

Washington's Health Workforce Sentinel Network

Findings Brief: Nursing Homes and Skilled Nursing Facilities

This Findings Brief highlights current workforce needs reported to the state's Health Workforce Sentinel Network by Washington's nursing homes and skilled nursing facilities during April/May 2024, as well as trends over time. Between 2016 and 2024, over the course of 16 reporting periods, nursing homes and skilled nursing facilities and other health care facilities in Washington provided key, on-the-ground information to the Washington State Health Workforce Sentinel Network. More findings from 2024 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	Spring 2021	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Fall 2023	Spring 2024
1	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Nursing assistant	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Registered nurse
2	Nursing assistant	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse
		Nursing assistant		Registered nurse	Nursing assistant		Nursing assistant
3	Licensed practical nurse	Occupational therapist	Nursing assistant	Cook / Food services	Cook / Food services	Nursing assistant	Cook / Food services
		Physical therapist					Environmental services
							Speech-language therapist
4	Occupational therapist	Speech-language therapist	Cook / Food services	Dietitian / Nutritionist	Environmental services	Occupational therapist	No additional occupations reported
	Physical therapist						
	Social worker				Occupational therapy assistant		
	Speech-language therapist				Physical therapist		

← Most cited

*Findings prior to Spring 2021 not shown due to space constraints. Occupations cited by the same number of responses share the same rank number.

Reasons for vacancies and retention/turnover problems reported by nursing homes/skilled nursing facilities

Many employers in skilled nursing facilities reported not enough applicants for open positions as the main reason for exceptionally long vacancies, with a smaller number of responses citing salary/wage/benefits issues.

- [Registered nurse] Unable to attract RNs to apply for long standing openings or unwillingness to work weekends or alternative shifts.
- [Nursing assistant] We are doing a deep dive into this as an agency as we have had huge turnover of NACs in all homes but mostly in our largest facility.
- [Multiple occupations] Pay rates, new hires collecting sign on bonus and then resigning.
- [Multiple occupations] Lack of qualified applicants.
- [Multiple occupations] Difficult to recruit.

Nursing Homes/Skilled Nursing Facilities (Spring 2024)

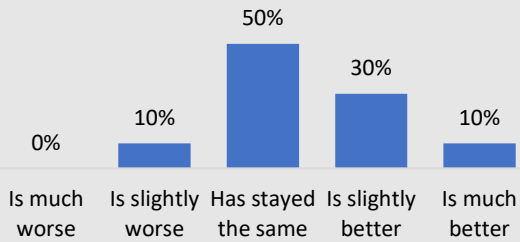
Responses by nursing homes/skilled nursing facilities to questions about current overarching workforce issues are summarized below. Earlier overarching and pandemic-related findings are at www.wa.sentinelnetwork.org/findings/covid-19/.

Overarching Workforce Issues: Themes and Examples

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

Comment examples

- *[Is slightly better]* We started a CNA school.
- *[Is slightly better]* We have several Nursing Assistant Registered (NAR) employees who cannot start working... NARs are waiting more than 5 weeks (8 weeks) to receive... certification and begin working inside SNFs.
- *[Has stayed the same]* Biggest challenge recruiting NACs.
- *[Has stayed the same]* We have been able to recruit more NACs to accommodate the high turnover.



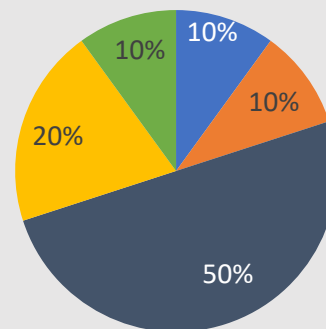
Describe retention strategies your organization has implemented in the past year and their impact on staffing.

Respondents described strategies around improving orientation, staff appreciation, and increasing pay.

- Stronger more thorough new employee orientation.
- Increased orientation and communication strategies.
- Staff appreciation.

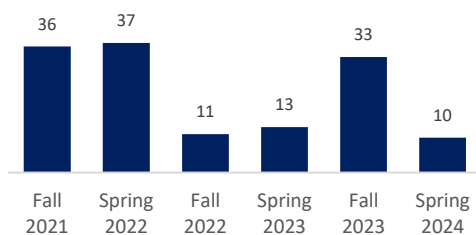
How would you describe your facility's use of contract/travel workers now compared with your use a year ago?

- We did not use contract/travel workers a year ago and still do not now
- We did use contract/travel workers a year ago but do not now
- We've decreased the number of contract/travel workers
- We use about the same number of contract/travel workers
- We've increased the number of contract/travel workers



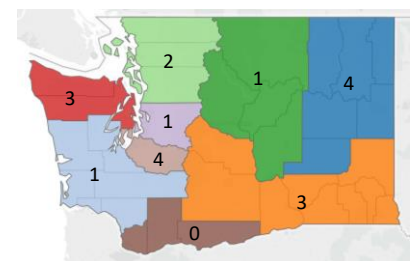
Number of Sentinel Network Responses from Nursing Homes/Skilled Nursing Facilities in WA

a) by Data Collection Date



Findings prior to Fall 2021 not shown due to space constraints.

b) by Accountable Community of Health (ACH) (Spring 2024)



Note: Each facility may serve clients/patients in more than one county.

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.

Contact: healthworkforce@wasentinelnetwork.org

Sentinel Network Team:

UW Center for Health Workforce Studies: Benjamin Stubbs, Grace Guenther, Nhu Nguyen, Beverly Marshall, Susan Skillman

WA Workforce Board: Renee Fullerton, Donald Smith