

## Washington's Health Workforce Sentinel Network Findings for Select Behavioral Health Occupations

Sentinel employers in Washington 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 about selected Behavioral Health Occupations.

### **Select Behavioral Health Occupations: Chemical dependency professionals (CDPs) and substance abuse and behavioral disorder counselors**

*By facility type:*

**The combined occupations of chemical dependency professionals (CDPs) and substance abuse and behavioral disorder counselors were the top occupation with exceptionally long vacancies recently reported by:**

- Large hospitals
- Behavioral health clinics
- Psychiatric/ substance abuse hospitals

They were also among the top 10 occupations listed with long vacancies at community clinics (FQHCs and other clinics providing care free or on a sliding fee scale).

*By geography:*

- Recently, the combined occupations of chemical dependency professionals (CDPs) and substance abuse and behavioral disorder counselors were the top occupation experiencing exceptionally long vacancies in 3 of 9 Accountable Communities of Health (ACHs). They were in the top 10 professions with long vacancies in the remaining 6 ACHs.

#### **Examples of reasons for exceptionally long vacancies:**

- Low wages and difficult working conditions.
- Increased client acuity and lack of qualified candidates.
- Integration with managed care means many new positions do not exclusively require CDP/Substance Abuse skills and there has been a flood of new positions on the market, leading to a shortage.
- Many CDPs have obtained dual licensure and have opted to be employed under Mental Health due to higher pay in that area.
- Long licensing process, including supervision requirements.

#### **Changes in onboarding and training priorities – examples of comments:**

- The State has increased reporting and documentation requirements (more-so than mental health occupations). In some cases, this has led to turnover, so more emphasis on this in training.
- Existing staff is being retrained on how to work directly with primary care.
- Have to be able to pass CORE.

## **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](http://www.wasentinelnetwork.org). Contact: [healthworkforce@wasentinelnetwork.org](mailto:healthworkforce@wasentinelnetwork.org)  
To provide information from your organization: <https://tinyurl.com/SNDataCollection>