

Washington's Health Workforce Sentinel Network Findings Brief: Assisted Living Facilities

This Findings Brief highlights current workforce needs reported by assisted living facilities in Washington State during September and October 2022. More findings from 2022 and earlier may be viewed at www.wa.sentinelnetwork.org/findings. Responses to questions about current overarching and pandemic-related workforce issues are summarized below. Earlier pandemic-related findings are at www.wa.sentinelnetwork.org/findings/covid-19/.

Overarching and Pandemic-Related Workforce Issues: Themes and examples

In the past year:

- has access to childcare, housing, transportation, or other factors affected staffing at your organization?

Themes: Childcare and transportation were the community factors most frequently cited.

	Yes	No	% Yes	Comments
Transportation	8	2	80%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gas prices, cost of fixing vehicles. Some of our care givers use public transportation and cannot work at night.
Childcare	6	4	60%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lot of staff has limited hours of working due to childcare restrictions. Some of our care givers are unable to work a certain days due to childcare issues.
Housing	4	6	40%	[No short answer responses]
Other	2	8	20%	Wages.

- how have your staffing arrangements affected your ability to respond to patient demand?

Themes: A majority reported that staffing issues have caused longer wait times and an inability to meet patient demand for some services, with burnout common due to staffing shortages.

- [We] have had to limit intake admissions in other facilities due to staffing shortages. [We] have brought in MAs in some cases to assist where we didn't have enough nurses.
- Low staffing has caused our employees to become burned out from picking up extra work to have coverage.
- We have had significant amounts of overtime, staffing agency contracts, and burnout due to hiring.

- what institutional actions has your organization taken to improve workforce diversity or to make your organization more representative of the population it serves?

Themes: Several mentioned specific strategies ranging from continuing education opportunities for employees to specific hiring goals. Similar numbers of respondents said that no strategies have been enacted in the last year at their organization.

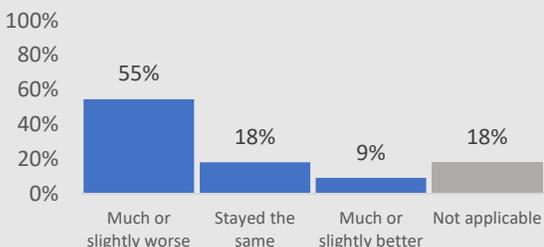
- In the past year, our organization has made every effort to be inclusive, we have been more diverse and there has been increased representation of the populations we serve.

- has the overall behavioral health status of the workforce at your organization changed? What resources are needed?

Themes: Most indicated that the behavioral health status of their workforce has worsened over the past year, while a few respondents indicated no change. Several indicated that they offer support and resources on behavioral health and wellness.

- The only behavior health change is burnouts. Providing support system would be helpful to effectively address this issue.
- We don't have the capacity to train we used to. Staff are fulfilling multiple roles and becoming burnt out.
- Each employee takes classes and continuing education on this area.

- has your ability to support clinical training experiences for students/learners at your organization become better, stayed the same or gotten worse? What strategies/policies have been – or would be – the most helpful?



- [Much better] Offering opportunities flexible to provide trainings.
- [Slightly worse] Having more staff to alleviate management team to be present for training/onboarding/preceptorship.
- [Stayed the same] We are big supporters of providing clinical training and supports.

Assisted Living Facilities (Fall 2022)

Assisted living facilities and other health care facilities in Washington shared information about their workforce needs with the Washington State Health Workforce Sentinel Network. Below are highlights of trends over time and recent findings. More Assisted living 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 2019	Spring 2020	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Fall 2022	
1	Nursing assistant	Home health aide or home care aide	Nursing assistant	Nursing assistant	Nursing assistant	Nursing assistant	Licensed practical nurse	
							Registered nurse	
2	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse	Registered nurse	Cook / Food services	Nursing assistant	
		Registered nurse						
		Nursing assistant						
3	Home health aide or home care aide	Multiple occupations cited at the same frequency	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Home health aide or home care aide	Home health aide or home care aide	Cook / Food services	
	Registered nurse			Personal care aide		Licensed practical nurse		
4	Personal care aide		Home health aide or home care aide	Cook / Food services	Home health aide or home care aide	Licensed practical nurse	Registered nurse	Home health aide or home care aide
	Cook / Food services							
5	Multiple occupations cited at the same frequency		Personal care aide	Cook / Food services	n/a	Personal care aide	Environmental services	Environmental services
		Housekeeping						

← Most cited

* Findings prior to Fall 2019 not shown due to space constraints

Reasons for prolonged vacancies reported by Assisted Living Facilities

Themes: Almost all respondents reported a lack of qualified applicants, with many also citing salary, wage, and benefit issues.

- [Licensed practical nurse] Wages and competition is heavy. We have adjusted pay and incentive packages numerous times over the last year. There have not been a lot of applications over past year.
- [Cook/Food services] This position/department goes on cycles with available positions. At times, we are comfortable with staffing levels and at other times, we have a large need. Pay has been adjusted to recruit more Food Services employees.
- [Certified nursing assistant] Very competitive market. We have been very creative in what we offer our employees. We had good look over summer with staffing, but once college students returned to school, we lost a few staff. We also had a few staff retire.

Reasons for worker retention/turnover problems reported by Assisted Living Facilities

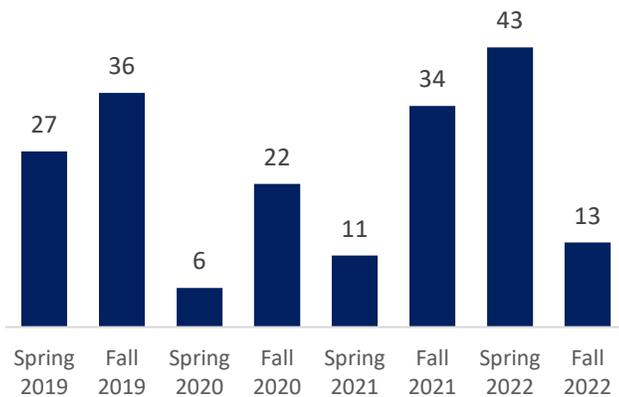
- [Registered nurse] A couple RNs left our company due to stress and needed breaks. We are hopeful they return.
- [Cook/Food services] Better opportunities for cooks led to a couple of staff leaving. We adjusted our wages to be competitive.
- [Environmental services] Wages were raised to be more competitive. Staff left for higher wages, and we hedged this.

Assisted Living Facilities (Fall 2022)

New roles for existing employees and new occupations hired by Assisted Living Facilities

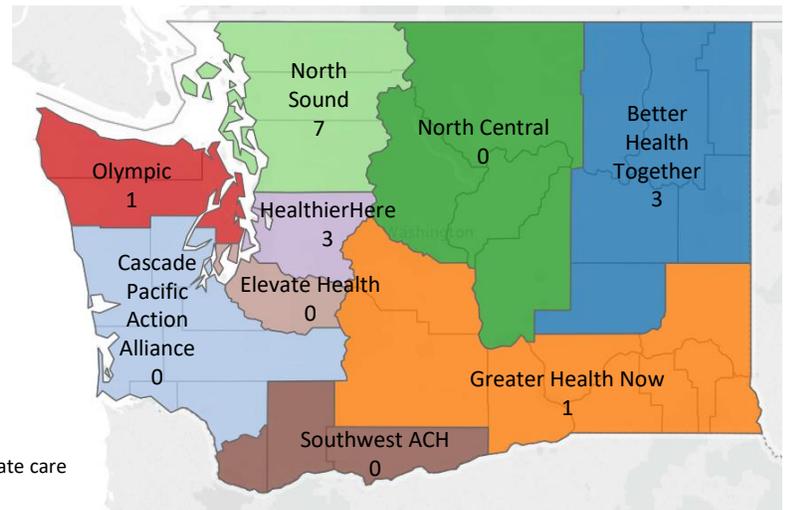
- [Multiple occupations] Doing non-licensed health and wellness director duties, working with health and wellness coordinator to provide health and wellness director (HWD) job; this was done because we couldn't find an RN to be the HWD.

Number of Sentinel Network Responses from Assisted Living Facilities in WA by Data Collection Date*



*Before Spring 2019, assisted living facilities were folded in to the “intermediate care facility” category, so response numbers cannot be shown here.

Number of Assisted Living Facility Responses by Accountable Community of Health (ACH) (Fall 2022)



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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