

Wisconsin Quality Home Care Authority (WQHCA)

What is it?

An Authority is a "quasi-State" corporation. It is established by the State, but is not part of State Government. In other states, it is called a Commission. The "WI Quality Home Care Commission" was created in 2006, but it has operated only in Dane County. This budget would change the Commission to an Authority and expand it statewide.

What is the purpose?

- Maintain a registry of home care providers; make referrals to consumers
- Determine if providers are eligible for the registry (do background checks)
- Operate recruitment and retention programs
- Provide orientation and skills training to providers
- Provide training and support to consumers
- Operate a 24-hour back-up system

Who are the "providers"?

Providers are independent home care workers who work directly for consumers. They are considered "employees" of the QHCA only for the purpose of negotiating wages and benefits.

This does NOT include employees of:

- Personal care agencies
- Supportive home care agencies
- Home health agencies
- Independent Living Centers, etc.

Who are the consumers?

People who use IRIS or the SDS option in Family Care can choose whether to employ their own workers or to go through an agency. Only those who employ their workers directly will use the registry.

Who controls the Authority?

The Governor appoints the Board, including nine official representatives (DHS, DWD, the State Assembly, State Senate, a Managed Care Organization, a non-Family Care county, BPDD, WCPD, BOALTC) and eleven (a majority) from the public.

What about the union?

SEIU has worked for years to get QHCAs in Wisconsin and other states. SEIU wants to represent these independent workers in collective bargaining. The union may only bargain for better wages and benefits. Everything else: hiring, firing, scheduling, etc. is controlled by the consumer.

It is up to the workers to decide if they want to have a union and if so, which union they want. However, if the majority decides to unionize, then everybody has to pay union dues. Dues are 2% of the workers' gross wages or \$14/month, whichever is less.

Controversy

This is a summary list of the strong opinions for and against the WQHCA.

NOTE: Some of these opinions may be based on a misunderstanding of the proposal.

The Board of the Dane County QHCC (the majority are consumers) says:

- QHCC created a registry of 2000 trained providers; consumers can access it online
- QHCC created a training outline to coordinate different training models into one system
- QHCC increased the level of criminal background checks
- Consumers have retained full control as employers. They may hire and fire workers at any time. The union bargains only for better wages and benefits, and they cannot get these increases by taking anything away from the consumers.
- Consumers have been the key voice in the Commission. We need to ensure this will continue in the Authority. For example, SEIU bargains with the Commission, which collectively represents all the consumer-employers. In the new proposal, SEIU would bargain with DHS. There should be a strong role for consumers built in.

Many provider agencies (ILCs, WPSA, etc.) say:

- No one should be forced to join a union. Workers should be able to “opt out”.
- All home care workers should get equal treatment. If the union wins increased wages or benefits for WQHCA workers, these increases should apply to workers at all the home care and personal care agencies.
- We already do criminal background checks, recruitment, and training. Why do we need another agency to do the same things?
- We carry liability insurance. Will the QHCA have insurance to protect consumers from law suits?
- The majority of independent providers are family members. They should not be forced to take training.
- The Dane County Commission has only been fully operational since January, 2009. We need to see outcomes before expanding the model statewide.

Many consumers say:

- If my workers are in a union, my right to self-determination is compromised. I can no longer make decisions about the workers.
- I have family members and friends willing to work for less than the going rate so I can have more money. We don't want a union telling me what I have to pay.
- Some of my workers work just a few hours a week. They should get to keep their whole paycheck and not have union dues deducted.

DD Council Directors in states that have QHCAs have said:

- The union succeeded in getting better wages and benefits for independent home care providers.
- Families have been angry about the required training.
- Consumers have retained full self-determination.