Candidate Questions

The Eldercare Workforce Alliance (EWA) is a group of 31 national organizations – representing consumers, family caregivers, the direct care workforce, and health care professionals – joined together to address the immediate and future workforce crisis for an aging America. With the 2016 election right around the corner, we have compiled some possible questions for candidates with background information. Post on Facebook or tweet your conversation and videos with candidates and/or elected officials on facebook.com/eldercarealliance or with the hashtags #EWA & #TogetherWeCare on Twitter.

Demographics

**Background:** By 2030, one in five Americans will be 65. The combination of the aging of the Baby Boom population, an increase in life expectancy, and a decrease in the relative number of younger persons, will mean that older adults make up a much larger percentage of the U.S. population than ever before.

**Question:** How can we as a nation build a sustainable workforce to provide quality care for the growing population of older adults in America?

*For more information: EWA Geriatrics Workforce Shortage Issue Brief*

Training the Workforce

**Background:** High-quality care for older adults, many of whom have multiple complex chronic conditions, requires a health care team with a diverse range of skills for addressing this population’s behavioral, cognitive, mental, and physical needs. Improved training is necessary across disciplines: less than one percent of pharmacists are certified in geriatrics, fewer than 3 percent of medical students choose to take geriatrics electives, and less than one percent of registered nurses are certified as gerontological. The lack of training requirements for both health professionals and the direct care workforce results, in part, from a lack of recognition that older adults have distinct health care needs.

**Question:** How can we ensure that the health care workforce is well trained to address the unique needs of older adults?

*For more information: EWA Public Policy Priorities, Education & Training: Meeting the Needs of Older Adults Issue Brief*

Direct Care Workforce

The Eldercare Workforce Alliance is a project of the Tides Center.

*The positions of the Eldercare Workforce Alliance reflect a consensus of 75 percent or more of its members, and do not necessarily represent the position of individual Alliance member organizations.*
**Background:** Direct care workers – including nursing assistants, home health aides, and personal care attendants – provide critical support to older adults in need of long-term services and supports. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Personal Care Aides and Home Health Aides are among the fastest-growing occupations, with demand expected to increase 49% by 2022. Despite the growing need, health care workers serving older adults, especially those in the direct care workforce, have high rates of turnover. High turnover, low wages, and a shortage of qualified home care workers endangers the independence of millions of older Americans who want and rely on these services to remain living at home.

**Question:** How can we strengthen the direct care workforce and provide better quality jobs in this field?

*For more information: Caring for Older Adults National Issue Brief, Advanced Direct Care Worker Issue Brief, Increasing Eldercare Workforce Compensation*

**Background:** EWA strongly supports the final rule from the Department of Labor that would extend greater federal minimum wage and overtime protection under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) to the more than 2.5 million paid home-and community-based workers. Implementation of the revisions to the companionship exemption can improve quality care by facilitating the recruitment and retention of a quality workforce, in part by expanding federal wage and overtime protection.

**Question:** What is your position on wage and overtime protection for home care workers?

*For more information: EWA Public Policy Priorities, Advanced Direct Care Worker Issue Brief*

**Support for Family Caregivers**

**Background:** Family caregivers in the United States provided more than 37 billion hours of unpaid care in 2013. Moreover, the estimated economic value of U.S. family caregivers’ unpaid contributions totaled $470 billion in the same year. Nearly one in five family caregivers who assisted with medication management and one in three who assisted with changing dressings or bandages received no instruction or training in performing these tasks. Additionally, 6 in 10 caregivers report being employed at some point in the past year while caregiving. Of those working while caregiving, 6 in 10 caregivers made workplace accommodation, such as cutting back on their working hours or taking a leave of absence.

**Question:** How would you work to better support family caregivers who provide care for aging loved ones, including those who work full-time?

*For more information: Caring for Older Adults National Issue Brief, EWA Public Policy Priorities, Family Caregiver Alliance; National Alliance for Caregiving*

**Background:** Care touches everyone. Our campaign believes strongly in the value of storytelling. When care stories move from kitchen table conversations to town halls, people who thought they were struggling with issues that only affected their family find a network of people working together to create a long term care system that meets everyone’s needs. As you know, it matters a lot when elected leaders share their own
personal stories with the issues impacting us. That is why we are asking elected officials to share their care stories with us.

**Question:** Will you share your care story with us?

**Person- and Family-Centered Care**

**Background:** Person and family-centered care refers to care, services and supports that are planned, delivered and evaluated based on the needs and preferences of the consumer. When appropriate, the needs, preferences, and role of family caregivers should be incorporated. The best care coordination models are well-coordinated, and person- and family-centered, across service settings, and promote better communication and interaction among the respective members of the interdisciplinary team, individual, and family caregiver. Person- and family-centered interdisciplinary team care has been the hallmark of geriatrics and is the key to older adults receiving quality care and remaining independent for as long as possible.

**Question:** How can we, as a nation, ensure care for older adults is coordinated and focuses on the goals and preferences of the individual and their family caregivers, not just their conditions or diseases?

*For more information:* [Quality Care through a Quality Workforce: A Toolkit for Advocates of Older Adults Who are Dually Eligible for Medicare and Medicaid, Care Coordination Issue Brief, EWA Public Policy Priorities](#)

**Background:** With 90 percent of people over age 65 having one or more chronic conditions, there is a growing need for interdisciplinary care teams who are trained to provide coordinated, person-centered care to help older adults live at home and in community-based settings for as long as possible.

**Question:** How will you help develop the care infrastructure necessary to allow for an increase in home and community-based services?

*For more information:* [Eldercare Workforce Alliance Reports Eldercare Is an Engine for Job Growth](#)