



**CASE STUDY:**

# Powering Local Health Care Workforces

## A Blueprint for Building a Highly Skilled Health Workforce

A growing shortage of health workers has reached “crisis levels” in the home health care sector.<sup>1</sup> If left unchecked, these trends hold critical implications for an aging population with increasingly complex care needs. Across the U.S., home health care providers report turning away more than 25% of referred patients due to staffing gaps.<sup>2</sup> Local policymakers, health employers, and workforce development leaders must invest in developing a direct care workforce that is equipped to meet the growing need.

In California, three workforce development organizations — Homebridge, Futuro Health, and EnGen — aligned their services to better connect home health workers with job skills and career pathways. With more than 4 in 10 California health workers coming from a newcomer background,<sup>3</sup> the partnership prioritized multilingual training and career-aligned English instruction with promising results. The program’s impact is ready to replicate in other states.

### IMPACT AT A GLANCE

- 75,000** California-based direct care providers accessed multilingual, career-aligned training resources, including 17,500 participants who completed sector-aligned English instruction.
- 95%** of all program participants felt that the quality of care improved as a result of the program.
- 92%** felt more empowered to navigate the healthcare system and advocate for care recipients’ needs.
- 94%** of English learners improved their English proficiency with industry-aligned vocabulary.

<sup>1</sup>Health Resources & Services Administration, “[Health Workforce Projections](#),” November 2024.

<sup>2</sup>Home Care Association of America and National Association for Home Care and Hospice, “[The Home Care Workforce Crisis: An Industry Report and Call to Action](#),” March 2023.

<sup>3</sup>Paulette Cha, Public Policy Institute of California, “[Immigrants are Key to California’s Health Workforce](#),” May 2019.

## UNDERSTANDING SECTOR NEEDS

California, like many states, has a rapidly aging population. One in four Californians will be 60 or older by 2030; the state projects a shortage of between 600,000 and 3.2 million direct care health workers in that same time frame.<sup>4</sup> Meeting the need starts with connecting the existing home health workforce with pathways to upskilling and career training, following three key priorities:

### BOOST CAREER MOBILITY.

In California and across the country, the current infrastructure supporting direct care workers is fragmented and under-resourced, resulting in limited access to career training and high rates of worker turnover.

### PROMOTE A MULTILINGUAL WORKFORCE.

When patients can speak the same language as their providers, they experience better health outcomes. Yet the current health workforce does not currently reflect the growing linguistic diversity in California and many other states.<sup>5</sup>

### INVEST IN ENGLISH SKILLS.

A full 42% of California's home health workforce comes from a newcomer background;<sup>6</sup> stats are similar across the country.<sup>7</sup> With investments in English upskilling, these workers can build in-demand multilingual skills.

In 2021, California launched its Master Plan for Aging, with a mandate to generate one million direct care jobs by 2031.<sup>8</sup> To reach that ambitious goal, the state then created the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Career Pathways Program in 2022, designed to provide training and upskilling to 550,000 incumbent home health workers, many of whom had never before accessed career development opportunities.

Homebridge, a San Francisco-based caregiving organization, understood that the success of the IHSS Career Pathways Program would depend, in large part, on the extent that it prioritized access for home health workers from multilingual backgrounds. Homebridge partnered with national upskilling providers, including Futuro Health and EnGen. Together, the organizations seamlessly integrated both language access and English upskilling into the IHSS program.

## PARTNERING TO PROMOTE ACCESS



**Homebridge** is the largest provider of caregiver training in California, offering innovative online and in-person education and training opportunities to home care workers



**Futuro Health** provides accessible education and training opportunities for allied health workers, including home health and direct care workers.



**EnGen** offers career-aligned English instruction with an on-demand, mobile-first learning platform that is optimized for working adults.

<sup>4</sup>California Health Care Foundation, "California's Direct Care Workforce: Who They Are, The Work They Do, and Why It Matters," January 2023.

<sup>5</sup>California Health Care Foundation, "How California is Strengthening Its Health Workforce: Five Key Questions and Answers," May 2024.

<sup>6</sup>Paulette Cha, Public Policy Institute of California.

<sup>7</sup>Jeanne Batalova, Migration Policy Institute, "Immigrant Health-Care Workers in the United States," April 7, 2023,

<sup>8</sup>Master Plan for Aging."

## FILLING THE GAP

The three partners worked to maximize IHSS Career Pathways Program access for California-based home health providers, regardless of their native language. The focus was on upskilling direct care providers' existing knowledge and skills in their preferred language – and offering access to workforce-aligned English instruction that would help participants simultaneously gain English proficiency and new career skills.

- Partners developed a suite of 167 IHSS-aligned training courses; of these, 132 were made available in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Armenian. The remaining 35 courses were focused on IHSS-aligned English instruction.
- The IHSS program compensated participants for time invested in training, an “earn and learn” model that allowed them to work while building career mobility.
- Training courses were offered in both asynchronous and synchronous modes which boosted access and flexibility.
- Online learning boosted participants' digital literacy skills.

## Building Career Pathways for Home Health Workers

### Contextualized Language Skills

EnGen's career-aligned English upskilling provides an on-ramp to the IHSS program



### Career-Aligned Instruction Industry-Recognized Credentials

Futuro Health & Homebridge's integrated curriculum aligns with IHSS standards



### Real-World Experience

Participants benefit from increased English skills and new job skills in existing home health careers



### A Highly Skilled Health Workforce

Participants have skills and experience to grow in a high-demand career, filling critical gaps in the home health care workforce



More than 75,000 home health workers accessed the IHSS training program. The program bolstered California's direct care workforce in meaningful ways:<sup>9</sup>



of program participants felt **quality of care improved** after taking Career Pathways trainings



felt **more confident providing care** aligned with their care recipients' preferences and needs



felt **more empowered to navigate the healthcare system** and advocate effectively for their care recipients' needs.



of respondents believe the trainings **helped prevent health-related or hospitalizations** for their care recipients

Adult English learners enrolled in the program also reported significant gains in English and career skills. More than 17,500 IHSS participants completed over 500,000 English lessons focused on direct care, averaging nearly 30 lessons per participant. A full 94% of adult English learners improved their English proficiency as a result of participating in the program. Increased English proficiency is linked to other workforce outcomes:<sup>10</sup>



**improved their confidence** in using English.



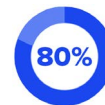
**saved time** at work.



improved their **job skills**.



improved their **digital literacy skills**.



**achieved a real-world goal** like a pay raise or promotion.

Popular English upskilling courses included Exchanging Personal Information in English; Identifying Letters and Numbers on the Keyboard; Sanitation and Safe Food Handling; Hygiene for Health and Safety; Communicating Online-Scheduling Virtual Appointments.

## PARTICIPANTS DESCRIBE THE PROGRAM'S REAL-WORLD IMPACT

“ It is a great program. Full of interesting classes. They are all self-paced which is extremely important to me cause I have a busy schedule and some other classes may cause conflicts. ”

“ I have been able to improve my English so well with this program. ”

“ Motivating, inspiring, many kinds of interesting topics to join and learn. ”

“ I enjoy taking the courses. I know with me taking these EnGen courses it's gonna help me get to my goal. ”

<sup>9</sup>Results based on an August 2024 survey of 1,100 Career Pathways program participants.

<sup>10</sup>Workforce outcomes reflect responses from a 2024 survey of nearly 2,500 EnGen learners enrolled in programs across the U.S. [See full survey results here.](#)

## REPLICATING THE MODEL

The two-year IHSS Career Pathways Program ended in September 2024. The program's success offers insights for other policymakers, employers, and workforce leaders interested in building similar efforts in other communities and sectors.

### PRIORITIZE ACCESSIBILITY.

Across workforce sectors and communities, adult English learners represent 1 in 10 working-age adults. Building successful workforce development means prioritizing both multilingual support and English upskilling opportunities. It also means offering digital and technical support to ensure that all participants can access learning platforms.

### ENGAGE CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERS.

In California, engaging multiple partners allowed each organization to offer specialized training and support. The takeaway for future programs is that there is a role for everyone – policymakers, training partners, employers – in building high-impact, at-scale workforce development initiatives.

### ACCELERATE WORKERS' CAREER & ECONOMIC MOBILITY.

The IHSS programs' industry-aligned instruction allowed participants to immediately use new skills (including English skills) on the job. Contextualized, career-aligned training is key to building high-impact workforce development programs.

#### About Homebridge

Homebridge is a national leader in home care, caregiver support and caregiver career development. Since 1985, Homebridge has provided home and community-based care in the San Francisco Bay Area to individuals with complex health, behavioral and social needs, preventing institutionalization and homelessness.

Learn more: [homebridgeca.org](https://homebridgeca.org)

#### About Futuro Health

Futuro Health is a non-profit organization focused on improving the health and well-being of communities by growing the largest network of healthcare workers in the nation. Futuro Health makes education journeys into allied health careers possible by growing the talent that employers need and creating a path to opportunity that workers want.

Learn more: [futurohealth.org](https://futurohealth.org)

#### About EnGen

A Certified B Corporation, EnGen partners with employers, adult educators, workforce development organizations, and state governments to connect job seekers and incumbent workers with English skills, career pathways, and employment in high-demand industries. EnGen's workforce-aligned approach addresses employers' recruitment and retention challenges and advances learners' economic mobility.

Learn more: [getengen.com](https://getengen.com)