

Washington's Health Workforce Sentinel Network

Findings from Long Term Care Facilities

Representatives from long term care facilities (skilled nursing facilities, home health care service providers, nursing and personal care facilities and intermediate care facilities) provided information to the Washington State Health Workforce Sentinel Network every 4 to 5 months from July 2016 to October 2017. This report summarizes the information they provided.

Occupations with exceptionally long vacancies or increased demand:



Nursing assistants, registered nurses and **licensed practical nurses** were the top occupations listed by long term care organizations as experiencing exceptionally long vacancies or increased demand from July 2016 to October 2017. **Home health aides, home care aides, physical therapists, nurse practitioners, occupational therapists** and **clinical social workers** were also mentioned, although less frequently.

Examples of reasons for exceptionally long vacancies or increased demand:

- Low compensation /benefits compared to hospitals and other facility types.
- Not enough training programs for new workers.
- Challenge to fill positions that require non-traditional work schedules or shift work.
- Applicants with required experience or educational attainment are hard to find.
- State requirements for LTC workers are hard to meet.
- Workers can get equivalent wages in other professions with less strenuous work schedules and daily activities, so do not stay in healthcare.
- In rural areas, it's hard to find enough local candidates.

*"[Our biggest challenges with RNs are] the wages we're able to offer, our [rural] location and a 12-hour minimum shift."
[SNF]*

*"New state requirements for 24/7 RN coverage has spiked demand. State makes it hard to bring in out of state or foreign nurses."
[SNF]*

New roles and new occupations

Several Sentinels mentioned the need to assign new administrative or supervisory roles to account for the regulatory requirements specific to long term care facilities, including updating internal policies and procedures, data collection and interpretation and organizing new training activities. In some cases, Sentinels indicated an effort to promote internally rather than bring in new hires.

*"[We're] grooming a NAC to become a scheduler and begin slowly taking on more responsibility and eventually becoming a Client Service Manager."
[home health care services]*

Orientation and training changes in long term care facilities:

About 50% of Sentinels reported changes in orientation/onboarding priorities for new employees or changes to training priorities for existing employees.

Examples of changes to orientation and training priorities:

- More time devoted and more follow-up after initial orientation/training to limit turnover. Some sentinels mention mentorship, preceptor or residency programs.
- A lot of time spent on recent and upcoming regulatory changes so employees are aware of these requirements.
- Increased need for in-depth orientation due to hires with little prior experience.
- Focus on specific topics such as electronic medical records, new equipment, behavior training, dementia/mental health or other minimum required competencies.

*"[We're] investing in our staff by offering more training."
[nursing and personal care facility, nursing assistants]*

LTCs were active participants in the Sentinel Network in all four data collection rounds.

Long term care facilities (skilled nursing facilities, home health care service providers, nursing and personal care facilities and intermediate care facilities) accounted for approximately 30% of all responses (169 of 575) in all four data collection rounds. The number of responses among LTC providers was highest from skilled nursing facilities (Figure 1). Sentinels representing LTC organizations responded from all 9 Accountable Communities of Health in each data collection period.

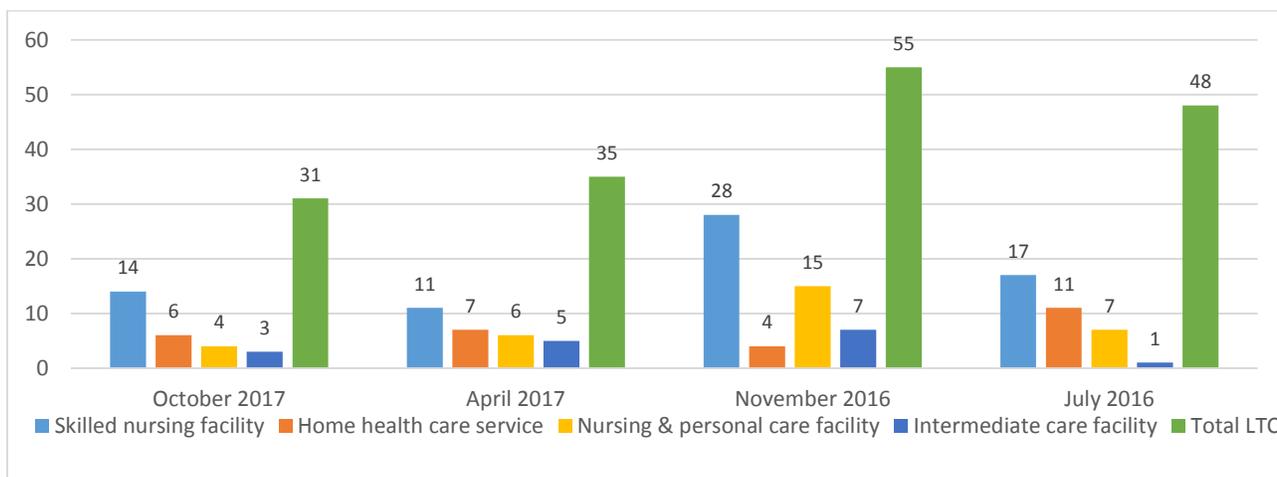


Figure 1: Number of Sentinel Network Responses from Long Term Care Facilities, July 2016 – October 2017

About the Washington Health Workforce Sentinel Network

The Sentinel Network links the healthcare sector with policymakers, workforce planners and educators to identify and respond to changing demand for healthcare workers, with a focus is on identifying newly emerging skills and roles required by employers.

The Sentinel Network is an initiative of Washington's Health Workforce Council, conducted collaboratively by Washington's Workforce Board and the University of Washington's Center for Health Workforce Studies. Funding to initiate the Sentinel Network came from the Healthier Washington initiative, with ongoing support from Governor Inslee's office.

Why become a Sentinel? As a Sentinel, you can:

- Communicate your workforce needs and ensure that the state is prepared to respond to the transforming healthcare environment.
- Have access to current and actionable information about emerging healthcare workforce needs.
- Compare your organization's experience and emerging workforce demand trends with similar employer groups.

Interactive summary of findings: www.wasentinelnetwork.org. Contact: healthworkforce@wasentinelnetwork.org
To provide information from your organization: <https://tinyurl.com/SNDataCollection>