is the one everyone has been mentioning certified the residential medication aid. My wife, she's a nurse instructor and even currently there is a class going on that's supposed to finish today. They're doing their final exam and after that they will be medication passes where we watch them do the medication pass at least three times to make sure that the skill is honed in. So that's been my journey. I think there will be more opportunities ahead and more work to do in the field. This is just the beginning. Being direct support worker was a good... This is on my side. Thank you.



Jess Maurer:

So I'm wondering, I heard you have a story about Jacob and I'm wondering if you might be willing to tell that.

Cedric Mfuranzima:

Absolutely. There is this gentleman who I was helping as supporting directly. He was one of the individuals with adult and developmental disabilities and we were really getting to know each other, then I learned that he had to move to a different place because he was... In his plan, being in that area was no longer safe for him behavior wise. So in the new area, he became lonely. So he did not have more new people to interact with. His network was kind of interrupted.

So we organized a company-wide event and he met everybody else and they played bowling to against [inaudible 00:24:11]. It was a really fun event. At the end he came, he gave me a big hug and say, "You are my hero." Nobody ever called me that. I never... It was a compromise. "I cannot believe this guy, really?" But I saw that was genuine for him given what I knew, given the relationship we had and what that small event meant for him. So that moment stands out for me. I don't think everybody has experienced those there. So it was a very personal thing and for me, I keep sharing this story because I know it's my story. So... Yeah.

Jess Maurer:

I love that. Well, it just underscores what Angie was talking about just a few minutes ago, which is it's all about the person's experience. It's not about...

Cedric Mfuranzima:

Yes.

Jess Maurer:

... our experience. Angie, I'm going to just jump over to you for a second because you actually started your career as a direct care worker and I'm wondering what was that like? Also thinking... Going back to when you started, what would you tell yourself about joining this career now?

Angie Hunt:

Okay, thanks. So I am actually a physical therapist by trade and I actually knew exactly in high school that's what I wanted to do. I think the big thing with me is I really wanted to make a difference in somebody's life- I wanted to be able to give to the community and I liked physical therapy and the reason why I liked physical therapy is that it holistically looks at a person and it uses holistic means like exercise and heat and ice and all these modalities that you can use to help somebody better their mobility or decrease their pain or whatever you're treating. So I was very attracted to that and I think the advice I would give people is I never in my life would ever believe I would've been a chief operating officer because that's a pretty big jump from a physical therapist to a chief operating officer of a company.

What I have to say is "Find something that you're passionate about that you like." Definitely you have to love people and you have to love people and hear their stories and really care about them. When you do these things and you're happy in your job, these opportunities come to you and you have the decision to say "Yes" or "No" to these opportunities and you grow with them and you'll be something that you



might not have expected because of where you worked. You were given those opportunities to do things like at The Cedars, they look within and they promote.

I'm a prime example, 21 years ago and I came to The Cedars, I was a manager for rehab and then I just took a zillion different jobs. They asked me, "Do you want to do this?" Or I volunteered to do this. So if you're willing to take that responsibility and that leap, the world is yours and this is a great time for looking at jobs as you're in the driver's seat and there is money there to help support some of these endeavors that you might decide you want to do. So...

Jess Maurer:

We've got just a couple minutes left before we're going to go to questions from the audience. So I'm going to ask the last question. Renee, what are the qualities you look for in a worker?

Renee Freudenberger:

That's such a great question and I think Angie touched on this quite a bit during her presentation. It's all the same things. We're really looking for folks who are striving to make a difference, who like people and care about people and want to use their particular skills and bring those to a role where they can enrich the lives of someone else who desperately needs them. And so those are really the folks that we are looking for. We can train them and give them the skills, but underneath it all, they really just need to have the heart for the work and that makes the best possible match.

If I could just echo Angie's sentiment of also about the promote from within philosophy, Woodfords is the same and I think many organizations in this field are, our agency nurse consultant started off as a DSP and worked her way through school, actually she started off as a BHP and then became a DSP. And many of our leaders within the organization started off in entry level positions and like Cedric and Angie had the opportunity to try on new things as their skill level grew and as opportunities presented themselves. So we always look first inward to see if we can find someone to provide new professional opportunities for. So lots of growth opportunities.

Jess Maurer:

Cedric, I'm going to give you the last word of the first part of this session. How when you were doing this work, did you describe success or how would you describe success for someone as a direct support worker?

Cedric Mfuranzima:

To go back what I said earlier, you start with how you see it personally, how you define it. The way I would define it for myself was looking how the resident is reacting to the work you've done to the work you're doing for them. Basically, trying to gauge with them, if you see them peaceful, if you see them serene, very enjoying the moment, that is all indication you need, that's how you're succeeding. You are providing peace, you are providing enjoyment in many ways. That's how to define success. Yeah.

Jess Maurer:

That's a good definition. So we're going to transition over to your questions, but first a couple of things. One is, so I'm going to encourage you if you have questions for Angie, Cedric or Renee, please go ahead and put them in the chat or you can raise your hand and we'll call on you.

But first I'm going to very quickly show you all this terrific new website that's been created by the state called and we'll I put that in the chat, we'll put it in again caringforme.org. To just very quickly say, you



can find career pathways, job openings, training opportunities, wonderful real stories including I think Cedric's; events, you can find actually this event on this website resources and you can also connect with people, and I'm going to underscore that because the Department of Labor has hired a new navigator to really help people navigate to these jobs, the right job within the caring field. Then also to navigate toward other career opportunities if that's something you want. A lot of people come into these jobs and stay in these jobs for decades because they absolutely adore them. So before we move to questions, I'm going to turn to Samantha who is going to offer a poll question to get us started.

Samantha Dina:

Yeah, great, thanks, Jess. And thanks to all our panelists. So we just wanted to do a quick pulse check to see how things are coming along and how people might want to engage with this campaign and resources about direct care and behavioral health opportunities moving forward. So a couple of polls just popped up on your screen, so feel free to answer those. It's totally anonymous, we won't know what you tell us. But good information for us to know where to head next to this campaign.

Cedric Mfuranzima:

There is a slight issue with the poll, though.

Jess Maurer:

We can't take the poll, Cedric, because we are co-hosts.

Samantha Dina:

We hope Cedric, that all the panelists would say "Extremely interested" for all of our answers. But we want to get a sense from other folks on the call. It looks like we've got about half of folks have been able to participate. We'll wait just another minute as you all are reading through these questions and as you're reading through these questions, think about other questions that you might have for our panelists.

Cedric Mfuranzima:

This is pretty good. I like it.

Samantha Dina:

I'll give another 20 seconds here.

Jess Maurer:

So the one thing I will say while folks are taking their poll is that while we're hearing from just a few folks today, and I think they're all located in Southern Maine, we have employers all across Maine in every county, there are about 400 at least employers around Maine, maybe 500 who engage in employing folks who care, workers who care as we've just been talking about. So no matter where you live, I guarantee you you'll be able to find available positions and we could hire, I believe probably about 10,000 workers to fill the gaps needed throughout healthcare and home care and long-term care for all the populations we have. So if you've got an interest, there are definitely employers that you can find, jobs you can find through that website I offered. So does anybody have any questions? I'll just wait. You can certainly, again, as I mentioned, you can raise your hand and we can have you come off mute or you can put your question in the chat.



Speaker 7:

I'd just like to... Can you guys hear me?

Jess Maurer:

We can.

Speaker 7:

Yeah. I just want to say thank you for putting this on today and with the information in for the new website that you have launched too. I'll be checking that out. Other than that I don't have any questions per se right now, but I just want to thank you and all the people that spoke today, it's very, very insightful.

Jess Maurer:

Thank you.

Speaker 7:

So thank you, guys.

Jess Maurer:

Thank you. All right, so do you want to share the poll results, Sam?

Samantha Dina:

Yes, I think I just did.

Jess Maurer:

Okay, perfect. Great. We do have a question and is, "Can you tell me more about what starting pay looks like for BHP, DSP or CNA?"

Angie Hunt:

I can go first. This is Angie. So for a CNA, the starting pay is \$19 at The Cedars. If you are 32 hour... If you work for 32 hours or more, you get a sign on bonus, there are \$3,000 sign on bonus. Which is prorated to you over the first six months that you work and you get it on your first paycheck.

Also, there's differentials. If you work the day shift and you work the weekend, you might get an extra dollar an hour. If you work in the evening, you get a couple dollars an hour more so you're not studying, you're \$19 but if you work in the evening, you're \$21 an hour. If you work at night, it's a \$3 shift. We have a special program at The Cedars called Abayla program. So if you're a CNA and you want to work just the weekends, because you go to school during the week, maybe you can work a 12 hour shifts. You work two 12 hour shifts for 24 hours, you get paid for 32 hours.

Then there's also incentives. If we have a shift that we have a hard time filling, we actually pay people \$7 more an hour to take that additional shift if you're a 32 hour a week worker or more. If we're really desperate, we escalate that up to \$20 if we're not at that minimum staffing ratio because... And we'd like to have our people work, not more agency staff, we prefer our people because they know the residents, the residents get better consistent staffing, they get better quality care. So that's for CNA.



Jess Maurer:

That's great. Would you like to answer the question, Renee?

Renee Freudenberger:

Yes, sure. So DSPs and BHPs, our starting pay is... For DSPs it's around \$16 an hour and for BHPs it's right around \$17 an hour. I apologize, that's direct support professionals are \$16 and behavioral health professionals are around \$17.

Jess Maurer:

There's a question about benefits. Can you talk about what kinds of benefits entry level positions might come with?

Renee Freudenberger:

Yes, absolutely. Woodfords has a really robust and generous benefits package. We have a great insurance program that includes both an HMO and an HSA. We have 10 paid holidays, vacation and sick earned time and 403(b) retirement planning. So it is a quite robust and all employees are eligible for that.

Angie Hunt:

At The Cedars we similarly have similar robust benefits. We have the medical benefit, we have three different plans there from Harvard Pilgrim. Actually if there's one HMO with an HSA in it, that's actually, if you're just ensuring yourself as free to the employee. We have dental insurance. There's a 401(k) program, our 401(k) program matches up to 25% of the first 6% of your total salary. So if you put in a dollar, the CS is going to put another 25 cents in that dollar for you, which is very generous. There is short-term disability, long-term disability, there's life insurance that you get. There's a flexible spending account. We do education and tuition reimbursement. So if you want to go for a higher level, we don't pay for it all, but we might pay for a course here and there for you. Then there's pay time off. I think we do 30 days, the 30 days at time off that you can take time off, you decide. All the sick time and everything is lumped together kind of.

Jess Maurer:

That's great. I think those are the questions that have come in so far. Do others have questions for our presenters? One question I have is, "What if you've got an employer who isn't offering free training?" Do you know where people can access free training?

Renee Freudenberger:

Yeah, so I would say that most organizations like Woodfords do offer internal training or contract with another agency to ensure that their staff have the training that they need to be able to fill these roles because we really want to make sure that we're supporting people in their professional growth and development so that they'll stay of course. For those folks, though, who maybe want to have a leg up and come to an organization already qualified to do that work, the behavioral health professional certification is available through adult ed, education opportunities. Woodfords holds the contract for administering the behavioral health professional certification program. And so folks can come directly to us and we can put them through that program. Some of the colleges offer that course as a three credit college course as well.



The direct support professional course is currently limited only to those individuals who are associated with an organization. So in other words, they have to be hired by an organization that provides direct support professional services in order to achieve that training. However, I recently spoke to the Office on Aging and Disability Services and they are working to make that more publicly available to folks in the very near future. So stay tuned for that one.

Cedric Mfuranzima:

I wanted to chime in and add that we also, as I mentioned, we provide the [inaudible 00:41:33] candidates wants to be certified for certified residential medication aid, I will drop my information here in the chat if you want to pay for yourself. We provide this course and I will have smaller agencies not the size of Woodfords, smaller agencies, newer ones here in Southern Maine. We have a working relationships with them. We can watch you pass medication and make sure that you are qualified and even help you connect with agencies that can provide work opportunities.

Samantha Dina:

I'm going to jump in here too. This is Sam from the Department of Labor. I just wanted to jump in with an aggregated resource. So what we're trying to do for our job seekers is make it easy for folks to navigate all of these different training opportunities. So we have a one-stop shop, I'll put the link in the chat as well so that individuals can find upcoming training opportunities that are free, that are short term, that are earned while you learn. So there's a lot of opportunities that Renee mentioned that you can start the job, get paid and work your way up to a credential. So we've tried to aggregate a number of those that are happening across the state in lots of different regions.

If you are unable to pay for certifications. So in some situations there might be a fee related to the training. We are providing some financial support to partially or fully cover trainings for certified residential medication aid for CNA, for CNAM, as well as direct support professional and personal support specialists. So a lot of the training or a lot of the occupations that we've talked about today, we've tried to pull the trainings together in one place and you can shoot a quick form to us, let us know what you're looking for and we're happy to discuss financial support for some of those as well. So I'll put that back in the chat.

Jess Maurer:

Fantastic.

Renee Freudenberger:

If I could just add very quickly, the Behavioral Health professional certificate is currently available at no cost to all interested individuals. You don't have to be affiliated with an organization. You can contact Woodfords directly, as I said. And that training is available at no cost and that includes the CPR portion and the bloodborne pathogens training as well. Just to add to what Cedric said about the CRNM aid course, certified residential medication aid, Woodfords does offer that training as well. Angie's course is a 40 hour course, but there's also a 24 hour course option and that is the one that Woodfords provides so that you can certainly work as a direct support professional with that 24 hour certification. And that's available at Woodfords. That's also available through some adult education organizations.

Angie Hunt:



I'd just like to piggyback for a second too is if you're a CNA or you're a CNA Med Tech, you do have a requirement of 12 credits per year. Like Renee or Cedric, we do offer internal education and the things we do a tiny bit differently, we do a lot of person first education because of the household model. So it's a whole program on how do you really develop relationships with the residents and how do you really are empower to act on what their wishes and needs are.

The other thing too is we do a lot of... Because we have an Alzheimer's, dementia, memory care, assisted living, I just want to add, it's a requirement that you have eight hours of education just even to... Once you get hired we do a lot of stuff with Teepa Snow, who is very well known, occupational therapist. She has a program called "Positive Approach to Care" that's excellent. We have certified trainers on that and we train that program. We do many other things with dementia training, but that's one of them. So that's a little different. We do also too, if you're a CNA or you want to be a CNA, we do support all that education and certification, but we will do pay as you learn with that too.

Jess Maurer:

Oh, that's great. So I'm wondering if there are additional questions. So I am actually going to come back to Cedric for a moment to ask, because I'm curious, as we're talking about resources and training, what was most helpful in advancing your career in relation to resources and trainings from a skills development, but also around soft skills? And I've heard a lot about soft skills like interpersonal communication. What was useful to you?

Cedric Mfuranzima:

Personally, I was always interested in learning and reading. When I could have downtime, I could read and developed my communication with the residents. But there were so many also resources in the community for people who are struggling with the language, adult education, Catholic Charities of Men provide so many resources to new people.

In terms of the trainings specifically that helped me was other DSPs, I'm not going to lie, trainings were not coming to me fast. So I learned a lot from other DSPs. They could show me how it's done, how to take care of somebody, the routine. Eventually I found about the College of Direct support online, and I did the modules and eventually I was lucky enough to get into a life class and eventually finish my certificate. But the agencies that I was working for could offer courses here and there. So it was sporadic, there was no consistent of training but I think today has gotten better given how abundant the amount of training is available today, it has gotten better.

Jess Maurer:

That's great. There's another question that has come in from our audience, which is, "Housing and the rising costs of goods continues to be a challenge for many folks." Absolutely. "Do you offer a strong EAP to help employees who may be having a hard time?" I'm assuming navigating through these pieces?

Angie Hunt:

Yes, we do. At The Cedars have a program, an EAP program, we also... During when we were having COVID or if we have active COVID and the direct care staff works with that person, we do offer \$10 more an hour when they're working in a COVID environment with a resident. We also have supported a lot through this year and a half where we've provided meals, a lot of free meals and meals to go home. We usually make a meal of maybe... For four people to go home with our employees. So we try to do those kind of things to show that we really appreciate them, especially working through this unbelievable,



unprecedented times and especially with the staffing challenges that we have now that they're really the heart and soul of our organization. So we try to support them as best as we can.

Renee Freudenberger:

Yeah, Woodfords is the same. We also have a very robust emergency assistance, our employee assistance program and like Angie's organization during the pandemic, we really strove to provide, as we always do, continuous support to our staff as needed. We had a employee fund that we could help folks out who were really struggling financially during the pandemic. We even distribute..., we had a drive up day where you could come and get toilet paper and other necessary supplies. I mean, whatever we can possibly do to support our employees, they are absolutely our most valuable asset and our goal is to support them in any way that we can to help them be successful in their job, but also to strike a healthy work-life balance.

Jess Maurer:

Renee, I'm going to come back to you because...

Renee Freudenberger:

Sure.

Jess Maurer:

... I feel like we didn't adequately answer the question. If you could talk about the different settings that direct support professional and behavioral health professional work in. Because I think we didn't really talk about the different settings...

Renee Freudenberger:

Yes.

Jess Maurer:

... [inaudible 00:50:25] was really good about that.

Renee Freudenberger:

Yeah, thank you for asking. I'd love to talk about that because everyone has different interests and there are lots of opportunities across both settings. So our behavioral health professionals can work in the home one-on-one with a child. They can also work in that home with the family as a whole. They can work as ed techs in the school districts as well at different levels. Ed techs can work in the school system with just that high school diploma, but then they can move up if they have a certain number of college credits. So there are a number of... Oh and more recently children's residential as well. So there are many opportunities for behavioral health professionals in the community.

Then our direct support professionals can work in the residential setting. So we may have two or more individuals living in a home and the staff rotate around that home to provide support 24 hours a day. So they can work in those residential treatments. They can also work in day programs. So individuals will go to a program to engage in social activities of interest to them or maybe even work opportunities, work training programs. So in work supports program, they may work in shared living opportunities and also in independent living opportunities. So there are lots of different environments where our folks can work and have the opportunity to support folks in a way that works for them too.



Samantha Dina:

I think you're muted, Jess.

Jess Maurer:

I am.

Samantha Dina:

There you go.

Jess Maurer:

I figured it out. I'm going to take another pause and just see if there are any more questions from our audience. If not, I think we will move toward closing. Cedric, I'm going to give you the last part again of this segment, which is to say just if you could briefly describe the impact that you think your work had on the people that you engaged with while you were a direct support professional.

Cedric Mfuranzima:

The impact for me, I could measure it on a day-to-day basis. Seeing progress in terms of new habits being developed, good ones, sometimes. We were always also in the process of breaking bad ones also at the same time. So seeing a reduction either in bad habits, also increasing in good habits, good behaviors; seeing the environment, really saying that "This is a home." Sometimes when things are not working well, it feels like it's not a home, it loses that sense, it's no longer a residential area. When you are working, you're doing a job very well, you start feeling homey if it feels like a place where there is peace.

The other way of measuring my progress is seeing people that are supporting, going for more opportunities available to them, when it's not going right they get stuck in many ways, in one sort of a cycle, but when you see them move from, "Oh, now I'm exercising, but also I'm pursuing work opportunities, but also I'm making friends, but also I'm now reconnecting with family." So those new slight changes on a daily basis, it's how I could measure the progress. Basically, small wins on a daily basis.

Jess Maurer:

Fantastic. So I think, Sam, I'm going to thank our presenters and I'm going to turn things back over to you for closing us up today.

Samantha Dina:

Great, thanks so much, Jess for moderating; Angie, Renee, and Cedric for sharing your stories and your experiences. This was wonderful. I learned a lot. I hope everyone else did too. Hopefully you come away with a little bit of knowledge about how you can enter this field. And really the bottom line that all of these panelists shared is having some passion to make an impact on folks lives. There's the training, the education, there's so many resources available to help people that are passionate and that want to come into these careers to make an in meaningful impact on people's lives. So we put a lot of resources in the chat, we'll follow up with folks as well. But please feel free to come to caringforme.org to learn about current career opportunities, training opportunities, and get connected to someone that can help you navigate all of the different career opportunities. So thanks so much everyone, we really appreciate it. And we'll talk to y'all soon.

