

Washington's Health Workforce Sentinel Network Examples of Findings from Behavioral Health/Mental Health, Substance Use Disorder Clinics and Residential Treatment Facilities

Representatives from behavioral health/mental health, substance use disorder clinics and residential treatment facilities provided information to the Washington State Health Workforce Sentinel Network eight times between Summer 2016 and Spring 2020. This summary highlights some of the information they provided, with an emphasis on the most recently submitted data. In addition to these findings, a summary of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on these facilities can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/WABHC>.

Behavioral Health Clinics* - Occupations with exceptionally long vacancies: 2016-2020

Top occupations cited as having exceptionally long vacancies by date of reporting								
Rank	Summer 2016	Winter 2016	Spring 2017	Fall 2017	Summer 2018	Spring 2019	Fall 2019	Spring 2020
1	Mental health counselor	Chemical dependency professional	Mental health counselor	Chemical dependency professional	Mental health counselor	Mental health counselor	Mental health counselor	Mental health counselor
2	Chemical dependency professional	Mental health counselor	Chemical dependency professional	Mental health counselor	Chemical dependency professional Peer counselor	Chemical dependency professional	Chemical dependency professional	Chemical dependency professional
3	Social worker	Social worker	Social worker	Social worker Nurse practitioner	Nurse practitioner	Social worker	Peer counselor	Social worker
4	Nurse practitioner	Nurse practitioner Psychiatrist	Nurse practitioner	Peer counselor	Social worker Psychiatrist	Marriage & family therapist	Marriage & family therapist	Peer counselor
5	Psychiatrist	Marriage & family therapist	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Marriage & family therapist	Peer counselor Psychiatrist	Social worker	Multiple occupations cited at same frequency

↑ Most cited

*Behavioral health/mental health, substance use disorder clinics and residential treatment facilities

Reasons for vacancies reported by behavioral health clinics (Spring, 2020 examples)

- (Mental Health counselors, social workers) Many have student loans and can't live on current wages. Also a lack of younger population wanting to do community BH.
- (Mental Health counselors) Reliant upon Medicaid funding which is inadequate.
- (Peer counselors) Qualified peers who are healthy enough to work in this environment are hard to come by. These are low paying jobs and sometimes it's easier for them to just work in fast food or grocery stores.
- (Mental health counselors) Providers not wanting to live in a rural area, and/or not interested in group practice. Another big problem is getting the DOH to finalize licenses or out of state applicants who are finished training and testing and are qualified to be licensed.

Behavioral Health/Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Clinics

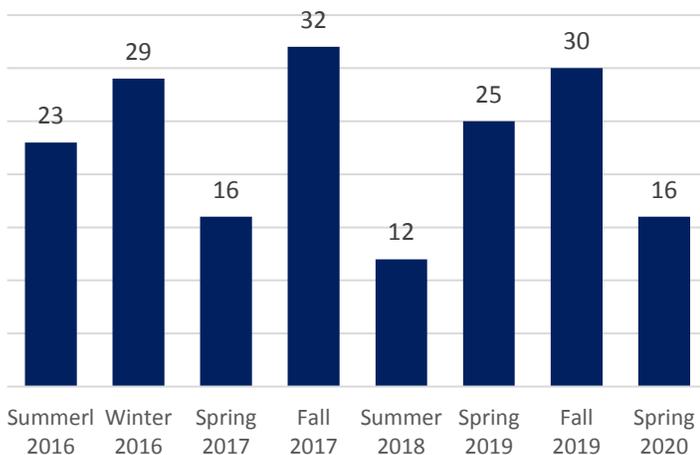
Reasons for worker retention/turnover problems reported by behavioral health clinics (Spring, 2020 examples)

- (Mental health counselors, social workers) Our clients are particularly demanding, and documentation requirements have increased, leading to staff completing documentation at home and during off hours.
- (Chemical dependency professional) Work load has doubled due to lack of staff due to quarantine.
- (Mental health counselor) As soon as clinicians are licensed, they leave for primary care settings or private practice where the patients are much less difficult and the pay is better.
- (Multiple occupations) ...[T]he constant looking for staff, high case loads... This leads to high burnout and a demand to have high productivity in order to be profitable.

New roles for healthcare workers reported by behavioral health clinics (Spring, 2020 examples)

- (Mental health counselors, peer counselors) Now using Telehealth [due to COVID-19 restrictions].
- (Mental health counselors) Much more focused now on mobile crisis outreach.

Number of Sentinel Network Responses from Behavioral Health Clinics in WA by Data Collection Date*



Number of Behavioral Health Clinic Responses by Accountable Community of Health (ACH) (Spring, 2020)*



*Note: in Spring 2020, a higher number of facilities provided responses to COVID-19 related questions. See <https://tinyurl.com/WABHC>.

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 and the Washington State Legislature.

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.

To view an interactive summary of findings and to provide information from your organization: www.wa.sentinelnetwork.org.

Contact: healthworkforce@wasentinelnetwork.org