

# 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 September and October 2022. More findings from 2022 and earlier may be viewed at [wa.sentinelnetwork.org/findings/](http://wa.sentinelnetwork.org/findings/). Responses to questions about current overarching and pandemic-related workforce issues are summarized below. Earlier pandemic-specific findings may be viewed at [www.wa.sentinelnetwork.org/findings/covid-19/](http://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, housing, and transportation were the community factors cited most frequently.

	Yes	No	% Yes	Comments
Childcare	8	3	73%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childcare expensive and difficult to find due to covid. Staff are staying home to care for children.</li> <li>• Some went to part time to care for children.</li> <li>• Buses not picking up their kids, no childcare, working around their childcare.</li> </ul>
Housing	6	5	55%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inflation and high house pricing with increase interest rates. This also increases rent.</li> <li>• Cost of living is going up.</li> </ul>
Transportation	5	6	45%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff coming from [a neighboring city] have to pay toll costs.</li> <li>• We do not have public transportation in our area.</li> </ul>

**- how have your facility's staffing arrangements affected your ability to respond to patient demand?**

Themes: A majority reported that staffing issues have impacted admissions, and many reported using nursing agency or contract workers to fill in gaps.

- We have closed down wings due to lack of adequate staff. We have adjusted Pharmacy hours due to lack of staff.
- We have not been able to accept admissions from the hospital like we have in the past due to the lack of staff to handle heavy care patients.

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

Themes: Several respondents mentioned specific strategies to improve diversity in their workforce or organization, while an equal number of respondents said that no strategies have been enacted in the last year at their organization.

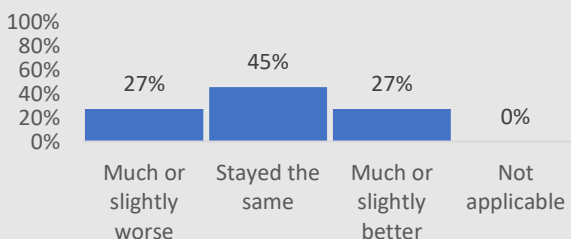
- We have diversity training each year for all staff and we are an Affirmative Action facility.
- We have increased diversity in our leadership positions.

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

Themes: A majority said the behavioral health status of the workforce had changed for the worse.

- Increased burnout and career changes due to the stress of healthcare employment.

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



- [Much worse] Agency-wide consistency and qualified trainers to educate staff at all the facilities in [our organization's system].
- [Stayed the same] Partnerships with local tech schools and Community Colleges.
- [Stayed the same] More staff to be of support to the clinical students.

## Nursing Homes/Skilled Nursing Facilities (Fall 2022)

Between 2016 and 2022, over the course of 13 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](http://wa.sentinelnetwork.org).

Top occupations cited as having exceptionally long vacancies by date of reporting								
Rank	Spring 2019	Fall 2019	Spring 2020	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Fall 2022
1	Registered nurse	Nursing assistant	Nursing assistant	Nursing assistant	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Nursing assistant
2	Nursing assistant	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Nursing assistant	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse
						Nursing assistant		Registered nurse
3	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse	Occupational therapist	Nursing assistant	Cook / Food services
			Dentist			Physical therapist		
4	Occupational therapy assistant	Speech-language therapist	Multiple occupations cited at same frequency	Occupational therapy assistant	Occupational therapist	Speech-language therapist	Cook / Food services	Dietitian / Nutritionist
	Physical therapist			Physical therapist				
	Social worker			Social worker				
	Psychologist			Speech-language therapist				

↑ Most cited

\* Findings prior to Spring 2019 not shown due to space constraints and can be viewed on the Sentinel Network Dashboard: [wa.sentinelnetwork.org](http://wa.sentinelnetwork.org).

### Reasons for vacancies reported by nursing homes/skilled nursing facilities

Themes: Many employers in long term care feel they are competing with other industries or contract agencies and there are not enough applicants applying for open positions.

- [Licensed practical nurse] Agency staffing companies paying a lot more and lose staff to them making the problem worse.
- [Cook/Food services] Food service in general is struggling with staffing. We do not offer tips in our wages. Competition for Cooks throughout our community.
- [Registered nurse] Hard to compete with private sector nursing home wages and overall lack of workforce.

### Reasons for worker retention/turnover problems reported by nursing home/skilled nursing facilities

Themes: Facilities frequently reported that staff left looking for higher pay, flexible schedules, and lower workload.

- [Certified nursing assistant] Some staff left earlier due to wages and others left NAC work altogether.
- [Registered nurse] Moved out of area, interested in different setting.
- [Multiple occupations] COVID vaccine mandate.

## Nursing Homes/Skilled Nursing Facilities (Fall 2022)

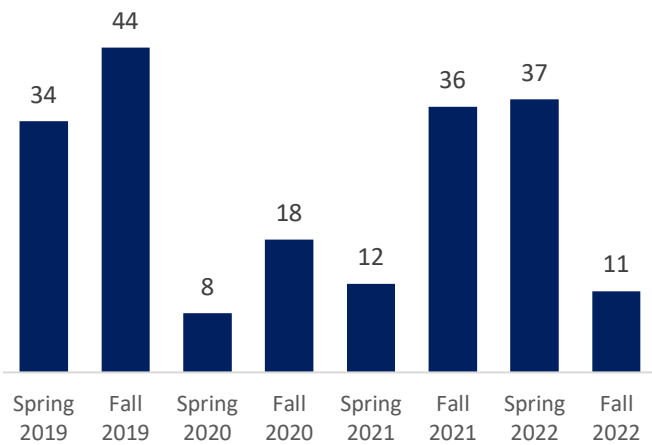
### Changes in nursing homes'/skilled nursing facilities' priorities regarding orientation/onboarding for new employees and training for existing/incumbent workers

- [Certified nursing assistant] Facility has established a training program to hire and train those wanting a career as a Certified nursing assistant.
- [Registered nurse] Resident safety [training], especially in resident falls.
- [All clinical staff] COVID-[related] training.

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

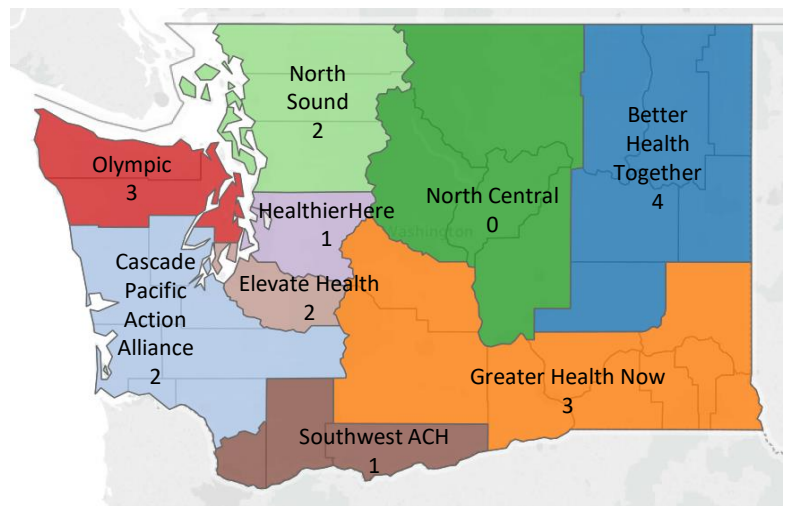
- [Hospitality aide] To assist them in getting used to this setting and explore NAC training program for career.
- [Unit secretary] To assist the nursing department with tasks that did not require a degree to complete, to remove the burden of cumbersome duties.

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



\* findings prior to Spring 2019 not shown due to space constraints.

**Number of Nursing Home/Skilled Nursing 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](http://www.wa.sentinelnetwork.org).

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