# Washington's Health Workforce Sentinel Network
Findings Brief: Small Hospitals

This Findings Brief highlights current workforce needs reported by small acute care hospitals with 25 beds or fewer (referred to as Small Hospitals in this brief) in Washington State during March and April 2023. More findings from 2023 and earlier may be viewed at www.wa.sentinelnetwork.org/findings. Responses to questions about current overarching workforce issues are summarized below. Earlier overarching and pandemic-related findings are at www.wa.sentinelnetwork.org/findings/covid-19.

Overarching Workforce Issues: Themes and Examples

In the past six months, how has your organization's ability to staff your facility/facilities changed?
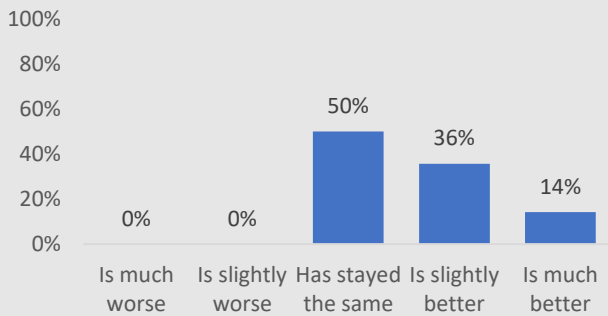
- *[Stayed the same] Recruitment has not improved. We are receiving very few or no applicants for most the positions indicated.*
- *[Stayed the same] It's been about the same over past 3 years.*
- *[Slightly better] We are seeing more applicants than in the previous 6 months and this time last year.*
- *[Much better] More full time RNs have come on staff reducing the need for temporary internal and agency positions to keep up with patient care load.*

What are your top workforce needs that could be alleviated by new or modified laws, policies, regulations, and/or payment rules?

Suggestions included focusing on education loan repayments, career pathway development, and updating licensing requirements for several occupations.

- *Better incentives/rewards to get people interested in these careers [MAs/LPNs/RNs]. Student loan repayment programs have been utilized more heavily than ever in the last year.*
- *Get rid of the phlebotomy certification requirement for laboratory technicians and technologists. This is a major barrier to providing timely efficient care to our patients.*

Has your organization made any of the following changes in the past year?

Change	Yes % (#)	Comments
Hired or assigned workers with higher-level qualifications to fill lower-skilled roles or positions.	15% (2)	•*Nurses to fill CNA functions.* •*Clinic Receptionist.*
Hired workers with fewer qualifications than would normally be considered.	38% (5)	•*Training people with no formal college education to become laboratory technicians to run moderately complex lab tests.* •*With expectation they would obtain in a certain time frame requirements.*
Implemented new outsourcing/contracting of specific services (or 'service lines').	15% (2)	[No comments provided]

In the past year, how has your ability to support clinical training experience/preceptorship/rotation opportunities for students/learners (not newly hired or incumbent employees) at your facility changed? What strategies/policies (e.g., financial incentives, student housing, etc.) have been - or would be - the most helpful for supporting clinical training experiences at your facility?

Most respondents reported that their ability to support clinical training opportunities stayed the same over the past year.

- *[Stayed the same] Our biggest challenge is lack of willingness from staff, especially providers to participate and precept students, second challenge is requirement in our organization for students to be fully vaccinated and not accept student exemptions to date.*

Small Hospitals (Spring 2023)

Small hospitals 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 small hospital 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	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Fall 2022	Spring 2023
1	Physician/ Surgeon	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Registered nurse
2	Registered nurse	Medical assistant	Nursing assistant	Medical assistant	Nursing assistant	Cook / Food services	Medical / Clinical lab technologist
2	Nursing assistant	Nursing assistant	Nursing assistant	Nursing assistant	Nursing assistant	Cook / Food services	Medical / Clinical lab technologist
3	Multiple occupations cited at same frequency	Multiple occupations cited at same frequency	Medical assistant	Physician/ Surgeon	Cook / Food services	Nursing assistant	Medical / Clinical lab technician
3	Multiple occupations cited at same frequency	Multiple occupations cited at same frequency	Medical / Clinical lab technologist	Physician/ Surgeon	Cook / Food services	Nursing assistant	Nursing assistant

← Most cited

* Findings prior to Fall 2019 not shown due to space constraints. Spring 2020 not shows due to low response numbers. Additional time periods can be viewed on the Sentinel Network Dashboard: wa.sentinelnetwork.org.

Reasons for exceptionally long vacancies and retention/turnover problems reported by Small Hospitals

Themes: Most reported few qualified applicants, wage competition and difficulties recruiting to rural areas.

- *[Multiple occupations] Rural area, hard to recruit, lack of applicants, wages hard to complete with large systems on the I-5 Corridor, travel positions paying higher rates, people leaving healthcare, housing challenges in our area.*
- *[Multiple occupations] Shortage of applicants in our region. Housing costs or lack of housing. Lack of childcare.*
- *[Cook/Food services, Environmental services, Office staff] Lack of candidates interested in a job - several weren't qualified or stated only applying due to unemployment requirements.*
- *[Cook/Food services, Environmental services, Office staff] Wages, fit in department, work not what they expected*
- *[Registered nurse] Competition with larger facilities and travel nursing where compensation is better.*

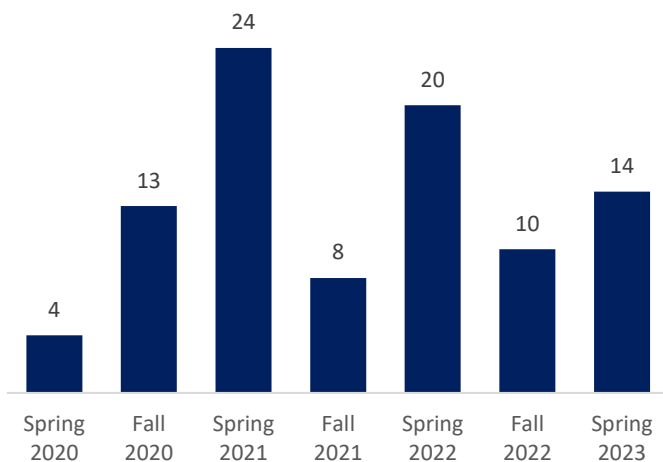# Small Hospitals (Spring 2023)

Changes in Small Hospitals' priorities <u>regarding orientation/onboarding for new employees</u> and <u>training for existing/incumbent workers</u>

- *With Covid many trainings were put on the back burner. [We're] refreshing all training [and] staff have asked for more training and mock events.*

- *Contract workers do not have training like the permanent staff*
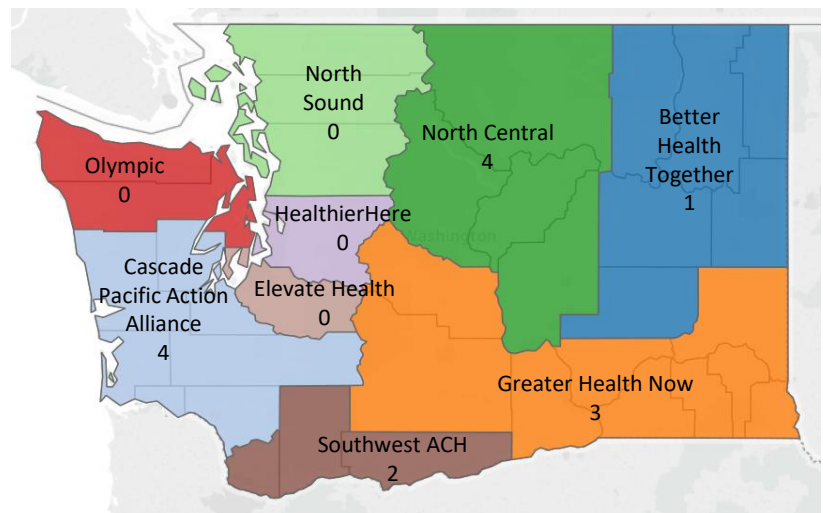
New occupations hired by Small Hospitals

- *[Operational safety manager] Not in response to the pandemic but in response to behavior post pandemic. Organizational safety and risk management.*

Number of Sentinel Network Responses from Small Hospitals in WA by Data Collection Date*

*Response counts prior to Spring 2020 are not shown due to space constraints.

Number of Small Hospital Responses by Accountable Community of Health (ACH) (Spring 2023)

North Sound 0
Olympic 0
North Central 4
Better Health Together 1
HealthierHere 0
Cascade Pacific Action Alliance 4
Elevate Health 0
Greater Health Now 3
Southwest ACH 2