Washington's Health Workforce SENTINEL NETWORK

Findings Brief: *Large Hospitals*

Spring 2025

This brief highlights workforce needs reported by Washington's **acute care hospitals (more than 25 beds, "large hospitals")** 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.

Large Hospitals

Top occupations with exceptionally long vacancies*

Rank	2016 – 2019	2020	Spring 2021	Fall 2023	Spring 2025
1	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Physician/Surgeon
2	Medical assistant	Physician/Surgeon	Nursing assistant Physician/Surgeon	Physician/ Surgeon	Magnetic Resonance Imaging technologist Registered nurse Radiologic technologist or technician
3	Physician/surgeon	Medical assistant Nursing assistant	Pharmacy technician	Nurse anesthetist Social worker	Medical assistant Social worker
4	Chemical dependency professional Nursing assistant Respiratory therapist Physical therapist	Respiratory therapist Social worker	Medical assistant Med/Clinical laboratory technologist Respiratory therapist Surgical technologist	Multiple occupations at the same frequency.	Multiple occupations at the same frequency.
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 supportmeaningful findings. Occupations cited by the same number of responses share the same rank number.

Reasons for Exceptionally Long Vacancies

Respondents cited not enough qualified applicants as one of the main reasons for exceptionally long vacancies across occupations. Examples of responses below:

- *[Physician/Surgeon] High competition for talent locally or even nationally. Not as many going into the field. Cost of living in or commuting to [our area].*
- *{Radiologic technologist or technician] Specialist rad techs such as interventional radiology techs are a high competition for talent locally or even nationally. Not as many going into specialty. Cost of living in or commuting to [our area]. Hospital based positions have a patient-care need to work routine work schedules, days of the week, and consistent work shifts.*
- *[Multiple occupations] Rural locations limited supply of qualified applicants.*

Reasons for Retention/Turnover Problems

Respondents highlighted workload and patient acuity issues as a common reason for retention/turnover problems.

- *[Medical assistant] On-going high turnover for medical assistants continues due to regional competition and pay competitiveness. Efforts to address this include a regular, annual pay equity review in addition to implementing programming in recent years such as a medical assistant professional ladder program, MA apprenticeship program, recognition retention efforts and enhanced career pathway resources.*
- *[Bachelors prepared counselor] One area of Bachelor's-prepared counselors where we've experienced on-going high turnover is for Pediatric Mental Health Specialist roles. This has been due to the intensity of the inpatient psychiatric environment and high and steadily increasing patient acuity. Retention strategies have included the implementation of a career ladder model for professional advancement, expanded onboarding experiences and safety training, education benefits including student loan repayment, and enhanced check-ins.*

Overarching Workforce Issues: Themes and Examples

Currently, what are your organization's top workforce issues?
Most respondents representing large hospitals said **recruiting new workers/filling vacancies** and **retaining current workers/increasing worker satisfaction**,

- *"We have increased our numbers of training positions. Pool of qualified individuals is too small. Efforts made re advertising done. Remains an issue"*
- *"Because these positions are in such high demand across the country, we work diligently to retain the knowledge and skills we have."*

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?
A majority of respondents supported "grow-your-own" programs.

- *"Promoting child psychiatry as a career option with medical students"*
- *"CNA MA Partnerships with local community college for CNA."*

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

Childcare availability

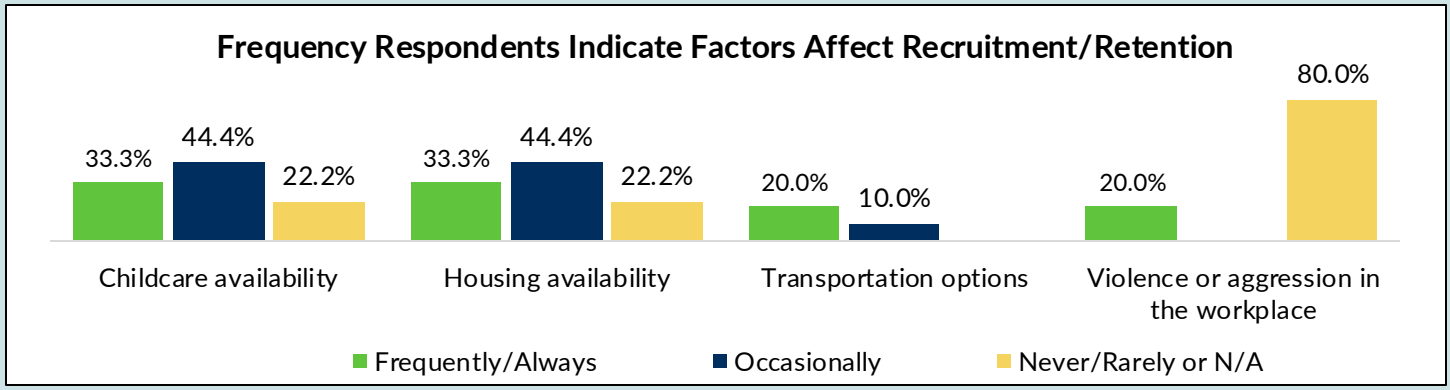
- *"We have been asked to start our own childcare facility due to the extended hours healthcare workers are scheduled as well as the high cost of childcare within WA."*

Housing availability

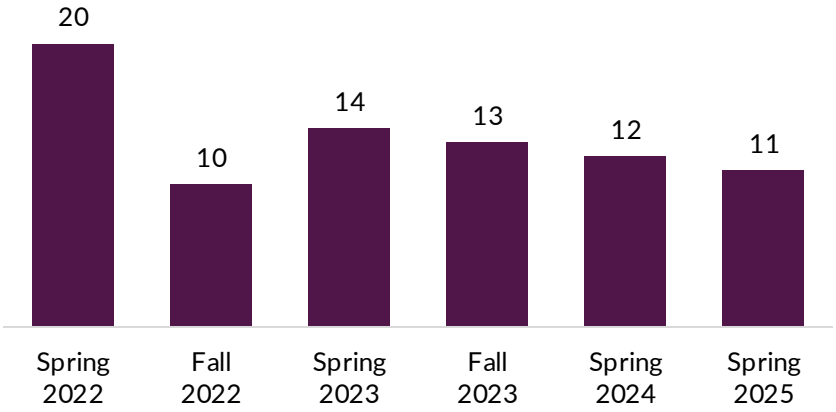
- *"Fast growing area with high demand on housing. "*
- *"Cost has been cited as a concern."*

Violence or aggression in the workplace

"Healthcare has become increasingly exposed to violence and aggression. This is a nationwide concern that we experience regularly."

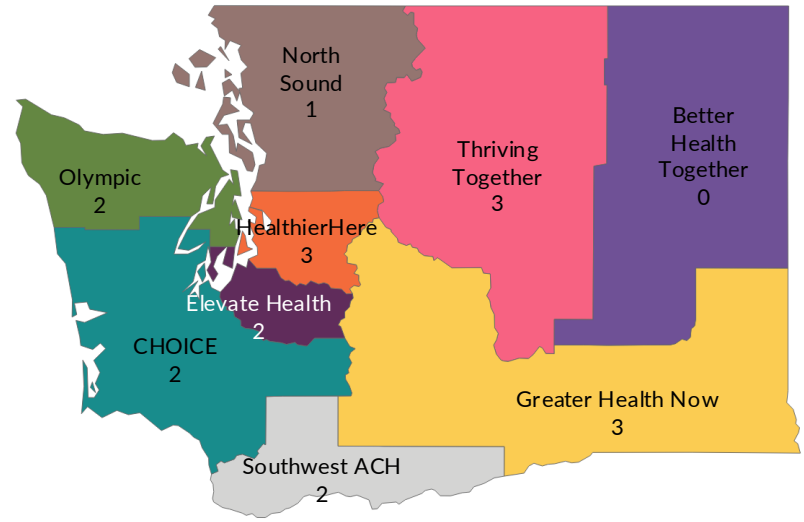


Number of Responses from Large Hospitals in WA by Data Collection Date



*Findings prior to Spring 2022 not shown due to space constraints.

Number of Responding Large Hospitals 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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