Washington's Health Workforce SENTINEL NETWORK

Findings Brief: *Assisted Living Facilities*

Spring 2025

This brief highlights workforce needs reported by Washington's **assisted living facilities** to the Health Workforce Sentinel Network in **May/June 2025.** These facilities have contributed workforce insights since 2016, across 17 reporting periods. More findings are available at wa.sentinelnetwork.org/findings.

Assisted Living Facilities

Top occupations cited as having exceptionally long vacancies*

Rank	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Fall 2023	Spring 2025
1	Nursing assistant	Nursing assistant	Licensed practical nurse Registered nurse	Nursing assistant	Nursing assistant	Licensed practical nurse Nursing assistant
2	Registered nurse	Cook / Food services	Nursing assistant	Cook / Food services Home health aide or home care aide	Cook / Food services	Home health aide or home care aide Registered nurse
3	Home health aide or home care aide	Home health aide or home care aide Licensed practical nurse	Cook / Food services	Environmental services	Home health aide or home care aide Licensed practical nurse	Multiple occupations cited at the same frequency
4	Licensed practical nurse	Registered nurse	Home health aide or home care aide	Multiple occupations cited at the same frequency	Environmental Services Registered nurse Personal care aide	
5	Personal care aide	Environmental services	Environmental services		Multiple occupations cited at the same frequency	

← Most cited

*Findings prior to Fall 2021 not shown due to space constraints. Spring 2024 findings not shown due to low response numbers. Occupations cited by the same number of responses share the same rank number.

Reasons for Exceptionally Long Vacancies

Respondents cited not enough qualified applicants and salary, wage, and benefits issues as some of the main reasons for exceptionally long vacancies across occupations. Examples of responses below:

- *[Licensed practical nurse] There are not enough nurses available, and we cannot compete with SNFs and hospitals in what they pay.*
- *[Nursing assistant] There are not enough people who want to do this job, and it takes classes and credentials to do it. Most people do not want to pay for the classes or find they don't want to do this job after they have been engaged for a while.*
- *[Home health aide or home care aide] Our biggest challenge is offering a competitive wage so caregivers will apply. We are on the same street as the hospital, 2 skilled nursing facilities, and memory care. All those other providers pay more than assisted living, so getting caregivers to choose us is the challenge. I find we have good retention if we can just get them to choose us.*

Overarching Workforce Issues: Themes and Examples

Currently, what are your organization's top workforce issues?
Over half of respondents representing assisted living facilities said **recruiting new workers/filling vacancies.**
Examples of responses include:

- *"We use a system called Symplr. We are not getting enough applications from these sources."*
- *"Finding employees that want to work a rotating schedule. Seems like most want to set their own schedules. It makes it difficult to have a schedule that flows for everyone on the team."*
- *"Recruiting new caregivers is our biggest challenge. Attracting them with our wages has been tough. We did raise our starting wage, but it is still not keeping us with the competing businesses around us. What we have found most helpful is getting our current staff involved in grassroots efforts to find new staff, using their own social media accounts to attract new staff."*

Has your organization experienced any of the following hiring challenges?
A majority of respondents reported experiencing testing delays, with fewer than half experiencing licensing delays.

- *"[Home care aide] training has been difficult to complete for some of the new hires. They have to wait a very long time to get a testing date."*
- *"Not enough teachers for classes. Not enough staff for testing when the classes are done. Sometimes it is quite a distance for both."*

In the past year, has your organization supported "grow-your-own" programs (i.e., apprenticeships, residencies or on-the-job training opportunities) to train workers for specific roles?
Less than half of respondents supported "grow-your-own" programs.

- *"We have offered in house home care aide training."*
- *"DSHS harm tags prevent us from creating training opportunities for CNA's and the educational programs in the area simply can't keep us with the need even with hiring bonuses being offered to students."*

To what extent have the following affected your ability to recruit and retain your workforce in the past year?
Childcare and housing availability remain a top issues for employers, impacting their recruitment and retention efforts.

Childcare availability

- *"Weekend childcare is the hardest to find, therefore we struggle with getting full coverage on the weekends."*
- *"Childcare is not round the clock."*

Housing availability

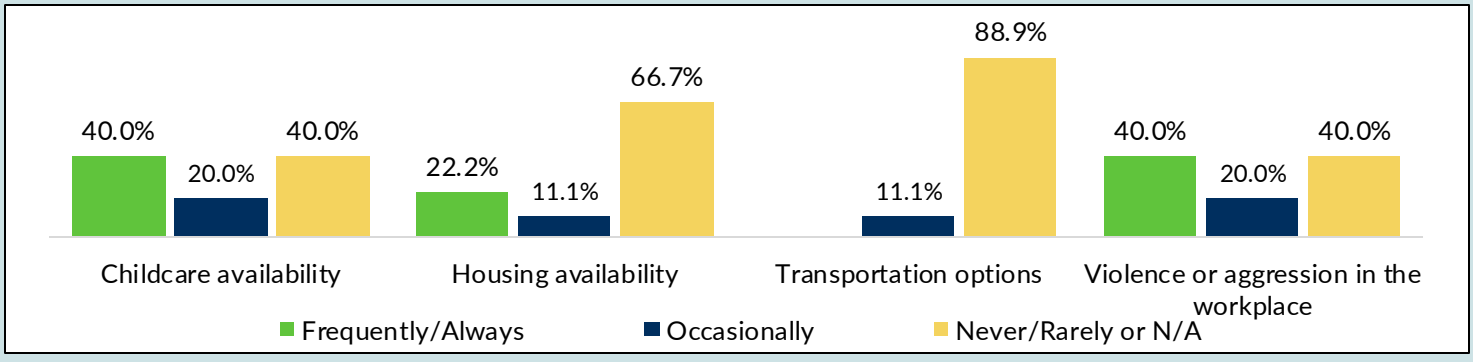
- *"Staff have to travel in from rural areas if they cannot afford housing in town, which adds a burden of time and transportation expense on to getting to work."*

Transportation options

- *"Bus routes are good for day and the start of evening shift. No bus for end of evening shift or NOC shift, so staff must have their own car or share rides with other staff at night; this is a barrier for some."*

Violence or aggression in the workplace

- *"Violence or aggression is extremely rare at the organization, but some people have fear about the work before even trying it. More education is needed about working with individuals with serious mental health issues."*

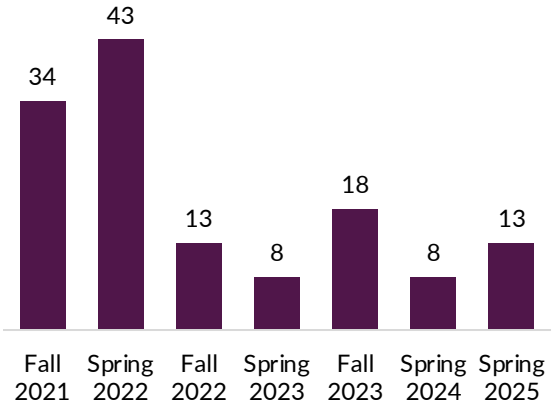


Reasons for Retention/Turnover Problems

Respondents described a variety of issues, including salary, wage, and benefits issues, not enough qualified applicants, and workload and patient acuity issues, as some of the main reasons for turnover and retention issues across occupations. Examples of responses below:

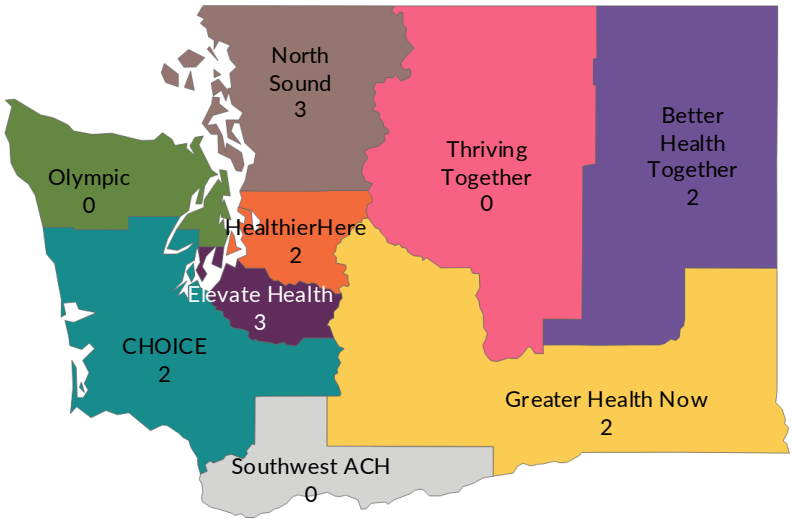
- *[Licensed practical nurse] LPNs are seeking RN certification. Once they have RN degrees they are in high demand and are paid double or triple the salary. The good ones continue on with their education.*
- *[Home health aide or home care aide] Not enough people want to work in geriatrics and care for residents. We need more immigrant population and visas that permit them to work.*
- *[Nursing assistant] People take this position then find they don't want to care for seniors.*
- *[Registered nurse] Many of our RNs are young and motivated by existential needs. Wages and hire-on-bonuses are creating a culture of facility hopping as RNs spend the required amount of time to receive their bonus and leave for a higher wage and a new bonus. Travel agencies are also recruiting many of our local RNs to work out of town for much higher pay.*
- *[Multiple occupations] Not enough people trained in this field. Education is expensive and the salaries are not high enough to warrant the pursuit of this education.*

Number of Responses from Assisted Living Facilities in WA by Data Collection Date



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

Number of Responding Assisted Living Facilities by Accountable Community of Health (ACH), Spring 2025



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, with a focus is 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 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:
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