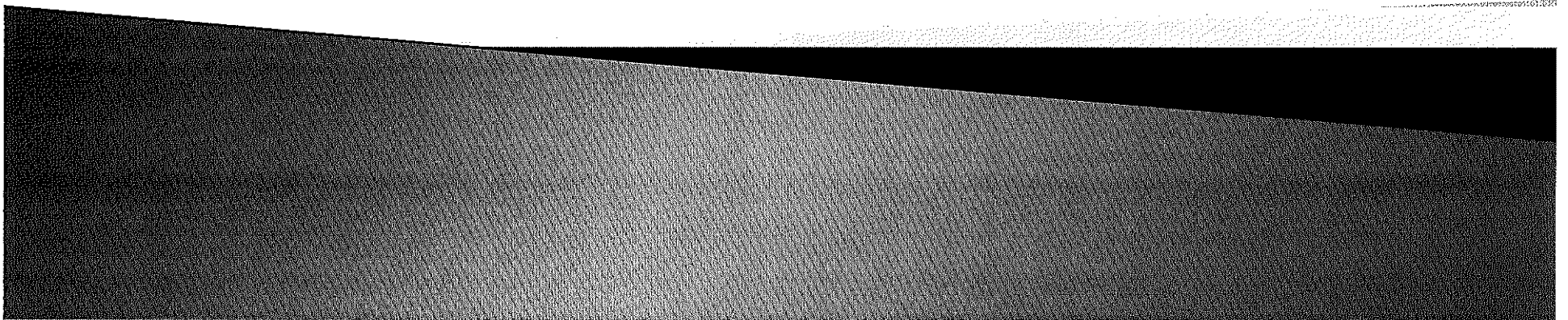


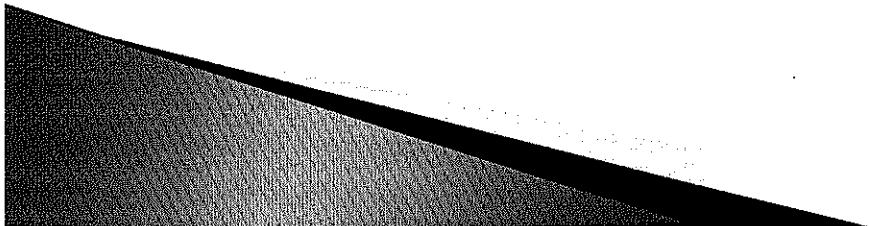
Results from the Maine Home Care Worker Retention Study 2009–2011

Long-term Care Workforce Commission
September 26, 2019
Sandra S. Butler
University of Maine School of Social Work



The Study

- ▶ Home Care Worker Retention Study
 - 2008–11
 - Funded by the NIA
- ▶ Mixed–method design



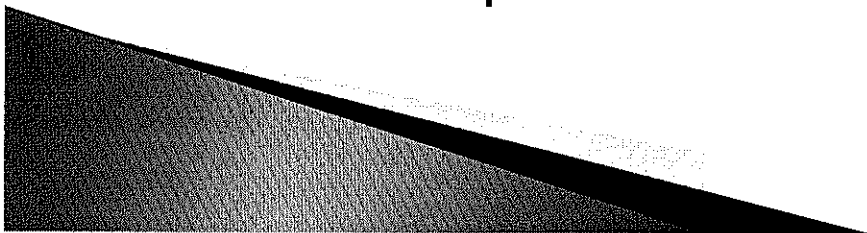
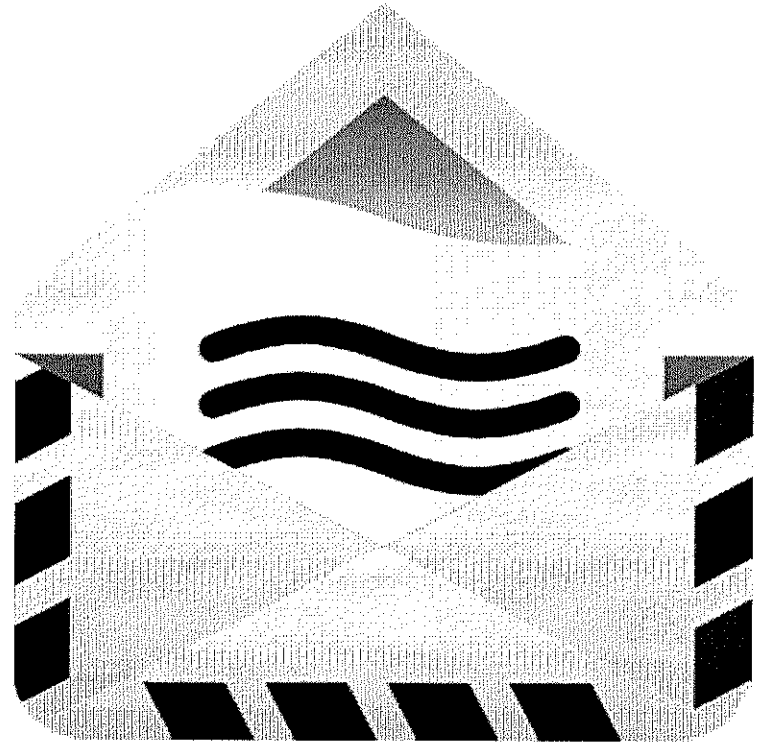
Study Goals

- ▶ To understand experiences of home care workers in Maine
- ▶ To learn about factors contributing to turnover and retention

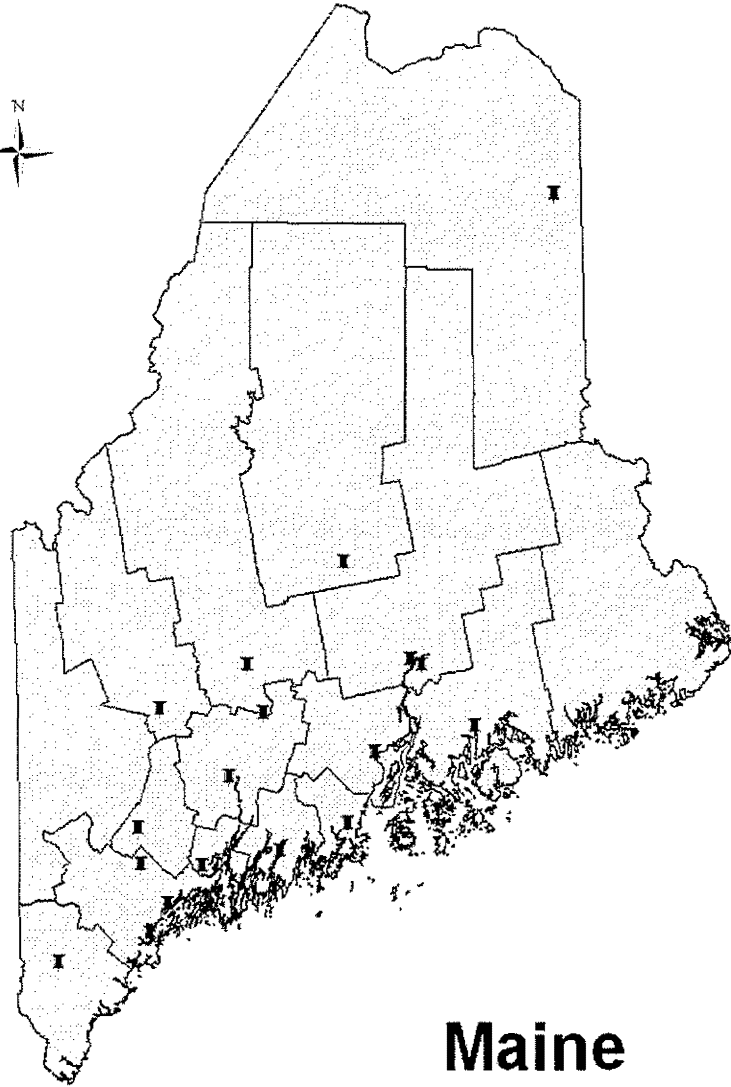


Method

- ▶ 12–page survey mailed to 496 Personal Support Specialists (PSSs) throughout the state
- ▶ 11 collaborating agencies/corporations
- ▶ 261 completed surveys
 - 52% response rate



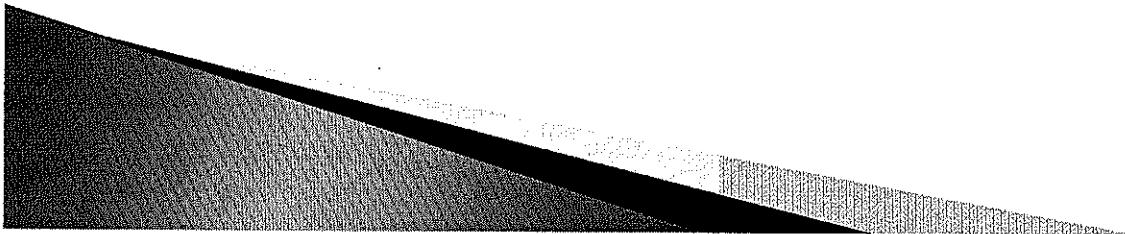
Home Health Care Agency Locations



Maine

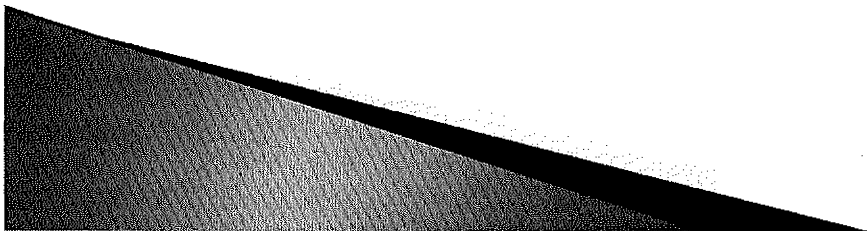
Tracking Turnover

- ▶ Longitudinal study–18 months
 - Regular contact with agencies regarding job terminations of study participants
- ▶ Job leavers received a 2nd survey (5 pages) and completed a telephone interview (15–30 minutes)
 - 90 terminations (about one third of sample) over the 18 months
- ▶ All others (171) received follow-up survey & did telephone interview after 18 months



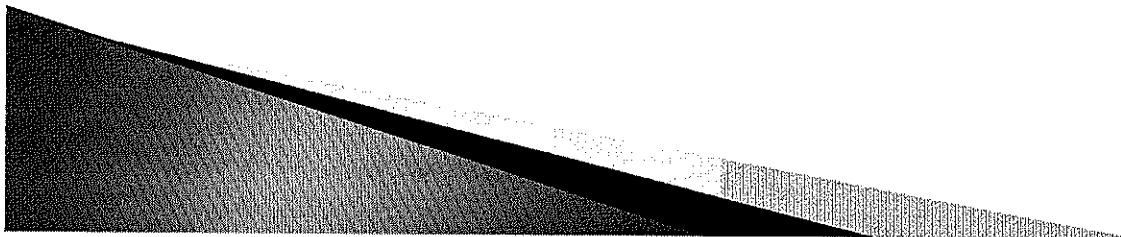
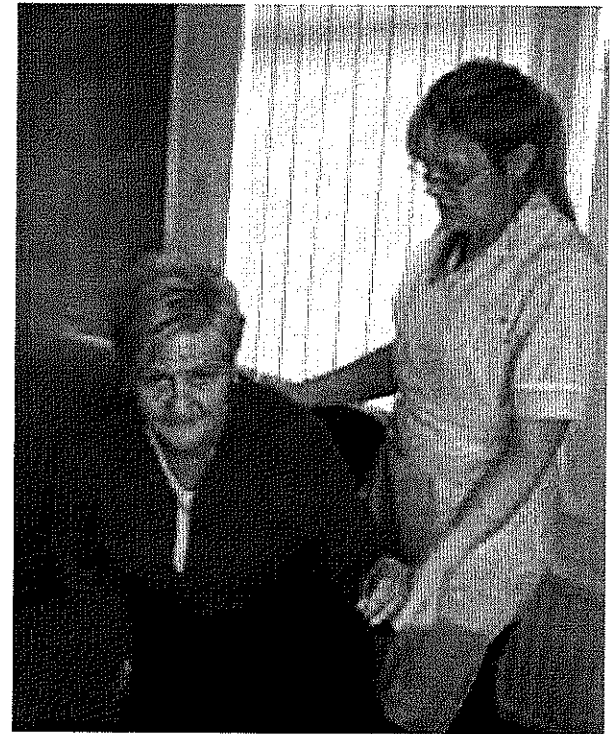
Survey Instruments

- ▶ Demographic data (Time 1)
- ▶ Data on job factors (Time 1 & 2)
 - Wages, hours, unreimbursed mileage
- ▶ Job experience scales (Time 1 & 2)
 - Job satisfaction, burnout, empowerment



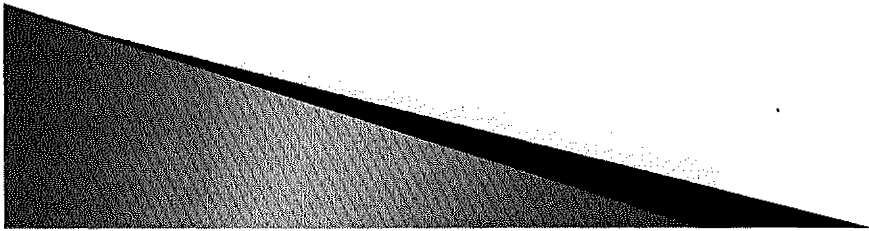
Findings-Sample

- No significant difference between population and sample
 - Age, gender, tenure of employment
- Age range: 19-82
- Average age: 46



Gender, Race, Ethnicity

- ▶ 94.6% female
- ▶ 93.5% European American/Caucasian
- ▶ 3.4% Native American
- ▶ 0.8% African American
- ▶ 2.3% Multiracial
- ▶ 11.1% Franco-American
- ▶ 3.4% born outside the US



Education

□ 3.8% less than HS diploma

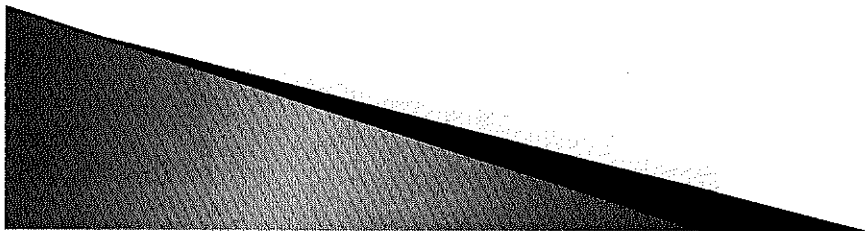
□ 50.6% HS diploma/GED

□ 14.2% 2yr PSE degree or more



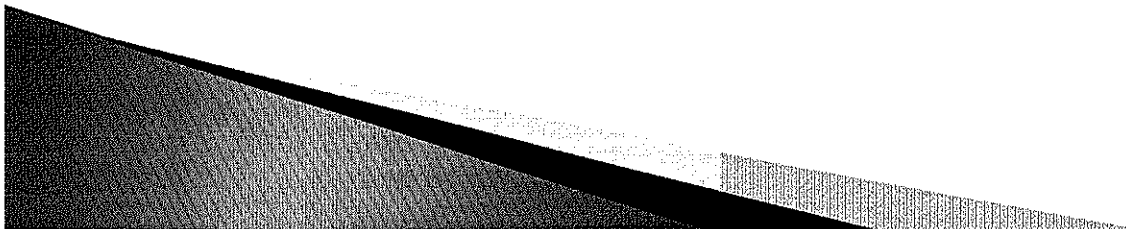
Household Income, Health Insurance

- 62.5% \$20,000 or less
- 37.5% > \$20,000
- 28.0% had no health insurance
 - 28.7 had Medicaid



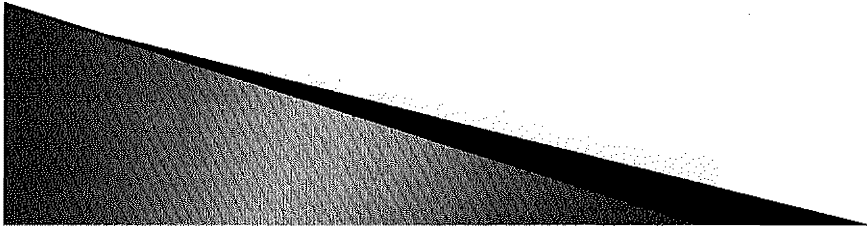
Overall Health

- ▶ Mean scores higher than US population norms on 7 of 8 subscales of *SF-36*
 - General Health
 - Physical and Social Functioning
 - Vitality
 - Physical and Emotional Roles
 - Mental Health
- ▶ Lower than population norm on Body Pain (meaning greater body pain)



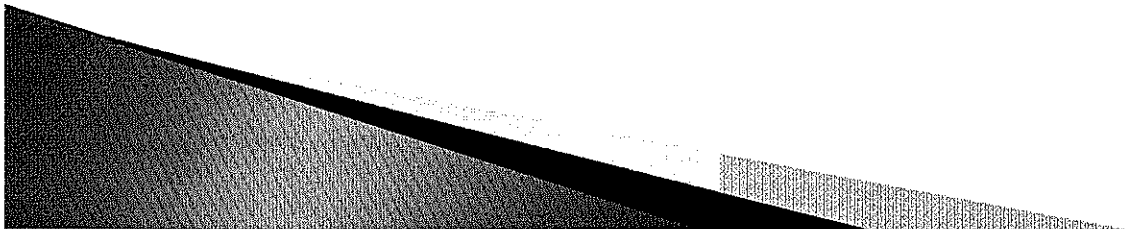
Tenure, Hours, Wages

- ▶ Average time at agency 2.6 years (range just started to 12 years)
- ▶ Average wage: \$9.05 (range \$7.50 to \$13.50)
- ▶ Average number of hours per week: 18
- ▶ Average unreimbursed miles per week: 46.1



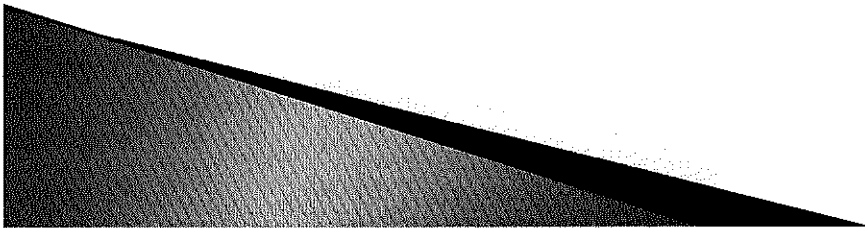
Job Experience Scales

- ▶ Job Satisfaction: 3.4 (range 1 to 4)
- ▶ Emotional Exhaustion
 - Frequency 1.8 (1 to 7)
 - Intensity 2.1 (1 to 5)
- ▶ Personal Accomplishment
 - Frequency 6.2 (1 to 7)
 - Intensity 3.9 (1 to 5)
- ▶ Empowerment: 4.0 (1 to 5)



Turnover and Tenure

- ▶ Will present on two related aspects of findings:
 - ▶ 1) Factors that predict termination
 - ▶ 2) Factors related to longer tenure on the job
- ▶ Quantitative findings enhanced by qualitative themes from telephone interviews



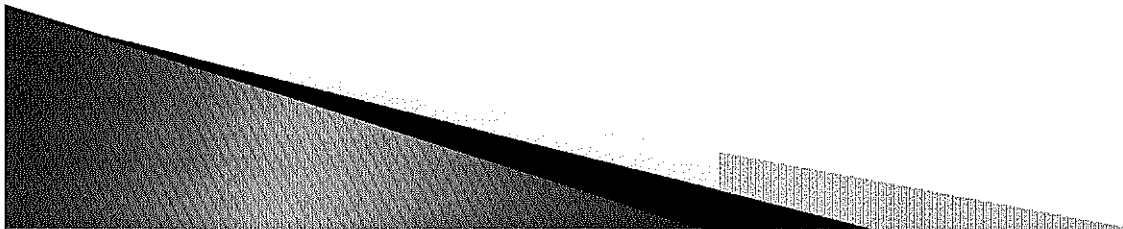
Turnover

- ▶ 90 study participants left home care agencies over 18 months of data collection—34% of sample
 - 14 (5.4%) terminations considered non-voluntary by study participants
- ▶ Findings based on survey data (Time 1) and telephone interviews



Logistic Regression

- ▶ Four factors predicted termination
 - Younger age
 - Lack of health insurance
 - Lower scores on mental health (depression and anxiety)
 - More intense feelings of Personal Accomplishment



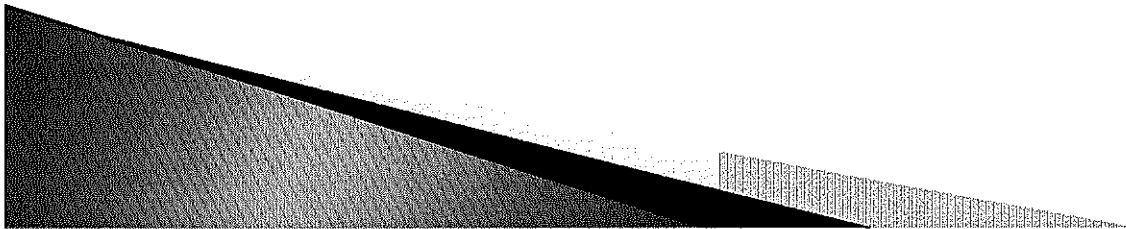
Reasons for Leaving

- ▶ Three primary themes emerged from narrative data from telephone interviews
 - Just Not Worthwhile
 - Personal Reasons
 - Burnout



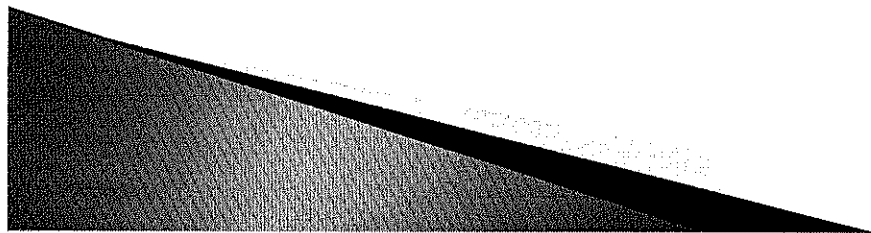
Just Not Worthwhile

- ▶ Many factors mentioned under this theme:
 - Low pay
 - No benefits
 - Lack of mileage reimbursement
 - Too much travel
 - Inconsistent hours
 - Not enough clients



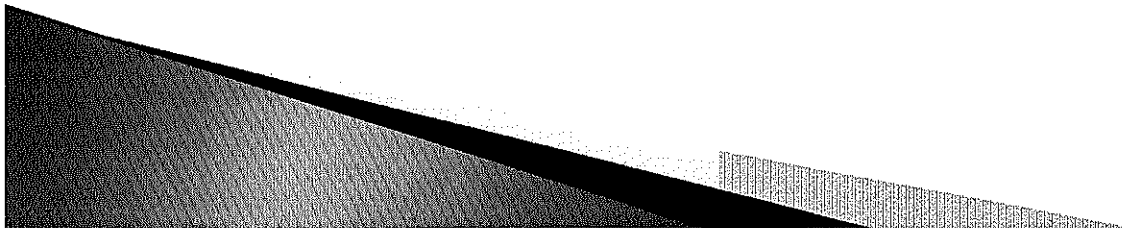
Just Not Worthwhile

- ▶ “Yeah, there was 20 [hours] in the beginning. And that was about what I wanted. And then, one lady went to a nursing home and another one, you know, this and that, and then all of a sudden I was down to 10 hours.”
 - 58-year-old woman
- ▶ “The fact that they don’t pay mileage. I felt like I was working for nothing.”
 - 53-year-old woman



Personal Reasons

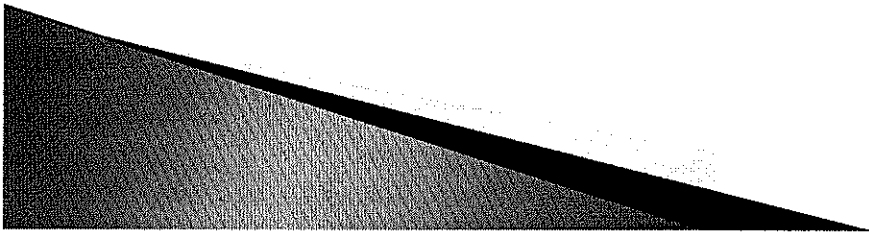
- ▶ Factors under this theme:
 - Family issues
 - Medical problems/recovery
 - Retirement
 - Relocation
 - Returning to school
 - Personal care of a family member ended



Personal Reasons

- ▶ “A combination of things like going back to school and keeping up with my family and being a single mother and all that.”
 - 36-year-old woman

- ▶ “Well, I’m 84 years old, so it’s probably time that I did stop!”
 - 84-year-old woman



Burnout

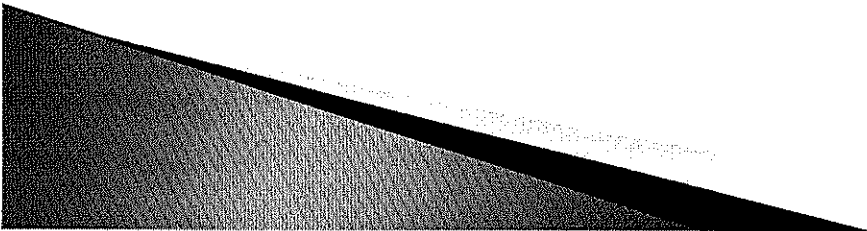
- ▶ Factors related to this theme:
 - Agency problems
 - Difficult clients
 - False accusations
 - Clients dying



Burnout

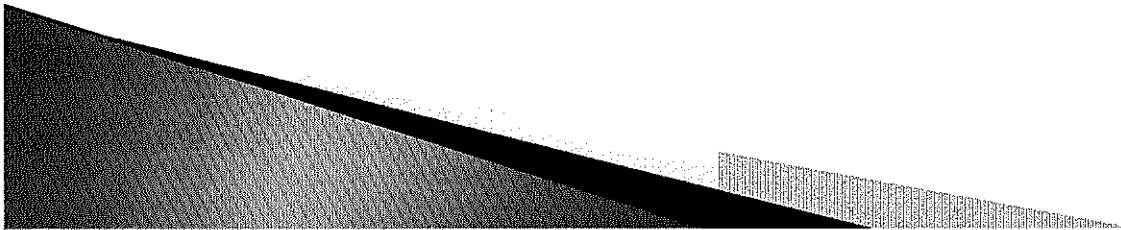
- ▶ “The constant lack of communication. Never really knowing what was going on. This caused me a lot of stress. I am a planner. I have things set up and that’s the way I expect them to go and things were never the way they said they were going to go. And, it just kind of had me in a tailspin, stressed out.”

▪ 25-year-old woman



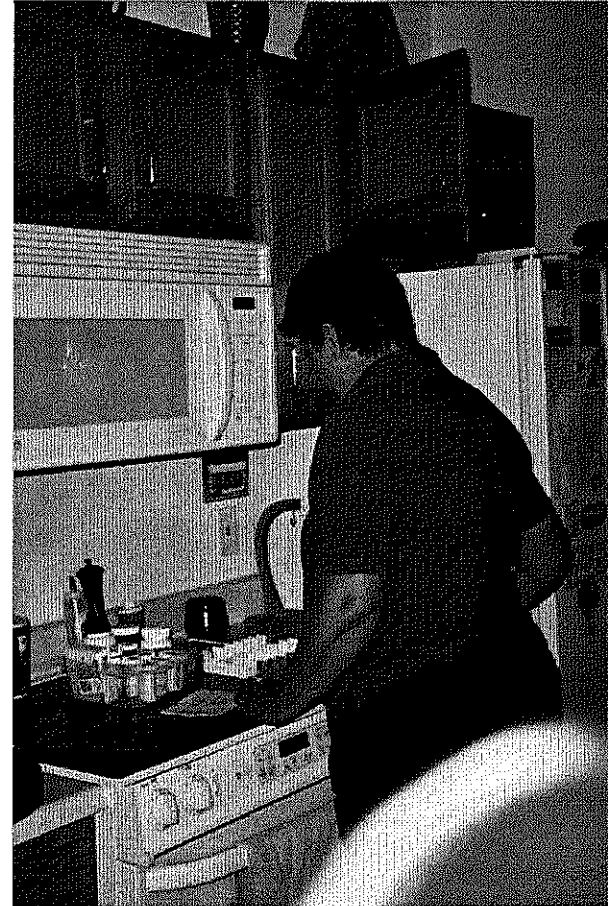
Both Rewarding and Challenging

- ▶ Terminated study participants reported both rewarding and challenging aspects to their jobs
- ▶ Of 88 who completed interviews
 - 47 (53%) reported more rewarding aspects
 - 37 (42%) reported more challenging aspects
 - 4 (5%) reported an equal number of challenging and rewarding aspects
- ▶ No significant difference by age groups (younger than 35, 35 to 50, older than 50)



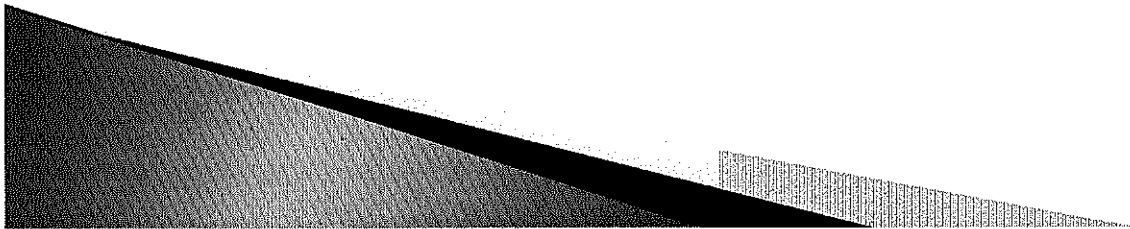
Length of Employment

- ▶ Examination of tenure as opposed to termination
 - Some people terminated after years of employment
- ▶ Average length of employment: 3 years
 - Range 3 months to 13 years
- ▶ Examined factors predicting longer tenure



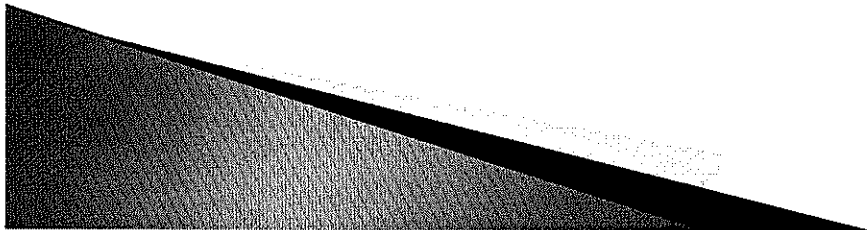
Predictors of Longer Tenure

- ▶ A regression analysis indicated six factors
 - Older age
 - Living in more rural county
 - Higher wages
 - Greater sense of autonomy
 - Lower physical function
 - Lower frequency of Personal Accomplishment



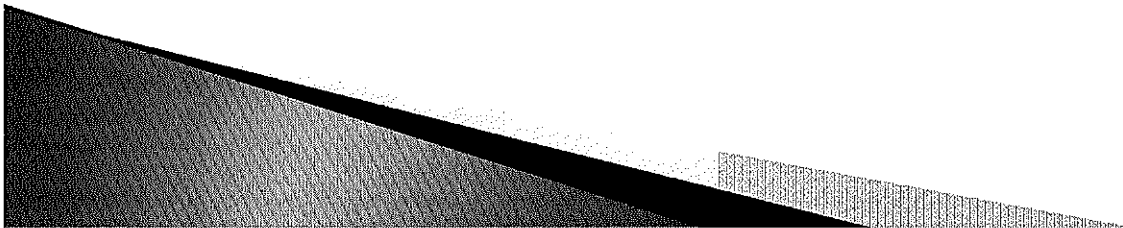
Comparing Two Groups

- ▶ Compared telephone interviews
 - Those who had worked 7 years or more (LT)
 - Those who had worked 1 year or less (ST)
- ▶ Emergent themes indicated many areas of overlap and a few points of difference



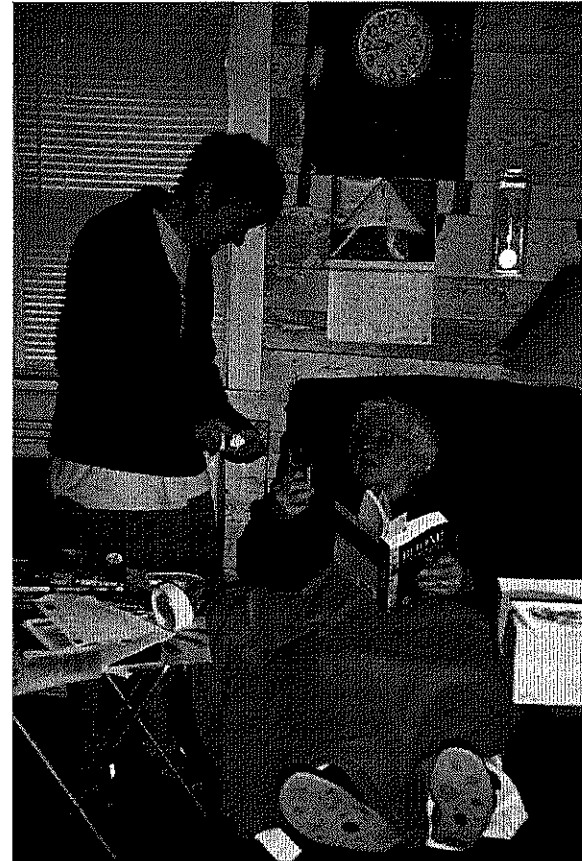
Themes in Common

- ▶ Rewarding work
 - Enjoys elders, awesome relationships, appreciation from clients/family, likes helping and making a difference
- ▶ Motivation
 - Golden rule, helping people stay at home, being own boss, flexibility of job
- ▶ Problematic aspects
 - Hard work—not for everyone, other workers unreliable, need more recognition, low compensation, agency communication a problem



Some Differences

- ▶ LT workers
 - Often had other income in house
 - Part-time schedule worked in their lives
- ▶ ST workers
 - Had need for more hours and higher pay
 - Tended to report problems in agency communication



Quote from Short-Term Worker

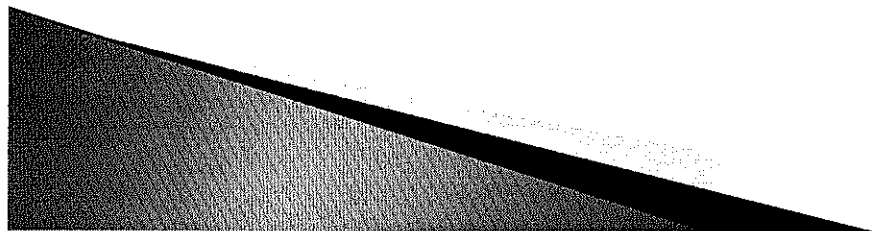
▶ “Just the stress of working 7 days a week, not really having a day off. The high demand of clients...They were stringing us out. Like 3 hours at one client’s house and then I’d go for 2 ½ to another client’s house. And then 2 to another. And it was just getting to be too much on me.”

- 33-year-old, divorced woman, left agency after 10 months



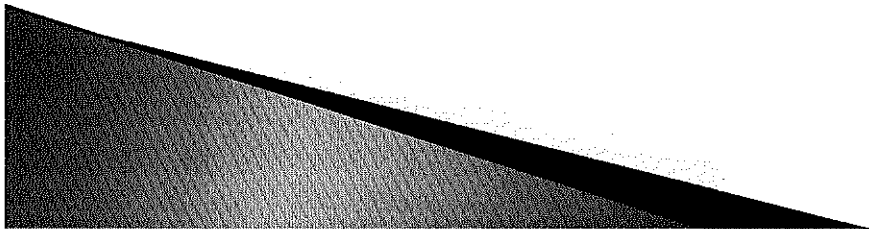
Quote from Long-Term Worker

- ▶ “Well I’ve been doing it since I was 15-years-old. And I just like caring for the elderly...just generally caring for people.”
- ▶ “I’m semi-retired and I work, my husband says I work to buy stuff for my grandkids. I’m not working for the money per se.”
- ▶ “I’m disabled myself. So I feel very comfortable going into somebody’s house and knowing that if I need to go home I could call my husband...if I worked in a nursing home I would have to go there for 8 hours...I just couldn’t do that.”
 - 58-year-old, married woman, at agency for 10 years



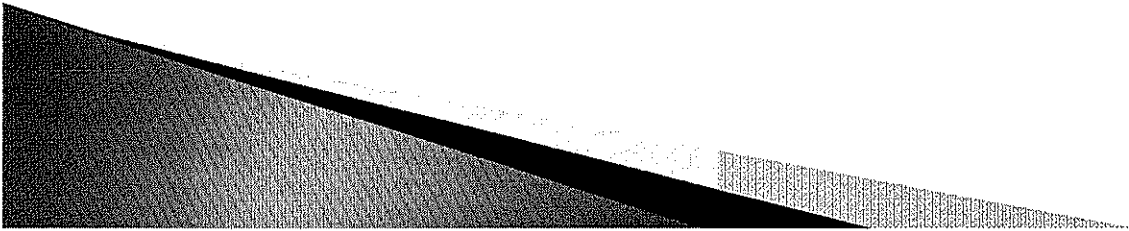
Surprising Findings

- ▶ Personal Accomplishment
 - More intense feelings related to termination
 - More frequent sense related to shorter tenure
 - Perhaps related to age (not statistically significant)
- ▶ Lower physical function: longer tenure
 - A job that can be done with disabilities
- ▶ Rural residence predicts longer tenure
 - Perhaps because of fewer job opportunities



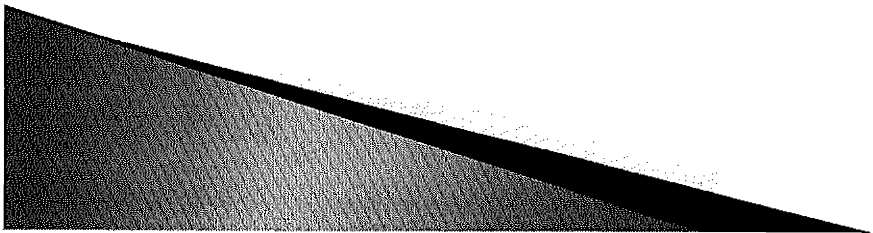
Psychosocial Predictors

- ▶ Higher scores in depression and anxiety predict termination
 - Hard to care for others when in distress (mentioned in interviews)
- ▶ Greater sense of autonomy predicts > tenure
 - Many mentioned enjoying being their own boss
 - Independent work setting suits those who stay
 - ST workers also were drawn to job structure, though ultimately inconsistency of hours problematic



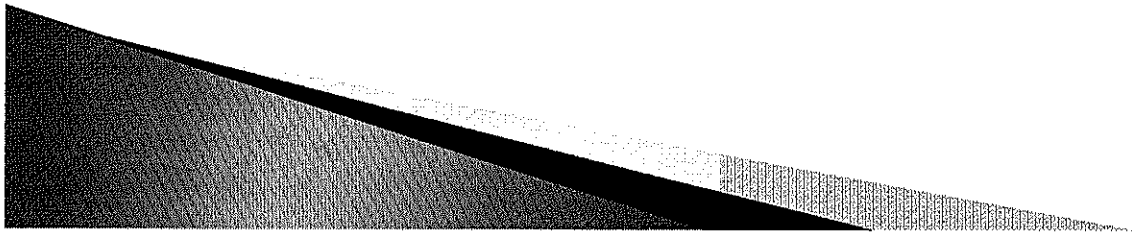
Wages

- ▶ Surprisingly, lower wages did not predict termination
 - Perhaps because of lack of variation (most less than \$10/hour)
 - Spoken of often in telephone interviews
- ▶ Higher wages did predict longer tenure
 - Perhaps due to receiving raises over time, though these raises are modest and workers reach wage ceilings quickly



Health Insurance

- ▶ Lacking health care was one of the key predictor of termination
- ▶ This may be less of an issue now as people have more options through ACA and, recently, the expansion of MaineCare



Older Workers

- ▶ Younger age was a predictor of termination and shorter job tenure
- ▶ Focus on older workers, one goal of this research study
 - Shrinking number of low-skilled women 18 to 54, the traditional pool of workers for direct care work
 - Growing number of older workers wanting to remain in or join the workforce



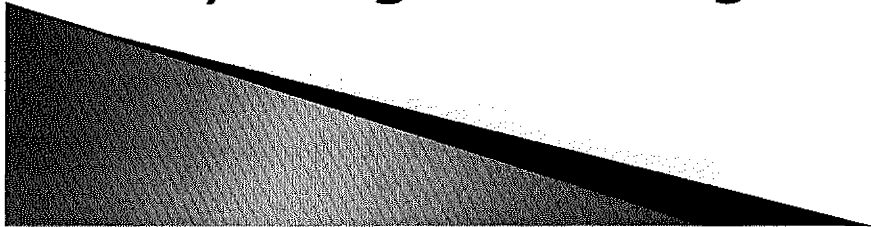
Good Match for Some Older Workers

- ▶ 2004 study of middle-age workers anticipating “retirement”
 - 80% want to work at least part-time
 - Desiring work that is flexible and meaningful
 - Keeping them physically and emotionally active and involved with others
 - Homecare work fits these criteria



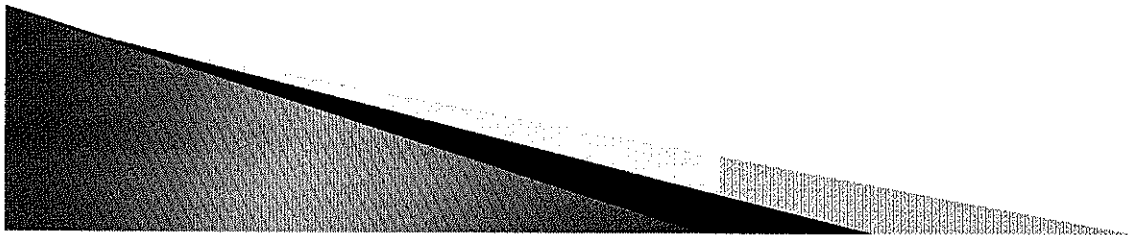
2nd Interview with Older Workers

- ▶ In 2011, contacted the 42 participants who were 60 or older at start of study, 31 agreed to be interviewed again
- ▶ Generally saw the PSS job as ideal for older workers
- ▶ Thought their life experience and patience made them better at the job than their younger colleagues



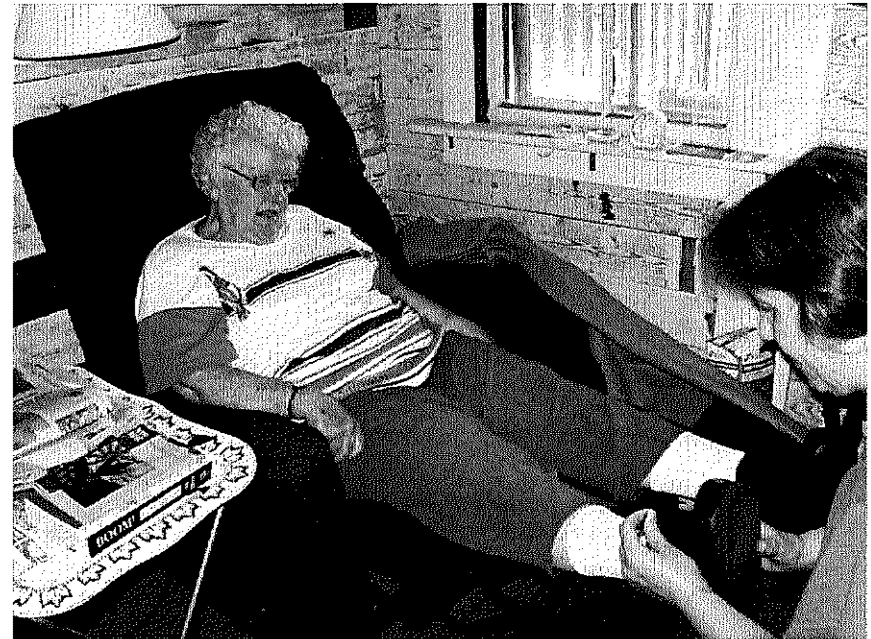
Part-time OK for Older Workers

- ▶ They often had other income in the household
- ▶ Most reported working low income jobs throughout their life, so were without large (if any) retirement savings–HCW supplemented their SS
- ▶ They generally preferred not to work full time



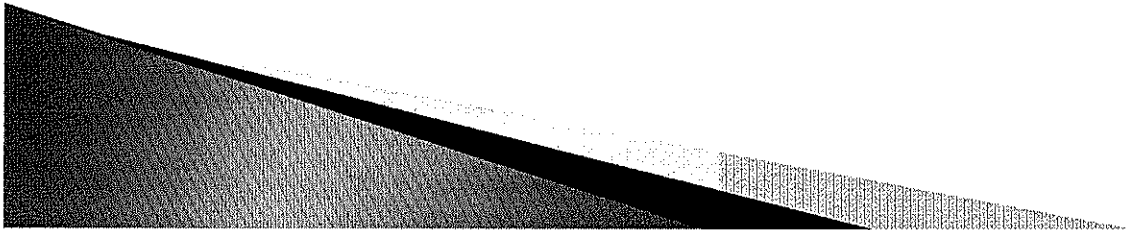
Short-term Recommendations

- ▶ Recognize and honor DCWs
 - Possible at agency, state and federal levels
- ▶ Provide respite and days off
 - Even unpaid would be a first step



Longer-term Recommendations

- ▶ Higher wages
 - Often tied to Medicaid reimbursement
- ▶ Mileage reimbursement
- ▶ Provide health insurance
- ▶ Consistent hours

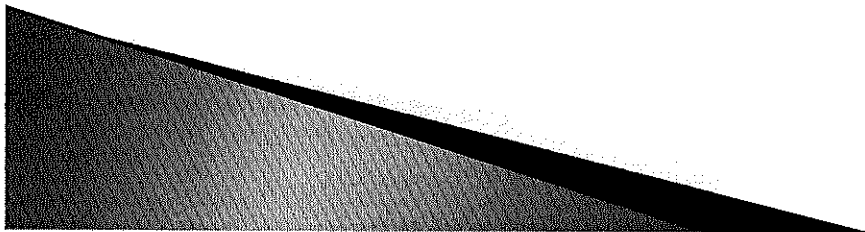
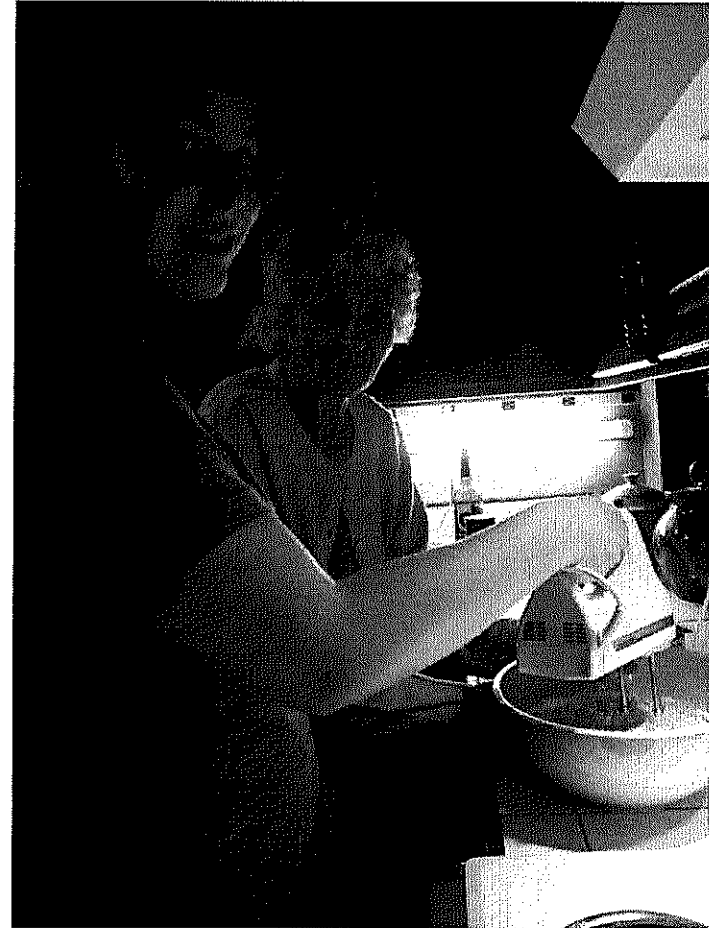


Challenges to Change

- ▶ Ongoing budget shortfalls at state and federal level
 - So hard to advocate for higher reimbursement levels under Medicaid

- ▶ Society's resistance to valuing elders or those that care for them

- ▶ Lack of savings for long-term care
 - Long-term care insurance is very expensive
 - Medicare does not cover (many people think it does)



Reflections on the Job

▶ “I think people should do it more. You know it is very rewarding. But it has to go both ways...I look at my son working at Kentucky Fried Chicken making minimum wage. He’s at \$7.25. I was doing all this work. Literally, physically picking this man up, cleaning him, feeding him. He couldn’t even feed himself. And the things I was doing for \$8.50 an hour? It just doesn’t seem right. I think more people would get into it if it were more financially rewarding to them as well.”

- 43-year-old, married woman, left after 6 months



Thank You!

Sandy Butler
University of Maine
School of Social Work
207-581-2382
sbutler@maine.edu

