

# Every role, every region

## Healthcare workforce crisis requires urgent action

Maintaining a robust and stable healthcare workforce is the cornerstone of providing quality care. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated and exacerbated longstanding national workforce challenges. This has led to widespread healthcare workforce shortages, diminishing access to care.

Hospitals and health systems across New York state were surveyed in the fall of 2022 about recruitment and retention for more than a dozen essential healthcare roles. The survey's results were distressing.

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### Vacancy rates are high amid widespread recruitment challenges

Since 2020, many experienced healthcare personnel have left the field, and the pipeline of new healthcare workers cannot meet demand. **Thousands of positions, across a wide variety of roles, are going unfilled despite active recruitment.**

- Vacancy rates for key clinical roles like licensed practical nurses are as high as 22.4%.
- A reported 12.0% vacancy for registered nurses amounts to over 8,000 open RN positions at respondents' facilities.
- A majority of respondents reported clinical laboratory technologists (92.5%), psychiatrists (78.6%) and RNs (74.1%) as difficult roles to fill.
- Over 70% of respondents are experiencing average hiring times of two months or more in several professional roles. That's before any orientation or training — sometimes several months' worth — can begin.
- 84.5% of respondents said they have trouble filling the evening, night and weekend shifts that keep hospitals' essential services available 24/7.

Recruitment challenges span all areas of the state, all sizes of facilities, and both academic and non-academic hospitals and health systems.

### Access to care is diminishing, as the need for caregivers continues to grow

Hospitals and health systems are employing every available tool and strategy to recruit new professionals, support team members and retain their current personnel amid a national workforce shortage. Despite significant action by healthcare providers, New Yorkers' access to care has been impacted.

- 33% of respondents have had to make the difficult decision to close units, resulting in fewer beds available, delays in admissions and procedures, longer emergency department wait times and increases in other systemic delays and bottlenecks.
- To fill persistent staffing gaps, 94.8% of hospitals reported having to increase the use of agency/contract nurses and 82.8% have increased the use of other agency staff, at ongoing and unsustainable costs that draw limited resources away from other priorities.

**While services are shrinking, the demand for healthcare is not.** Hospitals plan to expand employment in 2023 for many frontline staff positions, including RNs, certified nurse aides/patient care techs, licensed practical nurses, nurse practitioners and physician assistants, therapists (occupational, physical, speech), and clinical laboratory technicians and technologists.

This means even more roles to fill and a bigger healthcare workforce crisis if action is not taken.

## State and federal action is needed now

While there is no single solution for the national healthcare workforce crisis, lawmakers can take many steps to help alleviate immediate pressures and bolster the pipeline of healthcare workers we'll need in the years ahead.

Action must be taken to:

- strengthen the education infrastructure needed to train aspiring healthcare professionals;
- make it easier and more affordable to enter the healthcare workforce;
- address scope of practice limitations so qualified medical professionals work at the top of their license; and
- provide support for healthcare organizations to recruit and retain essential staff.

We have seen the clear benefits of workforce flexibilities that were available on a temporary basis during the pandemic. State and federal policymakers must act now to make permanent changes that stabilize and grow the healthcare workforce so hospitals, health systems and providers across the continuum of care can better meet the needs of their communities now and in the future.

**ABOUT THE SURVEY:** The Center for Health Workforce Studies in collaboration with the Healthcare Association of New York State, Greater New York Hospital Association, Healthcare Association of Western and Central New York, Iroquois Healthcare Association and Suburban Hospital Alliance of New York State, conducted a survey in fall 2022 of New York hospitals and health systems. Results from the survey represent 128 entities located in all regions of the state and reflect workforce challenges of hospitals and health system settings inclusive of ambulatory surgical centers, home health care, hospital-based outpatient clinics and nursing homes. Capturing the experiences of our state's smallest rural hospitals all the way to our largest academic medical centers, responses reflect about 60% of hospitals statewide or 75% of the annual revenue that New York hospitals and health systems generate. Data collected representing annual turnover rates, hiring timelines and other time-based measures reflect the period of Oct. 1, 2021, through Sept. 30, 2022.

**LEARN MORE:** Explore our healthcare workforce survey findings and additional data in the Center for Health Workforce Studies' April 2023 report, [The Health Care Workforce in New York State: Trends in the Supply of and Demand for Health Care Workers](#).