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**Frequently Asked Questions**

**For Everyone**

**What is happening to the Health Support Specialist (HSS) Registered Apprenticeship Program?**

LeadingAge Minnesota made the difficult decision to discontinue the Registered Apprenticeship Program, effective August 2019. This means that HSS courses through Ridgewater College and the Registered Apprenticeship Program through the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry will no longer be accepting new students.

LeadingAge Minnesota is exploring how the components of the HSS curriculum and the successful parts of the program could be incorporated into other Association education or evolve into new education opportunities. This will be a focus for our August Learning Lab.

**Why is this change happening?**

In 2018, LeadingAge Minnesota engaged the Applied Research Center at the University of Wisconsin-Stout to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the program. This evaluation gathered information from the full aging services marketplace, the organizations who train and employ HSS, and HSS themselves. Several key learnings told us there is a need for a shift in direction in how we are training direct care staff. HSS is seen as a valuable experience for those involved, however we’ve heard clearly that with shifts away from widespread use of the household model and blended workers, as well as growing pressures around the recruitment and retention of direct care staff means organizations need more flexible and accessible options with shorter training times. *We hear you and are taking steps to better meet that need.*

**For HSS**

**What does it mean for my credential? Will I be able to use it in the future?**

There is no impact on your HSS credential – you earned it and we hope you’ll continue to use it every day! The learnings and experience you gained through the HSS program are valuable and important and can’t be taken away; you will always be able to list HSS as an earned educational credential and talk about it with pride when explaining your work. These advanced skills and experiences will continue to serve you and the people you serve any place you work.

**I am going through the training now. Will I be able to complete my program?**

Yes. LeadingAge Minnesota and our partners at Ridgewater College and the Department of Labor and Industry remain fully committed to ensuring all current students have the strong supports they need to complete their HSS credential. We will work alongside you to ensure that you have what you need to wrap up any ongoing training and apprenticeship hours. You will be recognized at the 2020 Institute just as all previous classes of HSS.

For students who fail a course this year, have incomplete coursework or this timeline doesn’t work, we may need to create a unique education solution. If this is you, discuss with your HSS Coordinator and LeadingAge Minnesota will work with you to explore options.

**For Coordinators**

**I am an HSS Coordinator, how to I support our team through this transition?**

The HSS credential is not going way, even though new HSS will not be trained. Staff who earned that credential keep it and all the incredibly useful learning and experience they got from the training. Please reassure all team members that this program ending does *not* reflect on them, the importance of the skills they developed, or the leadership they provide each day in carrying out their work for your organization. HSS will be added to an email distribution list at LeadingAge Minnesota to stay up-to-date on future training opportunities and will be looked to as partners in developing and piloting future initiatives (such as the *ICan* program). We will also continue to support their learning. LeadingAge Minnesota staff will talk more about this in upcoming Coordinator calls, at Hub meetings this April and the final Learning Lab in August. Look for information coming soon!

**Will there still be learning opportunities for HSS? What about Learning Labs and Hubs?**

The April 2019 regional Hub meetings and August 2019 statewide Learning Lab will be our last official HSS gatherings coordinated by LeadingAge Minnesota. Association staff are exploring how we can continue to create ways to keep HSS to stay engaged as a community – from the Facebook Group to ongoing education. We’ll also be interested in your ideas for this! For example, any Hubs that want to continue meeting under the power of HSS themselves, we could look for volunteers to host future meetings at the April Hub meetings.

**For Administration**

**What does it mean for my organization?**

Organizations who participated in the HSS Registered Apprenticeship are some of the most committed to person-directed care and elevating leadership of staff at the bedside. You have found innovative ways to leverage the expanded skills, expertise and leadership qualities of HSS. We trust you will continue to maximize and grow the skills of these exceptional team members. LeadingAge Minnesota is exploring ways to continue offering learning opportunities for HSS and to incorporate the most impactful and relevant components of the HSS program into existing educational platforms or in developing new offerings. If you have specific questions, ideas, or expectations, please reach out to us.

**Will I be able to train more HSS in the future?**

No. The class graduating at the end of Summer 2019 will be the last class of HSS.

**I have staff going through the training now. Will they get to complete their program?**

Yes! LeadingAge Minnesota and our partners at Ridgewater College and the Department of Labor and Industry remain fully committed to ensuring all current students have the strong supports they need to complete their HSS credential. Our team will provide supports and ensure they have what you need to wrap up any ongoing training. If you have staff who have incomplete course work, fail a class or this timeline doesn’t work for, please let us know.

**I have unspent grant funds from the PIPELINE or HCBS Grant Program. What do I do?**

Contact Adam Suomala; we will work with state agency staff to support this transition.

**For More Information**

**I have questions that are not answered here. Who should I contact?**

Adam Suomala, Vice President of Membership and Strategic Affiliations at 651.603.3530 or [**asuomala@LeadingAgeMN.org**](mailto:asuomala@LeadingAgeMN.org)