

AUTHORIZE MEDICATION AIDES IN THE NURSING HOME IN THE 2023-24 BUDGET!

The Executive Budget would authorize specially trained certified nurse aides (CNAs) to work as medication aides in nursing homes, administering routine medications to residents under the supervision of a registered nurse. This proposal would provide a career ladder for CNAs, enable nurses to focus on higher-level responsibilities, and would help foster a more collaborative approach to caring for our most vulnerable in nursing homes.

A NO-COST STRATEGY TO COMBAT LONG-TERM CARE STAFFING CRISIS

New York State first declared a health care workforce emergency in the fall of 2021. The emergency demanded the deployment of the National Guard to assist with staffing challenges in nursing homes. While the National deployment to nursing homes ended in June of 2022, the health care workforce emergency persists ([E.O 4.18](#)) and is impacting the availability of nursing home beds in the State. Nursing homes are limiting admissions and closing beds and units in an effort to approach compliance with nursing home staffing mandates, or because they simply lack sufficient staff to care for additional residents. Today, there are 6,700 fewer nursing home beds available in New York than there were in 2019. This is a direct result of staffing challenges and inadequate Medicaid reimbursement.

Adequate [Medicaid reimbursement](#) is essential to enable nursing homes to recruit and retain staff, offer more competitive wages, and cover rising costs. **Authorizing Medication Aides, together with a rate increase, would offer a powerful and rapid response to the staffing crisis in nursing homes.** Unlike longer term strategies, such as nursing scholarships and building new training programs, Medication Aides can be trained relatively rapidly at a low cost.

STRENGTHEN THE CAREER LADDER FOR NURSING HOME STAFF

The opportunity to receive this advanced training and become a Medication Aide would enable a CNA to earn a higher wage and take on an advanced responsibility in the care of the residents they serve. It would also provide a path toward pursuing LPN training and licensure. It would enable the Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) and RNs in the nursing home to deliver care at the higher end of their scope of practice, resulting in greater job satisfaction, higher quality of care of residents, and a more collaborative, team-based approach to the care provided in nursing homes.

Approximately 25 states already authorize medication aides to perform these tasks in nursing homes. In New York, the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) allows unlicensed direct care staff to administer medications. In these OPWDD settings, unlicensed caregivers are able to administer medications to residents after receiving advanced training.

WHAT TRAINING AND SUPERVISION WOULD BE REQUIRED OF MEDICATION AIDES?

The Executive Budget would require Medication Aides to be CNAs, with at least a high school diploma or equivalent and at least one year of experience in a New York nursing home. They would be required to complete training and demonstrate competencies, as determined by the Commissioners of Education and Health, and pass a competency examination. They would work under the supervision of an RN, would perform only tasks assigned by an RN, and only after demonstrating to the RN that they are competent to perform all authorized tasks.

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