

The Washington Health Workforce Sentinel Network

Fall 2022 Update

Health Workforce Council Meeting
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Purpose

Since 2016, the Health Workforce Sentinel Network has supported efficient and effective health workforce preparation and deployment by:

- **Identifying emerging signals** of changes in health workforce demand.
- Tracking and identifying **trends over time**.
- **Rapidly disseminating information** to education, training and policy partners who can respond to findings.

Overarching Workforce Topics - “Enabling Factors”

In the past year, has access to childcare, housing, transportation, or other factors affected staffing at your organization?

Percent who answered “Yes” for each enabling factor

	Overall (n = 167)	Dental office/clinic (n = 49)	Long term care (n = 22)	Small hospital (n = 12)	Rural health clinic (n = 16)
Childcare	68%	69%	68%	83%	75%
Housing	50%	35%	50%	83%	69%
Transportation	35%	27%	64%	17%	31%
Other	18%	20%	9%	8%	6%

Overarching Workforce Topics - “Enabling Factors”

In the past year, has access to childcare, housing, transportation, or other factors affected staffing at your organization?

- “[Childcare is a] HUGE issue as most employees are single moms or have very young children in need of daycare....almost opened up our own onsite daycare.” (Dental office)
- “Rural communities have limited tax base and funds to grow the above areas [childcare, housing and transportation].” (Behavioral-mental health clinic)
- “Lack of housing in our area for permanent staff and travelers, lack of affordable homes for sale as well as affordable rentals.” (Rural health clinic)
- “Some of our care givers use public transportation and cannot work at night.” (Assisted living facility)
- “Big time. [Childcare] is one thing [that] if improved could help get workers back to work.” (Dental office)

Overarching Workforce Topics – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Please describe any institutional actions your organization has taken in the past year to improve diversity in your workforce or to make your organization more representative of the population it serves. What effects have these actions had on hiring and retention of the workforce, if any?

- *“Our organization's DEI committee has begun a review of employee experience from hire to termination to identify necessary actions to improve workforce diversity. Effects of action TBD.”*
(Behavioral-mental health clinic)
- *“We have hired 6 bilingual Spanish speakers and have bilingual physicians who speak English plus Spanish, Vietnamese and Tagalog. We have diverse LGBTQ and racial and ethnic diversity in staff which seems to be helping with work retention and our ability to care for our patients.”*
(Primary care clinic)
- *“Started holistic admissions. Identified key stakeholder populations that will be key in hiring efforts.”* (Higher education/research)
- *“Diversity and inclusion are also very important to me. Unfortunately, there are not enough qualified applicants to have the luxury of considering hiring based upon creating a diverse team.”* (Dental office)

Behavioral Health Module

In recent years, how well prepared have you found applicants and newly hired behavioral health providers (especially those with master's degrees and higher) with regard to each specific skill or knowledge category listed below)?

Areas where the highest percentages of respondents reported applicants and new hires were **well prepared** included:

- social justice and equity (45%)
- maintaining healthy boundaries with clients and other providers (42%)
- adherence to accepted ethical and behavioral standards of the profession (42%)
- clinical assessment (36%)
- motivational interviewing (33%)
- appropriate treatment for behavioral health (33%)
- creating a therapeutic and helping relationship with the client (33%)

Areas where the highest percentages of respondents reported applicants and new hires were **not well prepared** included:

- interdisciplinary team-based care (55%)
- working with high utilizers/high need populations (50%)
- documentation (42%)
- motivational interviewing (42%)
- solution-focused brief therapy (40%)
- substance use (36%)
- crisis de-escalation (33%)
- serving diverse clients (33%)
- research-informed practice (33%)
- relevant law (33%)

Key themes from Fall 2022

- Turnover and unfilled vacancies, especially among lower-wage occupations, are negatively affecting many organizations and, in some cases, have limited their ability to provide services.
- Inadequate wages and benefits are cited as major barriers to hiring and retention, but other enabling factors such as childcare and housing were also mentioned.
- Many respondents report concerns about the mental health status of their workers, possibly contributing to continued high rates of turnover due to burnout.
- Certain occupations, such as dental hygienists, dental assistants, nursing staff, master's-level behavioral health professionals, medical assistants and food services staff, were reported to be especially hard to hire and retain.
- While challenges related to COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses exist, most efforts to address workforce challenges have shifted to the underlying factors that were exacerbated during the pandemic.

Plans for 2023 and beyond

Strategic planning sessions are planned

Some general goals include:

- Improve experience for employer-Sentinels
- Continue to be a valuable tool for workforce planning
- Further develop behavioral health module (and possibly others)

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responses
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Washington's Health Workforce Sentinel Network

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