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## Home Care Employment in the Rochester Region: Opportunities for Improvement

The Rochester region in New York has a rich history of economic development and innovation, from the opening of the Erie Canal through the creation of today’s thriving health, higher education, and research sectors. But Rochester is also one of the country’s most impoverished cities, with deeply entrenched inequality among residents on the basis of geography, race and ethnicity, education, and income, and more. In recent years, local stakeholders have joined forces to address these disparities in the region through a range of interconnected initiatives, including cooperative business incubation. This raises a timely question: can cooperative development help improve employment in the home care sector—where home care workers, who are primarily women of color, struggle for recognition, support, and economic stability despite their essential contribution to the community? This fact sheet summarizes the findings from PHI’s study of the feasibility of cooperative development and other strategies for: improving job opportunities for Rochester’s home care workers, addressing the home care workforce crisis, and strengthening access to quality care for those who need it.

### By the Numbers: The Rochester Region’s Home Care Workforce

<b>12,900</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>\$11.93</b>	<b>\$17.2k</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>48%</b>
Total Workers	Female	Median Age	People of Color	Median Wage	Median Annual Earnings	In or Near Poverty	Rely on Public Assistance

Note: These “By the Numbers” data refer to the Rochester Metropolitan Statistical Area (as defined by the U.S. Census), which includes Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Wayne, and Yates Counties. Complete data definitions and citations are available in the full report.

# THE HOME CARE WORKFORCE IN THE ROCHESTER REGION

## Who Are Home Care Workers?

Home care workers provide essential support for older adults and people with disabilities in their homes and communities. The workforce includes *personal care aides*, who provide non-medical assistance with personal care and a range of other daily activities, and *home health aides*, who provide similar assistance but may also perform certain clinical tasks under the supervision of a licensed professional.

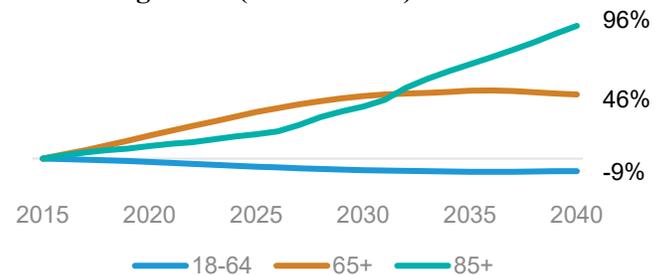
## Increasing Need, Growing Demand

Reflecting national trends, the need for home care is increasing in Rochester as the population grows older (Figure 1) and long-term services and supports shift from nursing homes to home and community-based settings.

Due to this rising demand, the home care workforce is projected to add over 5,600 new jobs in the Finger Lakes region between 2016 and 2026—more new jobs than in any other occupation (Figure 2).

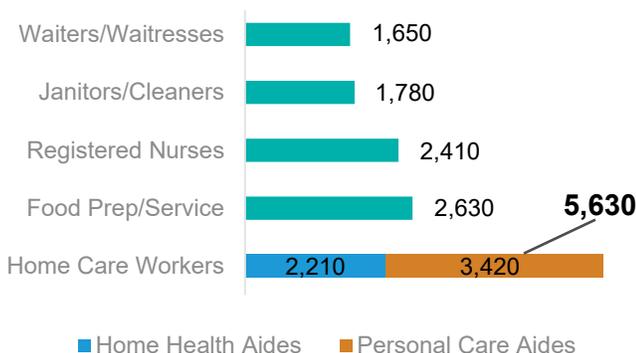
With fewer adults in the labor force and persistent job-quality issues plaguing the home care sector, stakeholders report that the region is experiencing a home care workforce shortage that will only worsen as demand grows in the years ahead.

**Figure 1: The Population of Monroe County Is Growing Older (2015 to 2040)**



Source: Cornell University Program on Applied Demographics. "New York State Projection Data by County." <https://pad.human.cornell.edu/counties/projections.cfm>. Accessed 12/18/19.

**Figure 2: Among the Top Five Largest-Growing Occupations, Home Care Will Add the Most Jobs in the Finger Lakes Region from 2016 to 2026**



Source: NYS Department of Labor. "Long-Term Occupational Employment Projections." <https://www.labor.ny.gov/stats/lproj.shtm>. Accessed 12/18/19. (The Finger Lakes Region comprises Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming and Yates counties. Occupational employment projections are not available at the single county level.)

## About This Research

This fact sheet highlights key findings from a mixed-methods feasibility study of cooperative development in the home care sector as a strategy for improving home care jobs in the Rochester region. The full report—along with similar reports for Buffalo, NY, and Detroit, MI—is available at

**PHInational.org**. This research was made possible by generous support from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation.

# FINDINGS ON THE FEASIBILITY OF COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT IN HOME CARE

This research found that low wages, insufficient hours, few career pathways, and limited transportation and child care options are endemic challenges (among others) for home care workers in Rochester—and employers are struggling to address these challenges while responding to rapid changes in the sector. But the study also found that growing momentum around cooperative business development in the region presents a promising solution—among other worker-focused sectoral strategies—to Rochester’s home care workforce crisis.

## Why Consider Cooperative Development?

A cooperative home care agency offers more than just short-term wages, with annual dividends and other worker-ownership benefits representing real asset-development opportunities in the long term. The cooperative model also relies on worker-centered employment practices, such as supportive supervision, employment supports, participatory management practices, and opportunities for career advancement. The potential for greater earnings over time and a better experience on the job could add significant value to the prospect of home care employment for Rochester’s job seekers. A cooperative home care agency may therefore be better equipped than other agencies to improve recruitment and retention, creating a stable business to effectively serve the community.

However, nationwide, there are only 11 operational home care cooperatives that collectively employ about 2,500 workers and generate \$76.6 million in revenue—a fraction of the industry total. These figures indicate the considerable challenges inherent in launching home care cooperatives and bringing them to scale. In the Rochester region, the feasibility of creating a new cooperative in the home care sector is further limited by the New York-statewide moratorium on new licenses for home care agencies and the contracting limits for managed long-term care plans. These policies mitigate against the entrance of new agencies into the market, suggesting instead the value of converting existing businesses to cooperative ownership and strengthening worker-centered practices across the industry.

### THE COOPERATIVE ADVANTAGE IN HOME CARE

By empowering workers as decision-makers, investing in their jobs and careers, and fostering their long-term commitment, a small number of worker-owned home care agencies around the country are fundamentally challenging the industry’s status quo. The results? Wages are consistently higher for workers at these agencies, employment supports are the norm, and turnover is less than half the national average (at 38 percent versus 82 percent).

Source: Kazda, Katrina. 2019. “Quantifying the Cooperative Difference in Home Care.” National Homecare Cooperatives Conference, Dulles, DC, 11/21/19.

## Key Resources for Cooperative Development in Rochester

**OWN Rochester** is a nonprofit cooperative business development corporation that helps incubate start-up or converted cooperative businesses and serves as their primary link to financial, legal, and other technical supports. Together with the Office of the Mayor of Rochester and other local stakeholders, OWN Rochester is actively pursuing opportunities to create a home care cooperative in the region.

An additional local resource is the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative (RMAPI). Funded through Governor Cuomo’s Upstate Revitalization Initiative, RMAPI is a multi-sectoral community coalition which aims to increase income levels, make basic needs more affordable and accessible, and lower concentrations of poverty in Rochester. Closely aligned with workforce development efforts in the region, RMAPI’s efforts could be leveraged by a home care cooperative or other high-road employer seeking to provide a range of employment supports to its workers.

# PROMOTING HOME CARE JOB QUALITY AND CARE QUALITY IN ROCHESTER

The following considerations for developing the home care workforce in the Rochester region arose from this analysis of the home care sector, the labor market, and the feasibility of cooperative development.

## Pursue a Cooperative Conversion Strategy

In the context of competition and consolidation in New York's home care sector, a cooperative conversion—rather than the creation of a new home care agency—would best serve both market and workforce needs in Rochester. A field-leading approach would be to consolidate two or more smaller, privately owned or nonprofit home care agencies into a single worker-owned business.

## Implement Worker-Centered Employment Practices

A cooperative home care agency—like any high-road employer, regardless of ownership structure—could implement a range of strategies to improve workforce recruitment and retention.

- **Develop tailored recruitment strategies.** This research suggests that a cooperative home care agency could build its workforce by recruiting specific segments of the labor pool, such as younger people, in targeted ways. Further, lower labor force participation and higher unemployment rates among workers of color in the region suggest the need for race-explicit and place-based strategies for reaching and supporting new workers.
- **Target supports to the needs of the labor pool.** The concerted effort underway in Rochester to coordinate employment and social supports provides a unique platform from which a cooperative home care agency could develop a program of employment supports for its workforce. Particular attention could be paid to addressing barriers to affordable transportation, child care, and housing, among others.
- **Demonstrate career pathways.** Following other innovative examples in the home care sector, a cooperative home care agency could distinguish itself from the competition by creating advanced roles—such as peer mentor or senior aide roles, among others—that incentivize workers to develop their skills and remain in the field while also improving care outcomes.

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To read the full report, visit: [PHInational.org/resource/home-care-cooperative-rochester/](https://PHInational.org/resource/home-care-cooperative-rochester/)

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