

# Washington's Health Workforce Sentinel Network

## Findings Brief: Higher Education and Research Organizations

This Findings Brief highlights current workforce needs reported to the state's Health Workforce Sentinel Network by higher education and research organizations during October/November 2023. Below are highlights of trends over time and recent findings. More findings from 2023 and earlier may be viewed at <https://www.wa.sentinelnetwork.org/findings>

Facilities responding as higher education and research organizations included representatives from health professions education and training programs at community/technical colleges, four-year colleges, and universities.

### Reasons for prolonged vacancies reported by higher education and research organizations

Reasons commonly cited for prolonged vacancies centered on not enough qualified applicants, salary/wage/benefits issues, as well as recruitment and retention problems not related to salary/wage/benefits.

- *[Registered nurse] There are not enough master's prepared nurses. We do not have enough interest from personnel wanting to be nurse educators. People still feel salaries are too low to leave bedside.*
- *[Office staff] There has been much overturn internally of programs so we've seen people coming and going over the period of time with change.*
- *[Social worker] [A lack of] administrative resources for [our campus] led to delays in being able to hire. Limited applicant pool. Possible solutions are for the legislature to increase funding for administrative staff to support program development.*
- *[Registered nurse] Unable to hire enough Nurse Educators to teach in our full time program. Adjunct faculty can be found, but is also limited. We did make a full cohort of students this quarter, but it required current faculty/administration to be a right at workload or over.*

### Reasons for worker retention/turnover problems reported by higher education and research organizations

The reason most cited for worker retention and turnover issues were salary/wage/benefits issues, with many workers returning to clinical practice due to higher wages.

- *[Registered nurse] Turnover of Master's prepared nursing faculty due to retirement and due to faculty leaving to return to clinical practice or to a community college where the pay is better.*
- *[Nurse practitioner] Turnover of clinical professors who are NPs due to return to clinical practice for increased salary.*
- *[Mental health counselor, suggested solutions include] Increase pay, increase onboarding and training, provide support, do not hire for one position and then add on multiple other positions/roles/duties.*
- *[Registered nurse] Last academic year, three of my nursing faculty went back to the bedside nursing, because of a variety of reasons with pay being the most commonly listed reason.*

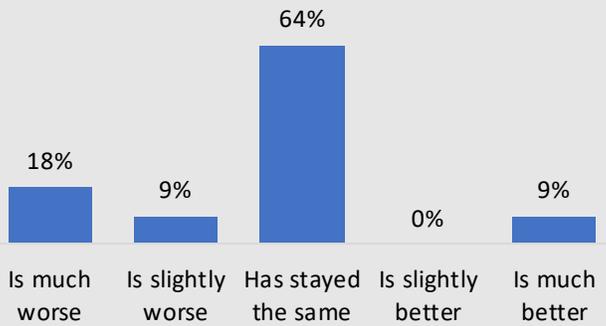
### Changes in higher education and research organizations' priorities training for existing/incumbent workers

- *[Registered nurse] New simulation training.*
- *[Radiologic technician, on what training is needed] We need training on how to be educators within prof tech higher Ed.*

## Higher Education and Research Organizations (Fall 2023)

### Overarching Workforce Issues: Themes and Examples

#### In the past six months, how has your organization's ability to staff your facility/facilities changed?



#### Comment examples

- *[Is much worse] People are leaving, reputation is being damaged which impacts [their] desire to take positions with us.*
- *[Has stayed the same] While the ability to staff our nursing education program has not varied, it is still not good. [...] Finding qualified nurses who are willing to work for the low salaries they are paid is very difficult. Oftentimes, we are left with a very small pool of applicants for our positions.*
- *[Has stayed the same] Finding nursing instructors is much different than other instructor types across the board*

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

Responses varied across higher education and research organizations , with many citing delay in care for students and reduction in the number of students they're able to serve due to staffing and budget issues.

	%	Comment examples
Delay in [services] for current [students]	9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We've had students whose supervisors (licensed MSWs and other professionals in the field) quit their positions or move somewhere else which has led to students having to transfer placements and/or pause their internships until there is a new internal hire to support them. This is causing a delay in patient/client care and also shows just how much [turnover] is happening statewide in the field.</i></li> </ul>
Inability to take new [students]	36%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We have to limit student incoming class sizes due to not enough faculty.</i></li> <li>• <i>We are working on expanding our program to allow for 20 more RN applicants, however, we haven't been able to fill our vacancies in nurse educators to educate them.</i></li> <li>• <i>Used to accept 80 incoming nursing students. Due to lack of qualified faculty, we've been down to 32</i></li> </ul>
No effect, operations continue as usual	36%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We have been able to find replacements for our staff who are leaving. We have not had applicant pools that allow us to address diversity concerns for our faculty.</i></li> <li>• <i>We are actually accepting additional students into each cohort at this time, which will result in 24 additional seats in our program by spring 2025. This increases our demand for simulation-trained faculty, which we are working on at this time. We have two faculty pursuing certification for teaching healthcare simulation and we will be posting two full-time faculty positions for the 2024-25 academic year during the late winter/early spring.</i></li> </ul>

18% of respondents indicated "other" or "not applicable."

#### Is your organization assisting workers who are pursuing education or training with the goal of advancing to a higher paying healthcare career?

45% of respondents answered "yes" to this question, indicating that they offer a range of assistance to their workers including financial assistance, tuition reimbursement, scholarships, and free classes.

- *We have tuition reimbursement program as well as flexibility in scheduling.*
- *Offering scholarships.*
- *We had a tenure track faculty member who was allowed to attend less required meetings to complete her M.N. Degree.*

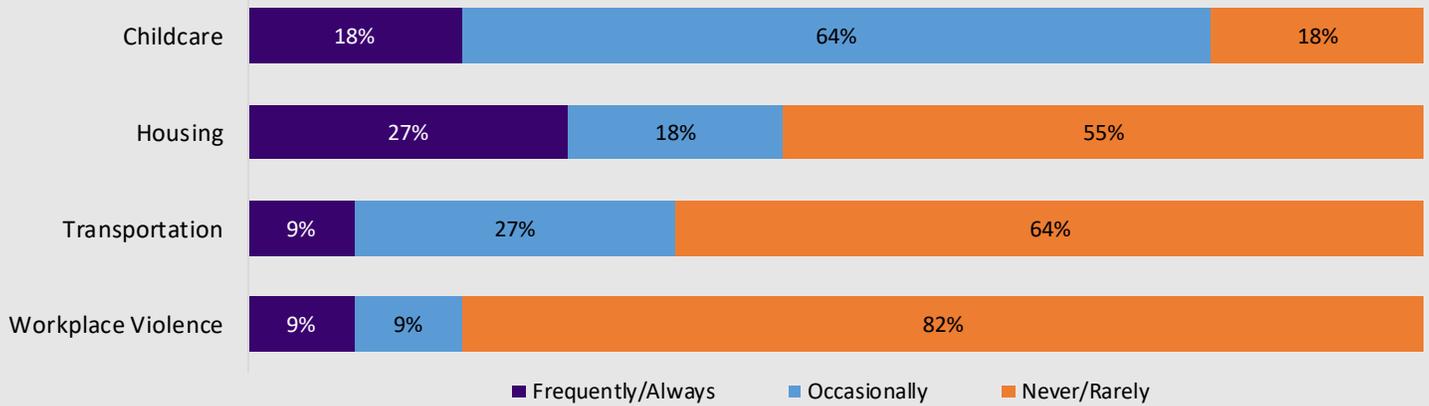
Those who answered "no" to this question indicated that funding is an issue preventing them from offering assistance or it is not a priority for them at this time.

## Higher Education and Research Organizations (Fall 2023)

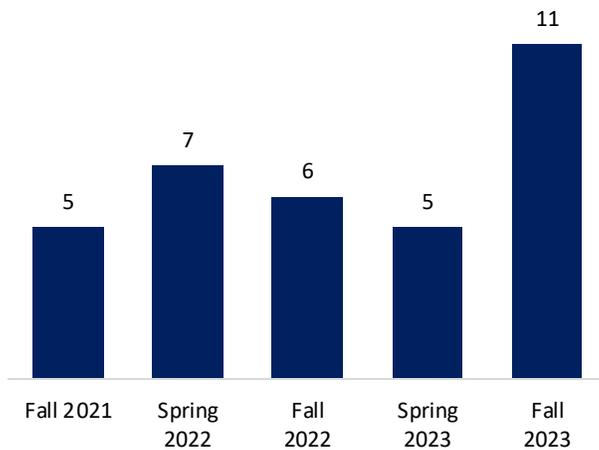
**To what extent have childcare, housing, transportation, and/or workplace violence affected your ability to recruit and retain staff in the past year? What strategies has your organization used to address these challenges?**

### Comment examples

- *We are applying for childcare grants and working with city officials for more affordable housing.*
- *We work closely with the childcare center on campus and employees get a discount when taking their children there.*

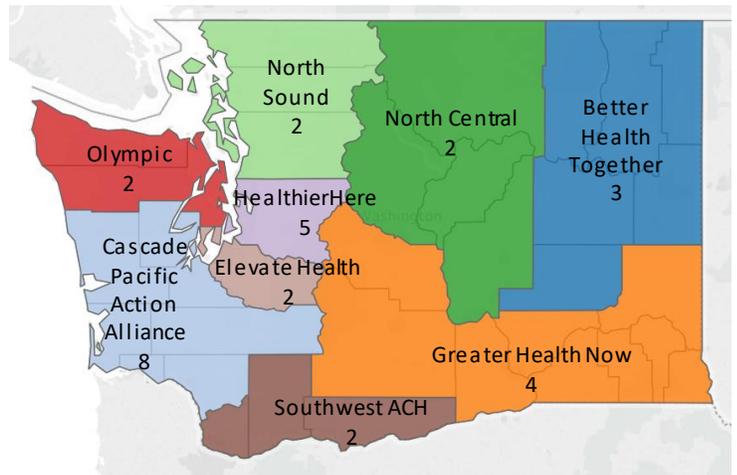


**Number of Responses from Higher Education and Research Organizations in WA by Data Collection Date\***



\*Findings prior to Fall 2021 not shown due to space constraints and low response numbers.

**Number of Higher Education and Research Organization Responses 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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