

Washington's Health Workforce SENTINEL NETWORK

Findings Brief: Long-Term Care Facilities

Spring 2026

This brief highlights workforce needs reported by Washington's **long-term care facilities** to the Health Workforce Sentinel Network during **April/May 2026**. Long-term care facilities include adult family homes, assisted living facilities, nursing home/skilled nursing facilities, and other nursing/personal care facilities. These facilities have contributed workforce insights since 2016, across 18 reporting periods. More findings are available at wa.sentinelnetwork.org/findings.

Assisted Living Facilities*

Top occupations cited as having exceptionally long vacancies						
Rank	Spring 2022	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Fall 2023	Spring 2025	Spring 2026
1	Nursing assistant	Licensed practical nurse Registered nurse	Nursing assistant	Nursing assistant	Licensed practical nurse Nursing assistant	Registered nurse
2	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	Home health aide or home care aide Licensed practical nurse
3	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.	Cook / Food services Nursing assistant Occupational therapist Speech-language therapist
4	Registered nurse	Home health aide or home care aide	Multiple occupations cited at the same frequency/	Environmental Services Registered nurse Personal care aide		No additional occupations reported
5	Environmental services	Environmental services		Multiple occupations cited at the same frequency/		

← Most cited

*Findings prior to Fall 2022 not shown due to space constraints. Occupations cited by the same number of responses share the same rank number.

Reasons for Retention/Turnover Problems

Respondents cited low wages, high cost of living, burnout, demanding work schedules, housing affordability challenges, competition from hospitals and other employers, and limited training pipelines as the primary drivers of turnover and retention challenges across occupations. Compared with prior rounds, more respondents representing long-term care facilities indicated that occupations did not experience retention or turnover problems. Examples of responses are shown below:

- [Home care aide, Assisted living facility] Burnout, having to work very long shifts, demanding job, and having to be away from family for long periods of time.
- [Occupational therapist, Nursing home or skilled nursing facility] Not a retention issue, more of a recruiting problem. Facility just changed to in house therapy staff vs contracted.
- [Multiple occupations, Assisted living facility] Pay is the biggest issue, and cost of living in [our area]. Many of our staff move out of the area due to cost of living... We offer free meals while they work and low staff to resident ratio to entice them to stay.

Nursing Homes/Skilled Nursing Facilities*

Top occupations with exceptionally long vacancies							
Rank	Spring 2022	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Fall 2023	Spring 2024	Spring 2025	Spring 2026
1	Registered nurse	Nursing assistant	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Licensed practical nurse
2	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse Registered nurse	Licensed practical nurse Nursing assistant	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse Nursing assistant	Nursing Assistant	Social worker
3	Nursing assistant	Cook / Food services	Cook / Food services	Nursing assistant	Cook / Food services Environmental services Speech-language therapist	Licensed practical nurse	Cook / Food services Environmental services Registered nurse
4	Cook / Food services	Dietitian / Nutritionist	Environmental services Occupational therapy assistant	Occupational therapist Physical therapist	No additional occupations reported	Medical records specialist	Nursing assistant Occupational therapist Office personnel

← Most cited

*Findings prior to Fall 2022 not shown due to space constraints. Occupations cited by the same number of responses share the same rank number.

Reasons for Exceptionally Long Vacancies

Respondents cited too few qualified applicants, along with compensation, scheduling, workforce shortages, burnout, and recruitment challenges, as some of the main reasons for exceptionally long vacancies across occupations. Notably, compared with prior rounds, more respondents representing long-term care facilities indicated that occupations did not experience exceptionally long vacancies for occupations. Examples of responses are shown below:

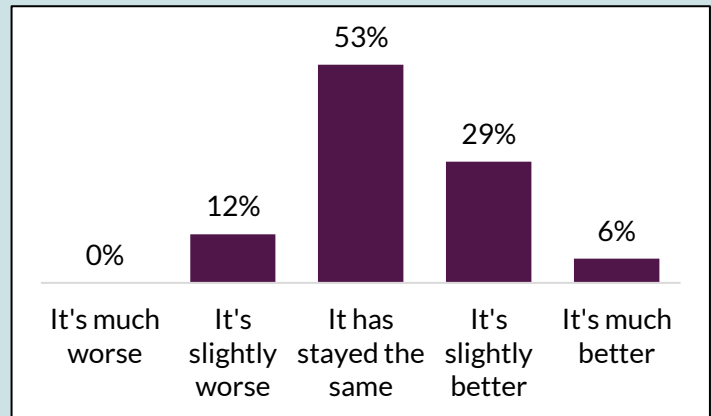
- [Registered nurse, Assisted Living] We have had a RN opening for the past year with little to no candidates. When we talk to new grads at RN career fairs, there seems to be little interest or talk about [assisted living] settings. Most RN candidates that we see want to be in either the ED, Acute, or Wound Care. This makes it exceptionally difficult to staff the support we need.
- [Licensed practical nurse, Nursing home or skilled nursing facility] LPNs are the most challenging clinical position for our agency to fill given the limited number of active, licensed LPN candidates in the workforce... Additionally, the limited number of available LPN training programs across the state pose a significant threat to the overall sustainability of the LPN workforce.
- [Licensed practical nurse, Nursing home or skilled nursing facility] Hard to recruit LPNs in eastern WA where they are less LPN programs available.
- [Social worker - healthcare, Nursing home or skilled nursing facility] Given the educational and licensure requirements for Social Workers, and the requirement that our roles hold a LICSW, wages are not commensurate with the average salaries we see across the state. Additionally, in our rural areas or areas outside of major metros, we struggle to retain social workers as commuting and housing costs rise.

Overarching Workforce Issues: Themes and Examples

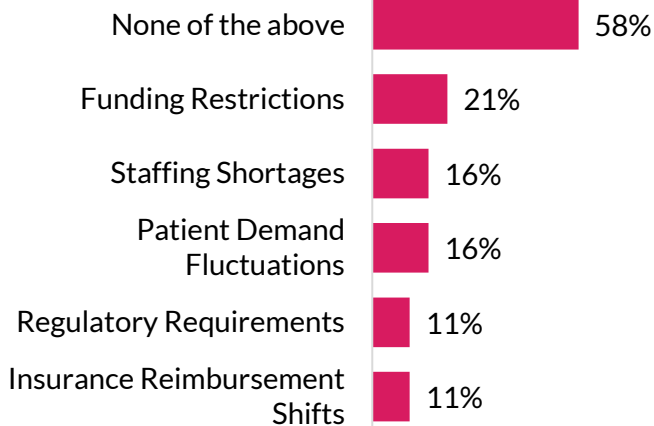
In the past year, how has your organization's ability to staff your facility/facilities changed?

About half of respondents (53%) indicated that their ability to staff has stayed the same, and slightly more than a quarter (29%) indicated that it's slightly better. Examples of responses include:

- *[It's stayed the same, Assisted living facility] Most of our staff have been here for 2 or more years. The only positions we have had to fill are for temporary reasons.*
- *[It's stayed the same, Nursing home or skilled nursing facility] We continue to struggle with hiring RN staff as our regulations state we have to have 16/24 hours of RN coverage. We have more LPN applicants than RN.*
- *[It's slightly worse, Assisted living facility] We are having difficulty finding ppl to work so we are all having to work more shifts which in turn wears us out.*



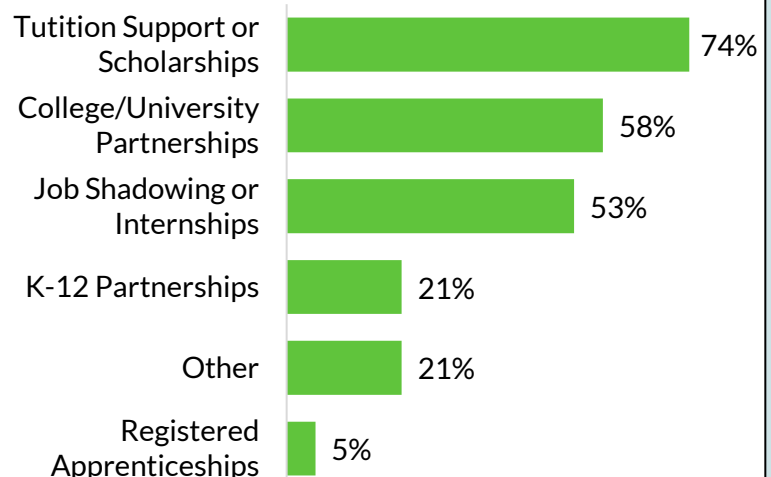
Has your organization recently taken steps or made plans to take steps to navigate uncertainty or prepare for potential changes in any of the following areas? (check all that apply) Responses included:



- *Started our own CNA programs which has been extremely expensive and time consuming. - Assisted living facility*
- *Our agency is consistently monitoring resident acuity to ensure current staffing levels and overall staffing plans can continue to support the level of acuity needed from the aging resident population. while we can anticipate an increased need, staffing remains a challenge... - Nursing home or skilled nursing facility*

Which of the following workforce outreach, pipeline development, or early-career development strategies does your organization support? (check all that apply) Responses included:

- *Training Certified Nursing Assistants. Supporting growth from NAC to LPN to RN. - Nursing home or skilled nursing facility*
- *Job shadowing... across all departments but mostly nursing and the therapy department. We partner with [local colleges] to host clinicals every quarter for the RN programs and CNA programs. We also partner with [a university] for their internship program. - Assisted living facility*
- *We offer tuition support as well as information for Leading Age scholarships to all of our staff. We have had several employees who have been recipients of the scholarships. - Assisted living facility*



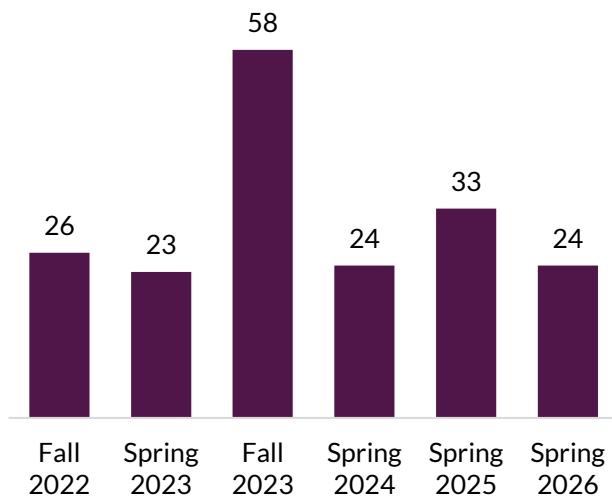
Overarching Workforce Issues: Themes and Examples

Has your organization adopted, or is it considering adopting, any new or existing technology?

About half of respondents reported using or exploring AI and other emerging technologies, including for billing, scheduling, EHR workflows, documentation support, administrative tasks, and fall-detection. Most described implementation as still being in the early stages..

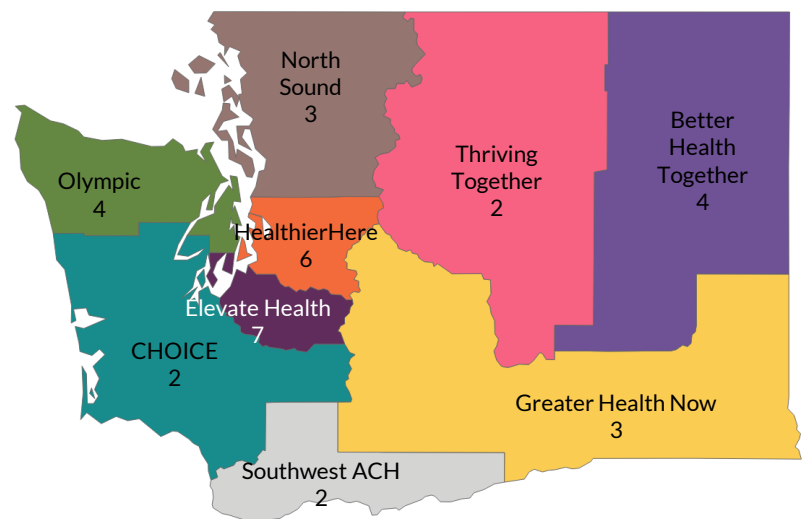
- We use COVR (Scheduling software) and PCC (EMR) that is incorporating AI technology.
- New software for electronic medical records, marketing, activity department, and billing. We implemented AI technology for fall detections to help staff (and residents) called Augi throughout all our buildings last year.

Number of Responses from Long-Term Care Facilities in WA by Data Collection Date



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

Number of Responding Long-Term Care Facilities by Accountable Community of Health (ACH), Spring 2026



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:

<https://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

