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UNH Program to Address Direct Care Workforce Shortage

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DURHAM, N.H. – A new program from the University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability will address the growing need for direct care workers to support the state's aging community. The program, DirectConnect: Partnering to Expand and Train New Hampshire's Direct Care Workforce, is funded by a three-year, $2.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment & Training Administration.

With a population aging faster than the national average, the state of New Hampshire is experiencing increased demand for long-term care support services and a heavier reliance on services provided in the home and community. It is projected that the need for home and community-based direct care workers will rapidly outpace supply in the near future.

DirectConnect will actively address the shortage of New Hampshire's direct care workers through a systematic recruitment and educational program, along with a tuition scholarship fund to promote training in the field through the community college system. The goal of the program is to train 800 incumbent direct care workers and recruit/train 200 individuals into the field.

"New Hampshire's population is rapidly aging, and as a result there is an increased demand for direct care services," says Jennifer Rabalais, DirectConnect project director. "DirectConnect strives to address this demand by increasing the direct care workforce and providing training opportunities for current direct care professionals. We are very pleased to have been awarded the grant to facilitate this important initiative, and we look forward to helping advance the quality and availability of direct care services to New Hampshire residents."

Several state agencies and organizations will be involved as program partners, including the New Hampshire Coalition for the Direct Care Workforce, the Workforce Opportunity Council, the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, the Community College System of New Hampshire, Granite State Distance Learning, Granite State Independent Living, and three regional developmental services agencies, among others.

For more information about DirectConnect, visit www.iod.unh.edu/directconnect.

The Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire was established in 1987 to provide a coherent university-based focus for the improvement of knowledge, policies, and practices related to the lives of persons with disabilities and their families. Its mission is to strengthen communities to ensure full access, equal opportunities, and participation for all persons.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

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