



Washington's Health Workforce Sentinel Network **Findings Brief: Nursing Homes and Skilled Nursing Facilities**

This Findings Brief highlights current workforce needs reported by nursing homes and skilled nursing facilities in Washington State during October and November 2021. More findings from 2021 and earlier may be viewed at wa.sentinelnetwork.org/findings/. Nursing homes' and skilled nursing facilities' current pandemic-related concerns are summarized below. Earlier pandemic-specific findings may be viewed at www.wa.sentinelnetwork.org/findings/covid-19/.

Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic reported by nursing homes/skilled nursing facilities: Themes and examples

How have your facility's staffing arrangements/configurations affected your ability to respond to patient demand during the past 6 months?

Most reported that staffing shortages and COVID-19 protocols have reduced capacity and added to stress/burnout.

- *There is far more demand than I can meet with current staffing level. I cannot take patients that I cannot care for so they remain in the hospital...[H]ome health ... is also overwhelmed with care demands and I often get community referrals from families who cannot meet their loved ones needs at home without extensive support...which isn't available.*
- *[W]e've been unable to admit due to COVID cases being high in our community and lack of staff. It has now been 3 months since we've had an admit and we don't foresee any admits for another month.*
- *Demands on care staff have drastically increased while simultaneously staff resources have been drastically decreasing [leading to] mandatory overtime, high burnout rates, angry staff, [impacting] the amount and level of care [for] residents.*

What are your top workforce needs that could be alleviated by policy, regulatory, and/or payment changes?

Higher Medicaid payments and reduced intensity of regulatory surveys were most commonly reported.

- *[R]eimbursement does not match the cost... And our facilities are PACKED with Medicaid, especially in rural areas...*
- *Faster response from legislators...biannual increases aren't working for the current climate that is changing rapidly.*
- *Reduce over zealous and punitive survey teams with the goal to find something wrong and fine us or cite us.*

How has the pandemic affected your ability to support educational/training opportunities ?

Some respondents reported ability to host limited clinical training while others report it's not possible.

- *With the restrictions on who can be in the building due to Covid ... We are forced to reduce opportunities and do what we can to support students and other learning opportunities.*
- *Unable to host clinicals for local nursing programs, no job fairs, lack of group onsite training sessions .*
- *This is the first quarter we have allowed nursing students back into the building. It was not without a LOT of anxiety however! But critical to educating the next class of nurses and in hopes we could demonstrate there are other areas of nursing other than hospitals.*

To what extent has your organization used recruitment incentives like sign-on bonuses during the pandemic?

What recruitment strategies have been most successful?

Most respondents reported using bonuses, but with very limited success. Other strategies were often more effective.

- *We have implemented a \$15K/\$5K sign-on bonus for majority of staff. Implementing CMA and NAR to CNA career path. Working on an LPN apprenticeship program. Working with Next Step as a feeder pool for trained CNAs.*
- *Sign on bonuses have shown to be inadequate. People would rather have higher hourly wages than a sign on bonus.*
- *We have not. Our focus is setting wages right in the first place and having an excellent working environment by hiring the right managers- not just someone to fill a role.*

Have you implemented new retention strategies during the pandemic? Please describe.

A variety of strategies were reported, most addressing wages and workplace culture.

- *Changing the toxic culture to a more family oriented and accountable workplace. Conducted employee satisfaction surveys and provided wage reviews and pay raises as a direct result*

Compared with 2 years ago, how would you describe the number of vacancies you're now trying to fill?

Almost all respondents reported major increases in vacancies and turnover, exacerbating problems from the previously high levels.

Nursing Homes/Skilled Nursing Facilities (Fall 2021)

Between 2016 and 2021, over the course of 11 reporting periods, nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities, and other health care facilities in Washington shared information about their workforce needs to the Washington State Health Workforce Sentinel Network. Below are highlights of trends over time and recent findings. More nursing home and skilled nursing facility findings, along with those from other health care facilities, are at wa.sentinelnetwork.org.

Top occupations cited as having exceptionally long vacancies by date of reporting								
Rank	Fall 2017*	Summer 2018	Spring 2019	Fall 2019	Spring 2020	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Fall 2021
1	Nursing assistant	Nursing assistant	Registered nurse	Nursing assistant	Nursing assistant	Nursing assistant	Registered nurse	Registered nurse
2	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Nursing assistant	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Nursing assistant	Licensed practical nurse Nursing assistant
3	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse Dentist	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse	
4	Multiple occupations cited at same frequency	Dentist	Occupational therapy assistant Physical therapist	Speech-language therapist	Multiple occupations cited at same frequency	Occupational therapy assistant Physical therapist Physical Therapy Assistant	Occupational therapist Physical therapist Social worker Speech-language therapist	Speech-language therapist
5		Physician/ Surgeon	Social worker Psychologist			Multiple occupations cited at same frequency	n/a	Multiple occupations cited at same frequency

* Prior findings to 2016 can be viewed on the Sentinel Network Dashboard: wa.sentinelnetwork.org

↑ Most cited

Demand for healthcare workforce reported by nursing homes/skilled nursing facilities

More demand due to high turnover, regulatory requirements, and increased demand for care.

- [Nursing assistant] More job openings due to more residents in SNF.
- [Nursing assistant] More openings because current team members are leaving for hospital setting.
- [Registered nurse] Increased minimum staffing requirements changed from 16 continuous hours of coverage to 24 continuous hours of coverage.
- [Licensed practical nurse] More openings than there are nurses.
- [Licensed practical nurse] We had a lot of people quit.

Reasons for vacancies reported by nursing homes/skilled nursing facilities

The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced some new challenges, but many pre-COVID challenges persist

- [Licensed practical nurse] More jobs than LPNs to fill positions. Wage rates increased, still multiple openings.
- [Registered nurse] Compensation, Competition, Benefits, Change in Min. Wage.
- [Registered nurse] Nursing homes are unattractive to potential candidates, low candidate pool, competition with local hospital (pay/environment)
- [Physical therapist] Health workforce does not meet demand, low compensation/benefits.

Nursing Homes/Skilled Nursing Facilities (Fall 2021)

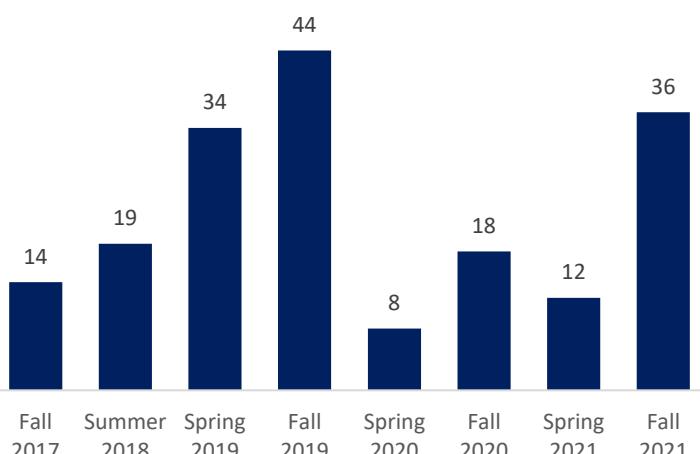
Changes in nursing homes'/skilled nursing facilities' priorities regarding orientation/onboarding for new employees and training for existing/incumbent workers

- [Licensed practical nurse] Comprehensive training geared toward required minimum competencies, and understanding of the requirements for CMS new rules of participation
- [Licensed practical nurse, Registered nurse, Nursing assistant] Much more in depth orientation process to try to limit turnover.
- [Licensed practical nurse] Providing 4 week preceptorship to new nurses to help them become familiar with long term care and our company.
- [Nursing assistant] Inexperienced NACs need more training and support.

New roles for existing employees and new occupations hired by nursing homes/skilled nursing facilities

- [Nursing assistant - Medication assistant certified] Educate existing NACs to fulfill this role.
- [Registered nurse] Our Resident Care managers roles have significantly changed into a more clinical role with different duties.
- [Registered nurse] New 24 hour RN regulation from Washington State.

**Number of Sentinel Network Responses
from Nursing Homes/Skilled Nursing Facilities in WA by
Data Collection Date***



**Number of Nursing Home/Skilled Nursing Facility Responses
by Accountable Community of Health (ACH) (Fall 2021)**



* Winter and Summer 2016 findings not shown due to space constraints

About the Washington Health Workforce Sentinel Network

The Health Workforce 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 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.

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