

## Washington's Health Workforce Sentinel Network

### Findings Brief: Large Hospitals

This Findings Brief highlights current workforce needs reported to the state's Health Workforce Sentinel Network by Washington's acute care hospitals with more than 25 beds ("Large Hospitals") during October/November 2023. Between 2016 and 2023, over the course of 15 reporting periods, Large Hospitals and other health care facilities in Washington provided key, on-the-ground information to the Washington State Health Workforce Sentinel Network. Below are highlights of trends over time and recent findings. More findings from 2023 and earlier, as well as for other health care facilities, may be viewed at <https://www.wa.sentinelnetwork.org/findings>

Top occupations with exceptionally long vacancies*				
Rank	2016 – 2019	2020	Spring 2021	Fall 2023
1	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Registered nurse
2	Medical assistant	Physician/Surgeon	Nursing assistant	Physician/Surgeon
			Physician/Surgeon	
3	Physician/surgeon	Medical assistant	Pharmacy technician	Nurse anesthetist
		Nursing assistant		Social worker
4	Chemical dependency professional	Respiratory therapist	Medical assistant	Multiple occupations at the same frequency.
	Nursing assistant		Med/Clinical laboratory technologist	
	Respiratory therapist		Respiratory therapist	
	Physical therapist		Surgical technologist	
5	Nurse practitioner	Mental health counselor	Med/Clinical laboratory technician	

← Most cited

\*Responses shown are from data collection dates with sufficiently large numbers of responses from Large Hospitals to support meaningful findings. Occupations cited by the same number of responses share the same rank number.

#### **Reasons for exceptionally long vacancies and retention/turnover problems reported by Large Hospitals**

**Too few applicants to offset turnover was commonly mentioned for multiple occupations. Similarly, wage competition was frequently referenced as a barrier to retention and recruitment.**

- [Registered nurse] Lack of competitive pay with travel nurses
- [Registered nurse] We are getting applicants and filling jobs, but ... we can't keep pace with separations.
- [Registered nurse] ...younger new grads...want what they want, and sometimes that means they only want to work day shift and won't work weekends or holidays.
- [Physician/surgeon] Physician salaries are [too low], and the workload is typically overwhelming..
- [Nurse anesthetist]...Due to the current national shortage of anesthesia care team members and rapidly [increased] CRNA reimbursement, we had very few applicants...
- [Social worker] Reportedly, low pay, high amount of responsibilities/long hours.

## Large Hospitals (more than 25 beds) (Fall 2023)

Highlights of current workforce needs reported to the state’s Health Workforce Sentinel Network by Washington’s acute care hospitals with more than 25 beds (“Large Hospitals”) during October/November 2023 (continued).

### Changes in Large Hospitals’ priorities regarding orientation/onboarding for new employees and training for existing/incumbent workers

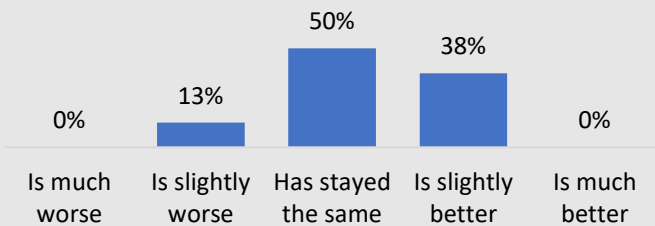
#### Comment examples

- *[Registered nurse] We are putting more effort into creating standardized, skills-based orientations.*
- *[Multiple occupations] New orientation focused on culture and not focused on regulatory compliance.*
- *[Multiple occupations] Changes to scheduling or content*

### Overarching Workforce Issues: Themes and Examples

Responses by Large Hospitals 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/](http://www.wa.sentinelnetwork.org/findings/covid-19/).

#### In the past 6 months, how has your organization’s ability to staff your facility(ies) changed?



#### Comment examples

- *Has stayed the same: Physician staffing has improved. RN staffing remains difficult/inadequate. [Social worker] staffing is most challenging of all.*
- *Is slightly better: Nursing seems to have gotten better.*

#### How has your facility's staffing affected your ability to respond to patient/client demand during the past year?

	%	Comment examples
Delay in care for current patients/clients	38%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We have been unable to fully staff ... anesthetizing locations (OR cases cancelled or delayed) at times. This has usually been around unexpected absence or illness and not having enough backup anesthesiologists to fill in.</i></li> </ul>
Inability to take new patients/clients	13%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We are being told that we are doing great even though less staff is taking on more responsibilities than ever. We are required to answer phones, schedule patients, ensure insurance authorizations for procedures and treatments all while providing patient care</i></li> </ul>
No effect, operations continue as usual	38%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Since COVID required new ways of care being delivered (telemedicine) and over crowding during the pandemic, the 'hospital inpatient' status returning to pre-pandemic numbers creates a 'false positive' that things are much better...</i></li> </ul>
Other	13%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Decrease in staff morale due to work/life balance. The impacts around insufficient staffing are largely intuitive.</i></li> </ul>

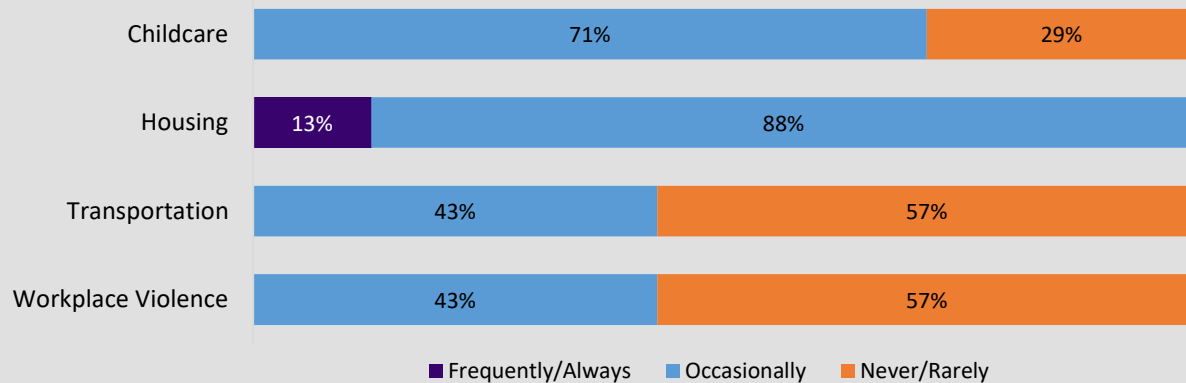
#### Is your organization assisting workers who are pursuing education or training with the goal of advancing to a higher paying healthcare career? If yes, in what ways is your organization supporting these activities?

- *Grants and scholarships for staff for education; these are well used by staff*
- *Tuition reimbursement and the delivery of certification courses free of charge.*
- *Free on the job training, money for education*
- *There is a tuition exemption program. We also support workers with scheduling needs.*
- *Some very limited resources/scholarships with restrictions as to use ... such as: limited degree or...specific areas of practice (i.e., informatics, administration, or NP but not degrees in education or public health)...[with some work commitments that have caused] many nurses and other staff seeking professional degrees to decline acceptance of any financial assistance.*

## Large Hospitals (more than 25 beds) (Fall 2023)

### Overarching Workforce Issues: Themes and Examples (continued)

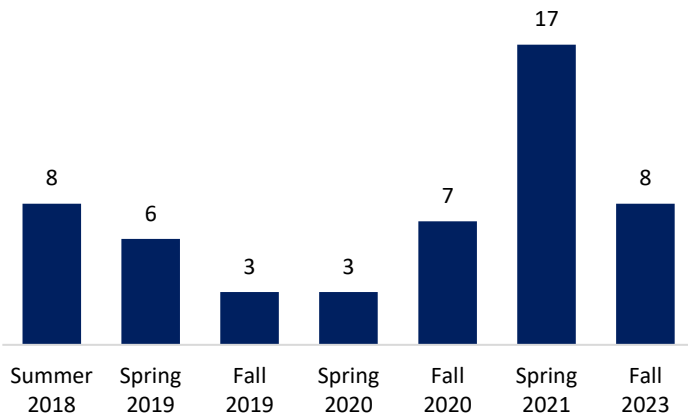
To what extent have childcare, housing, transportation, and/or workplace violence affected your ability to recruit and retain staff in the past year? What strategies has your organization used to address these challenges?



#### Comment examples

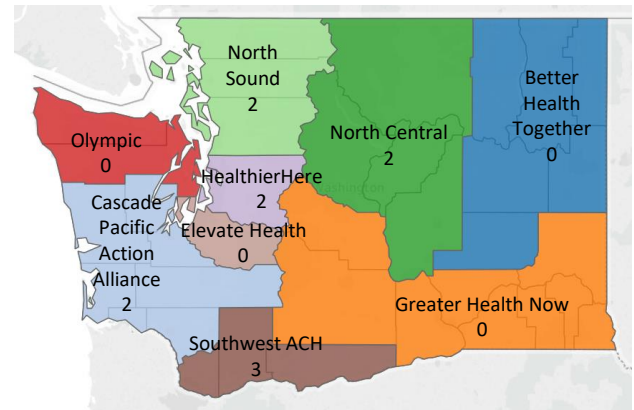
- Medical Staff office offers assistance for potential candidates to find housing.
- Limited staff housing.
- We've begun to work with a vendor specifically focused on identifying [housing] leasing options in the communities we serve.
- Work with daycares on nannies and other options. Work with local realtors on housing tours.
- We have provided passes for free public transit and provided significant pay increases to offset the costs of housing and childcare. We have also initiated programs focusing on decreasing workplace violence.

#### Number of Sentinel Network Responses from Large Hospitals in WA by Data Collection Date\*



\* Responses prior to 2018 not shown due to space constraints.

#### Number of Large Hospitals by Accountable Community of Health (ACH) (Fall 2023)



Note: Each facility may serve clients/patients in more than one county, which is why map totals may exceed total unique responses.

#### 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. The Sentinel Network is an initiative of Washington's Health Workforce Council, conducted collaboratively by Washington's Workforce Board and the University of Washington 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 organization's workforce needs to inform policy and planning responses.
- 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).

Contact: [healthworkforce@wasentinelnetwork.org](mailto:healthworkforce@wasentinelnetwork.org)

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