

A New Era of Care:

Executive Summary

APRIL 2026

This report is one of three from the National Council on Aging’s Direct Care Workforce Strategies Center examining the role of AI in home care. The first report introduces AI and its relevance to home- and community-based services, grounded in the realities of the direct care workforce. The second maps current AI use cases across 40 core responsibilities spanning both frontline workers and agencies. The third brings forward stakeholder perspectives, including direct support professionals, to assess current impacts and identify needed guardrails for the future.

A Note on Word Choice and Consistency

We’ve aimed to use clear and consistent language throughout this report so that key ideas are easy to follow. At the same time, we recognize that terminology in the long-term care and workforce fields is deeply felt and often debated. Where appropriate, we introduce alternative terms with corresponding definitions to reflect this range of perspectives. Our hope is that the core ideas remain clear, while honoring the distinct voices and sensitivities that shape how this work is described. In this report, and throughout the series, the term “home care worker” refers to members of the direct care workforce — including personal care aides, home health aides, and direct support professionals — who provide support in home- and community-based settings.

INTRODUCTION

Home- and community-based services (HCBS) are sustained by roughly 63 million unpaid family caregivers and more than 3.2 million home care workers. A home care worker is a paid professional who supports older adults and people with disabilities with daily activities and personal care in their homes. Unfortunately, persistent low wages and high turnover among home care workers threaten continuity and quality of care. In this context, AI can improve jobs for home care worker and care delivery, serving as a workforce multiplier that ensures older adults and people with disabilities receive the care they deserve as demand continues to multiply.

This three-report series, **A New Era of Care**, explains what AI is, where it is already being used in home care, and what safeguards and collaborative learnings are needed to ensure technology strengthens—not replaces—the human-touch dimensions of home care.





REPORT 1

A New Era of Care: Understanding Artificial Intelligence and Implications for the Direct Care Workforce

The first report provides a clear, accessible primer on what AI is and why it matters for home- and community-based services, situating new technology within the realities of the direct care workforce. It provides examples of how AI can strengthen jobs and care if adopted collaboratively, with strong guardrails to protect workers, clients, and the data AI relies on.

Key points:

- > **The home care sector needs a shared, foundational understanding of AI** before scaling its use, which is more likely to augment jobs than replace them.
- > **Thoughtful adoption could streamline administration**, improve safety, and support better care and jobs, but only if paired with investments in home care job quality.
- > **Potential risks around bias, privacy, surveillance**, and over-automation will require clear governance, transparency, co-design, shared learning, and human oversight.

REPORT 2

A New Era of Care: Reimagining Home Care Work with AI

This second report shows how AI is already being used across core direct care work—mapping concrete use cases to 40 responsibilities (20 worker-level, 20 agency-level). This overview highlights emerging examples from the field that demonstrate how AI can reduce administrative and operational burden for direct care workers and agencies, while supporting improved care delivery. These examples underscore that meaningful impact depends on designing and implementing AI with the needs and preferences of workers and clients at the center, alongside shared learning on practices that prioritize strong safeguards around privacy, bias, accuracy, access, and sustained human oversight.

Key points:

- > **AI is already being used in home care**, with real-world examples in the report depicting how it's deployed across worker tasks and agency operations.
- > **The report describes use cases** across eight focus areas, highlighting high-potential tools like fall/emergency detection, medication support, training, scheduling, care planning, and compliance.
- > **It emphasizes “technology with a human touch”** adoption should strive to balance technological innovation with human connection, with a clear focus on safeguarding privacy, mitigating bias and errors, and ensuring accessibility.

REPORT 3

A New Era of Care: Beyond the Algorithm—Expert Insights on AI and the Direct Care Workforce

The third report highlights stakeholder perspectives, including direct support professionals, to understand how AI affects the responsibilities of home care workers today and what guardrails are needed for the future. It synthesizes interviews, surveys, and a clear set of risks and considerations to guide responsible, worker-centered AI adoption in the home care sector.

Key points:

- > **Experts agree AI's greatest near-term** impact will be on administrative and clinical support (documentation, scheduling, monitoring, medication management, and coordination).
- > **Important considerations include over-reliance** on AI, poor data quality, privacy and surveillance concerns, algorithmic bias, and gaps in training and digital access.
- > **Successful adoption will benefit greatly** from transparency, co-design with workers and clients, independent evaluation of AI tools, sufficient funding for AI adoption and the sector writ large, and parallel investments in job training and quality for the home care workforce.



AI Opportunities in Home Care

The home- and community-based services sector is already innovating with AI. Some agencies are adopting AI-powered tools to improve safety and monitoring—such as sensors, fall-detection systems, and predictive analytics—while also streamlining communication across care teams and using transcription to support reporting, real-time problem-solving, and workforce training. However, much more can be done to leverage the full potential of AI to support the direct care workforce and the people they serve.

In this spirit, home care agencies can also tap AI to address staffing needs by automating resume screening and matching candidates to job openings, while accelerating hiring in often overstretched environments. AI tools can tailor training and education approaches to a worker's unique needs, track their competency development, and identify turnover patterns. Agencies can also leverage these tools to improve administrative efficiency—streamlining scheduling, billing, and payroll—support financial management such as budgeting and claims processing, and apply predictive analytics to better understand workforce dynamics and community needs.



Considerations for Safe and Effective Use of AI

As with any new advance in technology, it is important to consider potential risks associated with AI use in home care, which may include:

- > **Privacy and consent:** Weak safeguards can expose or misuse sensitive client and worker data.
- > **Accuracy and reliability:** False positives/negatives and generic outputs can waste time or cause harm.
- > **Bias and uneven outcomes:** Tools may perform worse for disabled people, older adults, or rural communities and can treat groups differently.
- > **Human connection:** Over-automation can erode judgment, autonomy, and relationship-based care.
- > **Usability and workflow:** Poor design or poor integration can add tasks and increase stress.
- > **Compliance and liability:** Errors can trigger HIPAA, Medicaid/Medicare, labor, and contractual risks if outputs aren't vetted.

Considerations for Action

Including direct care workers and the people they serve in the design of AI tools in home- and community-based settings can help ensure that these technologies meet real-world needs. Rigorous, independent evaluations of AI tools can also build trust and ensure that these technologies support, rather than undermine, the nature of home care jobs and workers, as well as the care received by older adults and people with disabilities. Documenting and widely disseminating implementation best practices will be essential to fully realize the benefits of these tools while mitigating potential risks. It will also be critical to ensure that AI-based technologies are both accessible and affordable for home care agencies.

When implemented well, AI can reduce the time spent on documentation, scheduling, and routine monitoring, giving home care workers more time to focus on people rather than paperwork. As

technology evolves, these tools may open up new opportunities to strengthen care delivery. However, broader home care job improvements related to compensation and training will nevertheless be urgently needed to strengthen this workforce and their capacity. For home care agencies to successfully adopt AI and mitigate its risks, they will need to bridge the gaps in trust and knowledge that many agency staff, workers, clients, and community members have about this technology.

Research Methodology. Interviews with 11 national experts including direct support professionals—two who participated in a focus group and one who provided insights independently—a questionnaire of partner organizations and subject matter experts and the Strategies Center Advisory Committee, and desk research were used to identify 40 core responsibilities (20 worker-level, 20 agency-level) and key examples.



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ABOUT US



The National Council on Aging (NCOA) is the national voice for every person's right to age well. Working with thousands of national and local partners, we provide resources, best practices, and advocacy to create the conditions for everyone to age with health and economic well-being. Founded in 1950, we are the oldest national organization focused on older adults.



Created by the Administration for Community Living in 2022, the Direct Care Workforce Strategies Center provides technical assistance to states and service providers and facilitates collaboration with stakeholders to improve the recruitment, retention, training, and professional development of members of the direct care workforce.

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