



ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS: GROWING DEMAND IN TIMES OF HEALTH CARE CHANGE

Results from the
2010 Health Care
Professionals
Workforce Survey



Healthcare Association
of New York State

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Healthcare Association
of New York State

IN COLLABORATION WITH



INTRODUCTION

Vacancy and Turnover Rates for NPs and PAs in 2009

	Vacancy	Turnover
NPs	7.8%	6.8%
PAs	4.5%	8.9%

Allied health care professionals are integral to the quality of care delivered at hospitals and health systems. An adequate supply of these trained professionals—including licensed practical nurses (LPNs), nurse practitioners (NPs), certified nurse aides (CNAs), physician assistants (PAs), physical therapists (PTs), clinical laboratory technicians, X-ray technicians, medical coders, dietitians/nutritionists, pharmacists, and licensed clinical social workers (LCSWs)—is essential to ensure that New York’s health care provider organizations continue to meet growing demand for health care services.

The demand for all of these professionals is growing, and the need for NPs and PAs, in particular, is certain to rise as the federal health care reform law is implemented and the shortage of primary care physicians continues.

This report summarizes the results of a survey of 118 hospitals and health systems—a 62% response rate—covering vacancy rates, turnover, and the ability to recruit and retain allied health care professionals. The data in this report reflect calendar year 2009.

This report represents a collaborative effort between the Healthcare Association of New York State

(HANYS), State University of New York (SUNY) Center for Health Workforce Studies (CHWS), Greater New York Hospital Association (GNYHA), with support from Iroquois Healthcare Alliance (IHA), Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council (NSHC), Northern Metropolitan Hospital Association (NorMet), Rochester Regional Healthcare Association (RRHA), and Western New York Healthcare Association (WNYHA).

As the demand for health care services grows, the availability of sufficient numbers of allied health care professionals takes on greater importance. A CHWS report, *The Health Care Workforce in New York, 2008*, which analyzed U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data, found:

- since 2000, employment in the health care sector has grown by 30%, while other sectors have grown by about 4%;
- by 2018, nearly one in nine jobs is projected to be in health care;
- between 2008 and 2018, more than 6.1 million health care workers will be needed nationally to fill new jobs and replace workers who leave their jobs or retire; and
- employment growth is seen in hospitals, ambulatory care settings, and home health care.

IMPACT OF THE RECESSION

The economic recession reduced vacancy and turnover rates for all allied health professionals in 2009, compared to 2008. However, there is reason to believe that this reduction is temporary; vacancy and turnover rates will likely increase once the economy recovers.

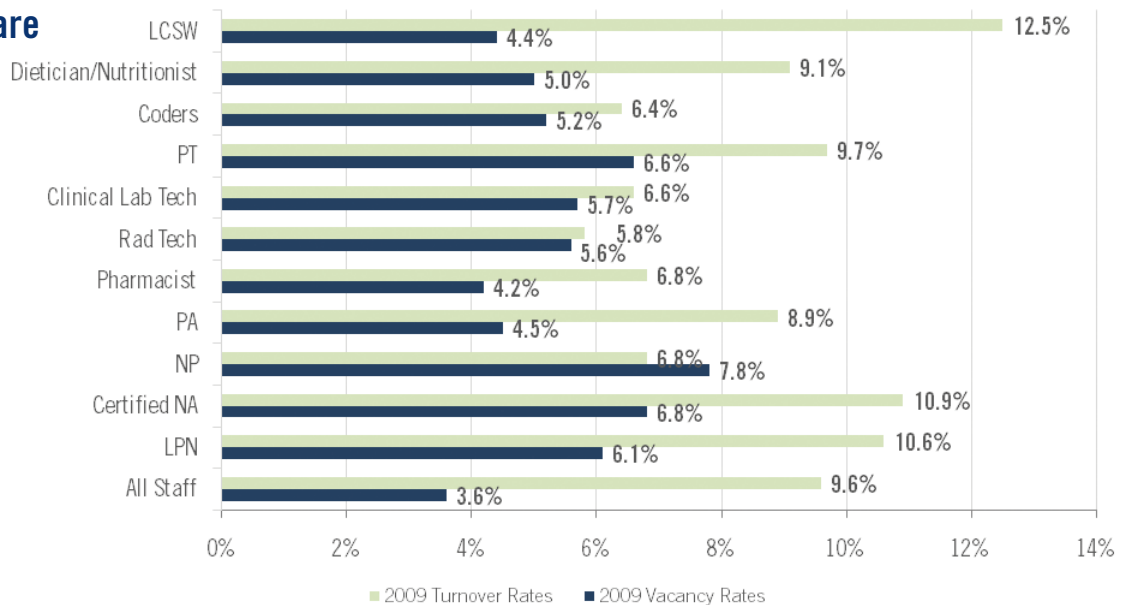
According to a separate HANYS/ GNYHA 2009 financial and economic survey of hospitals:

- forty percent of facilities reported that they had to freeze wages or cut staff;
- thirty-two percent implemented hiring freezes;
- more than 25% indicated they implemented layoffs or eliminated positions; and
- nine percent were forced to reduce services.

The *Allied Health Care Professionals Workforce Survey* asked provider organizations about the impact of the recession on the demand for hospital services. Seventeen percent of respondents indicated that the economic downturn had resulted in professional staff layoffs at their facilities. In addition:

- seventy-three percent experienced decreasing turnover rates;
- forty-three percent reported that the overall supply of health care workers increased since the economic downturn;
- fifty-one percent indicated there were fewer retirements; and
- about one-third (31%) indicated the demand for services increased, while another 49% indicated the demand for services remained the same.

Allied Health Care Professionals 2009 Vacancy and Turnover Rates¹

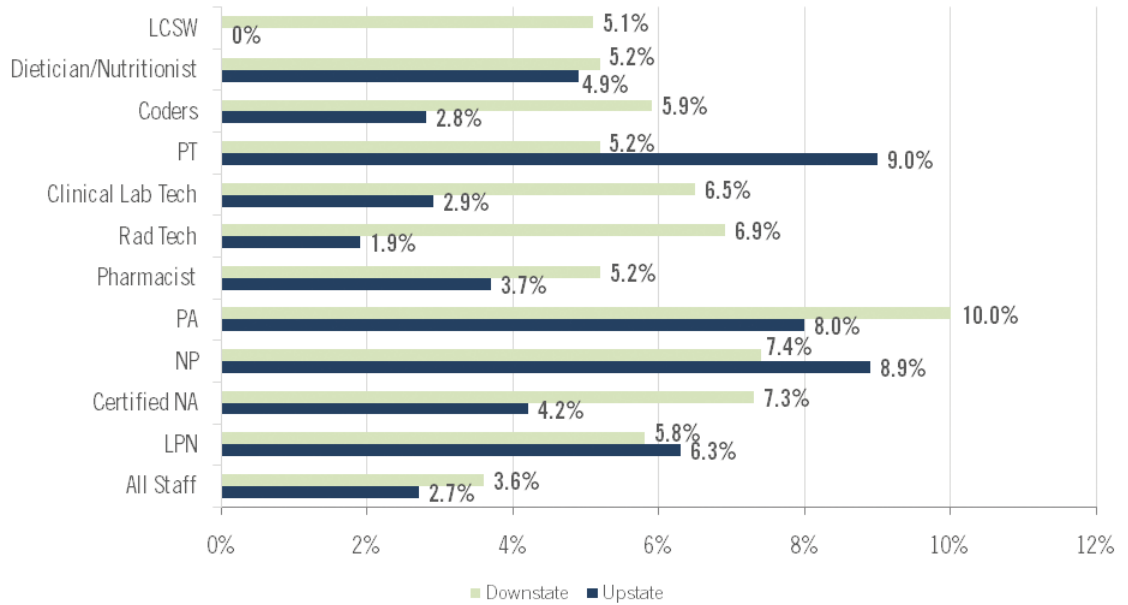


¹Vacancy rates were calculated by using the budgeted and staffed full-time equivalents (FTEs) reported by the hospital/health system. Only respondents who included both numbers were included in the rate. Turnover rates were calculated by taking the total separations from the facility and dividing them by the total number of staffed FTEs.

For several professions, vacancy rates are much higher in the downstate regions than in upstate New York. These include CNAs, radiologic

technicians, coders, and LCSWs. Upstate New York has very high vacancy rates for PTs.

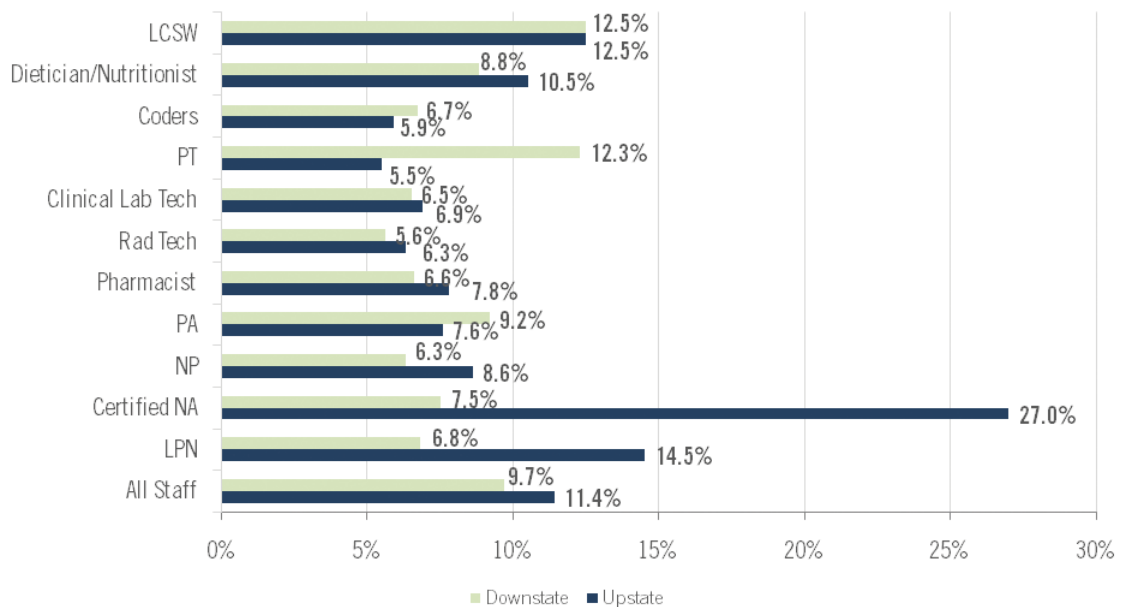
Upstate vs. Downstate Vacancy Rates



Overall, there is little variation between upstate and downstate turnover rates. However, LPN and

CNA turnover rates were particularly high upstate, and turnover rates for PTs were twice as high downstate.

Upstate vs. Downstate Turnover Rates



PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS AND NURSE PRACTITIONERS

With researchers predicting physician shortages at the national and state level, PAs and NPs can be expected to play a more crucial role in the delivery of health care services. HANYS has collected workforce data on PAs and NPs for several years. HANYS' 2009 report, *The Doctor Can't See You Now*, summarized the results of HANYS' physician workforce survey. Ninety-three percent of the hospitals and health systems that responded to the survey reported they employ NPs, and 87% employ PAs. The majority of these respondents indicated that they employ these professionals because they are cost-effective and fill an unmet need for primary care. Most (70%) believe that the use of these professionals is a viable long-term strategy to ensure access to primary and specialty care.

The 2009 survey of allied health care professionals collected information on vacancy and turnover rates, and

difficulties with recruitment and retention. Both vacancy and turnover rates decreased significantly from the previous year—a temporary change attributable to the economic downturn.

When examining the difficulty in recruitment of NPs and PAs, approximately 28% of hospitals reported that NPs were difficult to recruit, and 29% reported that PAs were difficult to recruit, citing shortages, competition, and salary requirements as the biggest obstacles. Data from a report by CHWS showed the number of PAs who received licenses increased 30% in New York State between 2004 and 2008. For NPs, the increase was 21.4%. Nearly 5,000 NPs and PAs were added to the health care workforce during that period. While these may seem like large numbers, HANYS expects the demand for these two professions to increase as federal health reform legislation is implemented.



SUPPLY AND DEMAND OF ALLIED HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

According to CHWS' report, *The Health Care Workforce in New York, 2008*:

- hospitals employ nearly 43% of the state's health care workforce;
- the number of jobs in certain selected health care occupations greatly decreased between 2004 and 2008, including LPNs and medical and clinical laboratory technologists;
- the number of jobs in other health care specialties increased, including pharmacists, registered dietitians, and physical therapists;
- the number of licensed individuals in certain health care professions increased between 2004 and

2008, including physician assistants, nurse practitioners, physical therapists, social workers, pharmacists, LPNs, and dieticians; and

- the occupations with the greatest need between now and 2018 will include CNAs and LPNs.

RECRUITMENT

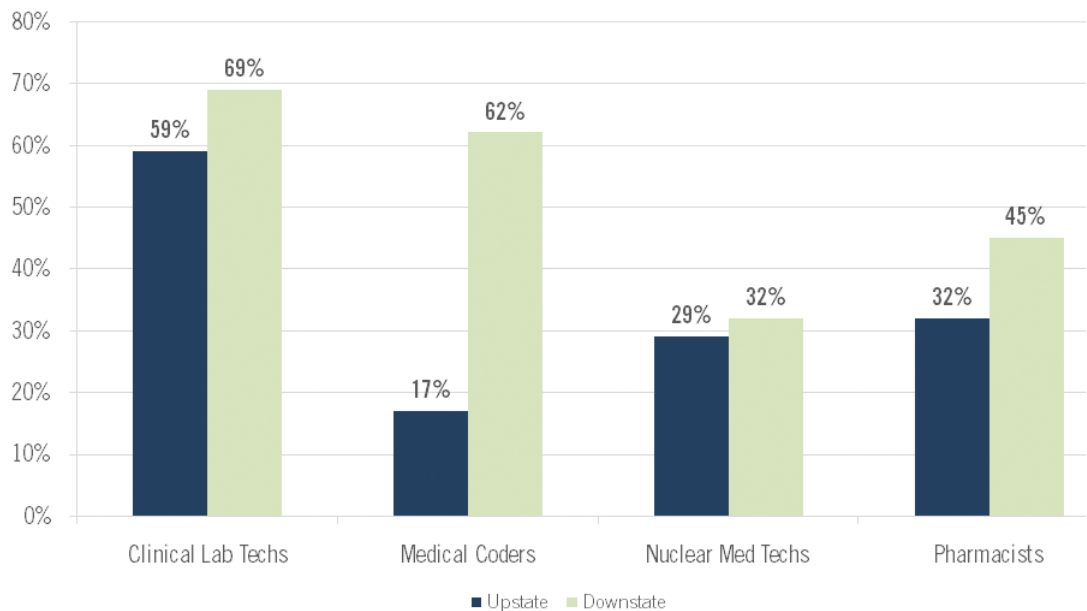
Despite increases in the number of those licensed for certain health care professions, recruitment of specific allied health professionals continues to be a major problem for many hospitals. The percentage of respondents who indicated that it was “very difficult” to recruit for a particular professional is listed below:

Clinical Laboratory Technicians	75%
Medical Coders	57%
Physical Therapists	55%
Pharmacists	46%
Nuclear Medicine Technicians	45%

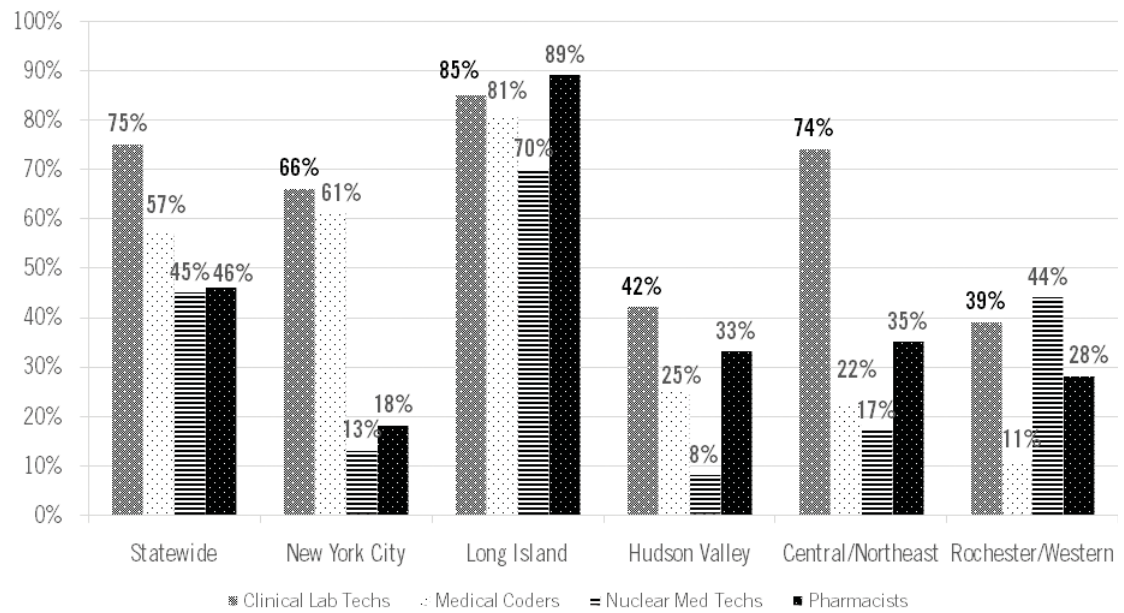
Key reasons cited for the difficulty recruiting these particular health care professionals were shortages, competition, and salary requirements.

It is of interest to note that, of the total number of separations from service for clinical laboratory technicians, 24% retired. None of the other professionals had such a high retirement rate. Since the implementation of the New York State Clinical Laboratory Technology Practice Act, which since 2006 requires licensure of clinical laboratory professionals, hospitals and health systems have continually reported difficulty recruiting clinical laboratory technicians.

Percentage of Upstate vs. Downstate Providers Reporting “Very Difficult” to Recruit



Percentage of Respondents Reporting “Very Difficult” to Recruit by Region



The ability to recruit key health care professionals varies widely by region. Clinical laboratory technicians are universally difficult to recruit, but more difficult in the New York City, Long Island, and Central New York/Northeast regions. Pharmacists and nuclear medical technicians are particularly difficult to recruit on Long Island.

Medical coders are more difficult to recruit on Long Island and New York City. The primary reasons cited on Long Island for the difficulty are shortages (82%) and salary (63%). In New York City, the primary reasons were shortages (85%) and competition (70%).

RETENTION

Respondents indicated that the following professions were the most difficult to retain:

Clinical Laboratory Technicians	32%
Certified Nurse Aides	29%
Medical Coders	27%
Nuclear Medicine Technicians	25%
Sonographers	25%

The data suggest that while recruitment of certain allied health professionals is very difficult, retention does not seem to be as much of a problem. This could be a reflection of the economic recession—during which fewer people leave their jobs.

CONCLUSION

Ongoing allied health care professionals shortages across the state continue to put pressure on health care providers as they struggle to deliver quality health care services to the people in their communities. While the recession has temporarily eased the urgency of the shortages, expected retirements and the economic recovery will likely reverse this situation and cause additional strains.

Demand for NPs and PAs is certain to rise as federal health care reform is implemented and the shortage of primary care physicians continues. It is

critical that the supply of these professionals is adequate to support increased access to primary care throughout the state, particularly in vulnerable shortage areas.

HANYS, GNYHA, IHA, NSHC, NorMet, RRHA, and WNYHA will continue to support legislation at both the state and federal levels to increase the state and federal commitment to addressing workforce shortages through workforce development programs, scholarships, loan forgiveness, and financial support.

