

Washington's Health Workforce SENTINEL NETWORK

Summary of Spring 2026 Findings

Spring 2026

Washington's Health Workforce Sentinel Network is a tool to understand employers' workforce needs – such as challenges related to recruitment, retention and needed skills – and make that information available to educators and policy makers. Having an ample workforce is key to overcoming the state's top healthcare challenges. Findings since 2016, including an interactive dashboard, are available at wa.sentinelnetwork.org/findings.

About Us

The Health Workforce Sentinel Network supports efficient and effective health workforce preparation and deployment by:

- Identifying the skills needed and local conditions that may make hiring difficult
- Providing information about the “how and why” behind workforce demand signals
- Engaging the full network of stakeholders needed to identify and solve workforce problems

Health workforce employer Sentinels can:

- Communicate their health workforce needs to decisionmakers
- Compare their organization's experiences and emerging workforce demand trends with similar employer groups.
- Have access to current and actionable information about emerging workforce needs
- Help to ensure that the state's health workforce is prepared to respond to the transforming health care environment

Spring 2026 Findings Briefs

The following Findings Briefs highlight current workforce needs reported to the Washington Health Workforce Sentinel Network by select health settings during April/May 2026:

Facility-specific briefs

- [Behavioral Health Facilities](#)
- [Community Health Centers](#)
- [Dental Offices/Clinics](#)
- [Higher Education/Research Organizations](#)
- [Large Hospitals \(≥25 beds\)](#)
- [Long-term Care Facilities](#)
- [Rural Health Clinics](#)
- [Small Hospitals \(≤25 beds\)](#)

Cross-cutting briefs

- [Peer Counselors](#)
- [Primary Care Occupations](#)
- [Rural Health Workforce](#)
- [Nursing Occupations](#)

View all findings briefs from 2016-2026:



High-Level Findings from Spring 2026

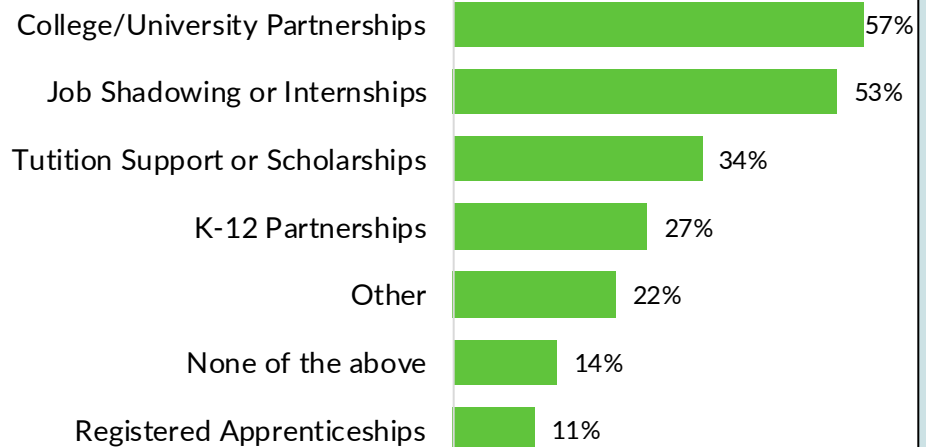
Respondents indicated that overall staffing has largely remained stable compared with prior survey rounds, while continuing to cite persistent vacancies due to fewer and less-qualified applicants, retention challenges related to wages, competition, and burnout, and system pressures such as funding limitations, reimbursement gaps, and training constraints. Examples of responses include:

- *For the past year we have continued to have the same vacancies. [...] We continue to post open positions and to hold rounds of interviews. – FQHC*
- *Our salaries cannot compete due to reimbursement rates we have to balance... smaller agencies cannot compete to find quality and experienced staff members. – Home health agency*
- *Fiscal insecurity from federal and state funding sources make it difficult to fill open positions... legislative cuts... are creating vast issues across the state. – Public health organization*
- *We are having difficulty finding people to work so we are all having to work more shifts which in turn wears us out. – LTC facility*

Examples of Responses Across all Facility Types

Respondents highlighted efforts to strengthen workforce pipelines through training partnerships and “grow-your-own” strategies, alongside early adoption of technology and operational adaptations to address staffing challenges. Examples of responses include:

- *“We partner with many universities to place both bachelor's level and master's level staff hoping that upon graduation there is an interest in accepting a full-time position at the agency.” – Behavioral Health Agency*
- *“We have medical students come for rotations and recently added a doctor who had rotated with us as a student.” – Primary Care Clinic*
- *“Our organization has their own Medical Assistance Apprentice program.” – Rural Health Clinic*



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 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/>

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