



Home Health Aide Program

Encuentro provides top quality adult education programs for the Latino immigrant community in a welcoming and culturally accessible environment. English language and literacy, High School Equivalency, and technology programs are offered. Because immigrants require supportive services in addition to education and training to sustain meaningful employment and move ahead in the workforce, Encuentro established the Workforce and Small Business Development Initiative. In January of 2016, Encuentro opened the Home Health Aide program as part of this initiative, to train and support immigrants to be employed in the fast-growing industry of home health care. The Home Health Aide program has three components:

Education:

- Encuentro offers a 15-week Home Health Aide training and certification, in collaboration with Central New Mexico Community College (CNM). The course takes place two times per year.
- Encuentro recruits 24 students per semester and provides a weekly session to support the students in successful study and test-taking skills and by applying adult learning principles with the students to reinforce and contextualize the course topics.
- The students attend the Home Health Aide class at CNM on Saturdays for six hours during the semester, and receive both lecture and lab-based instruction. Graduates receive a certificate of completion for Personal Care Attendant and for Home Health Aide. The course curriculum is approved by the New Mexico Department of Health as meeting or exceeding training requirements for these occupations. The students also receive CPR certification.
- Home Health Aides are further supported through educational offerings of English as a Second Language for Health Care Workers and independent Contracting for Home Health Aides.

Employment:

- A matching registry to connect persons seeking caregivers with our HHA graduates, called EnCasa Care Connections, will launch in late October 2017. Encuentro created the registry to boost opportunities for self-employment for our graduates.
- A peer-to-peer system for HHA graduates to rate their work experience in home health agencies is under development. This will inform graduates seeking agency-based employment about where to find positive job opportunities and to avoid unsupportive or discriminatory work environments.
- During training, students learn about worker's rights in the domestic care industry, and are introduced to a member of the El Centro de Igualdad y Derechos team that specializes in issues such as wage theft. In this way, HHA students and graduates know of accessible and culturally appropriate resources should they need them.

Advocacy:

- Encuentro is a local affiliate of the National Domestic Worker's Alliance, that advocates for fair workplace conditions and full compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act, which was recently revised to strengthen regulations that affect Home Health Aides and other domestic workers. HHA students and graduates are informed and participate in related local and national advocacy efforts.
- Encuentro is an active member of the New Mexico Senate Joint Memorial 6 Task Force, which provides legislators with recommendations for ensuring that the state Medicaid program is operating in compliance with FLSA requirements, and for policies to ensure that a sufficient and high-quality home care workforce is in place to meet the demand.

Challenges:

- Agency-based workplace conditions such as rate of pay, benefits provision, reasonable schedules, and respect for the HHA role are not good, in general.
- Immigrants working as HHAs often confront discrimination from supervisors and co-workers.
- Private care employment can offer better work conditions but are more difficult to encounter. In some cases, private care employment can be exploitative.
- The experience of working as an HHA can be isolating and the level of responsibility can be stressful.
- As English language learners, immigrant HHAs can face employment barriers.



EnCasa Care Connections <http://encasacare.com/>

- Is a matching registry where persons seeking caregiver services in the home receive personalized assistance and are connected with Home Health Aide (HHA) candidates that have graduated from the training program.
- Those seeking caregiver services fill out a web-based form that describes their needs, a schedule for services, and contact information.
- HHA graduates maintain an updated profile of their skills, work experience, areas of interest in caregiving, schedule availability and other details.
- An Encuentro coordinator contacts the person seeking caregiver services to learn about any further needs and to establish a friendly rapport.
- Home Health Aide graduates of the Encuentro program that appear to meet the described needs and work scheduled are referred to the person seeking caregiver services by the Encuentro coordinator. At least 2 and up to 4 candidates are referred.
- Tools and guides that can facilitate the interviewing and contracting process are resources that are made available to people seeking caregiver services and HHA candidates.
- The decision and arrangements to hire an HHA is exclusively those of the person seeking caregiver services.
- An opportunity to evaluate the matching process and the resulting service and work experience is available to both the person seeking caregiver services and the HHA.