

# WA Health Workforce Sentinel Network

*wa.sentinelnetwork.org*



Washington's Health Workforce  
**SENTINEL NETWORK**

(206) 543-9797

[healthworkforce@wasentinelnetwork.org](mailto:healthworkforce@wasentinelnetwork.org)

[HOME](#) [ABOUT](#) [JOIN](#) [FINDINGS](#) [TEAM](#)

## Washington Healthcare Facilities Respond to COVID -19

[Click here to see innovative solutions and ongoing needs.](#)

### FINDINGS DASHBOARDS

View employer needs over time

[READ MORE](#)

### SHARE YOUR HEALTH WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

As a Sentinel, you will make your workforce needs known to decisionmakers and inform policy decisions in our state.

[JOIN NOW](#)

### FINDINGS BRIEFS

View summarized findings for selected facility types

[READ MORE](#)

# UW Center for Health Workforce Studies

## Washington's Health Workforce SENTINEL NETWORK

### Objectives

- identify emerging signals of changes in health workforce demand
- rapidly disseminate findings to education, training and policy partners who can take action based on findings
- Employers provide data about health workforce demand changes twice yearly
- Health Workforce Council Initiative
- Collaboration of UW CHWS with WA Workforce Board
- Funding from the Washington Legislature

# WA Health Workforce Sentinel Network

---

## Core questions ask about:

- *Exceptionally long vacancies*
- *Recent turnover trends*
- *Changes in demand*
- *New occupations not previously employed*
- *New roles*
- *Orientation/onboarding changes*
- *Training priority changes*
- *If serve mostly urban or rural patients/clients*

## Overarching and pandemic topics (examples):

- *Staffing changes due to the pandemic*
- *Workforce impact of telehealth use*
- *Top workforce needs that could be addressed by policy, regulatory or payment rule changes*
- *Effects of vaccine mandates*
- *Workforce arrangements that helped with pandemic response*

# Sentinel Network Responses

## Spring 2022

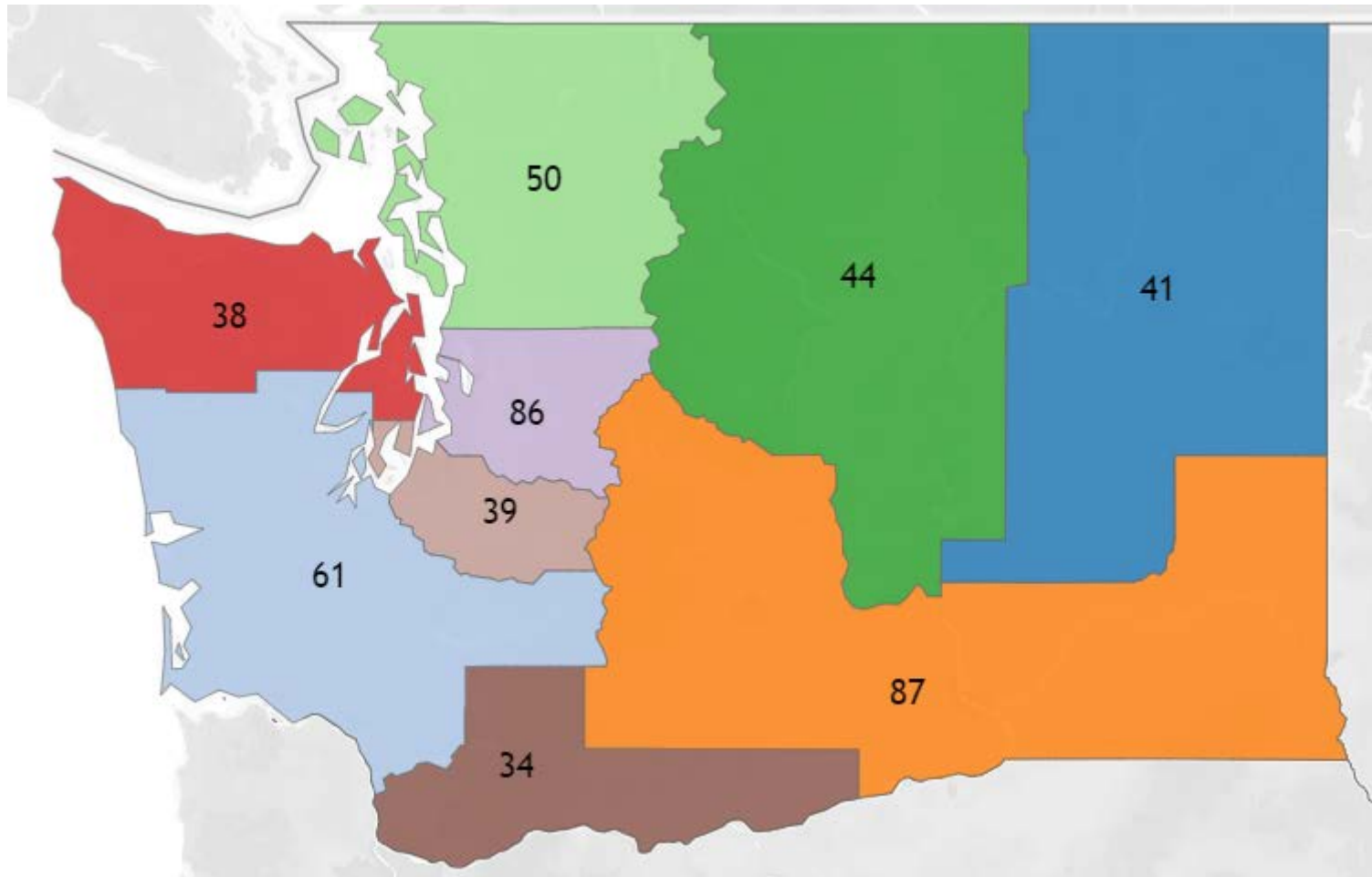
---

- 79 dental offices/dental clinics
- 58 behavioral health facilities
- 43 assisted living facilities
- 37 nursing homes/ skilled nursing facilities
- 20 acute care hospitals (25 beds or fewer)
- 17 rural health clinics
- 17 community or hospital pharmacies
- 14 community health centers (incl. FQHCs)
- 14 primary care clinics (not rural health clinics)
- 14 specialty medical clinics
- 10 medical/ diagnostic laboratories
- 8 acute care hospitals (more than 25 beds)
- *And more!*

<https://wa.sentinelnetwork.org/findings/response-counts/>

# Sentinel Network Responses

## *Spring 2022*



# Sentinel Network Example Responses - Spring 2022

## *Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Homes*

Top occupations cited as having exceptionally long vacancies by date of reporting								
Rank	Summer 2018	Spring 2019	Fall 2019	Spring 2020	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Fall 2021	Spring 2022
1	Nursing assistant	Registered nurse	Nursing assistant	Nursing assistant	Nursing assistant	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Registered nurse
2	Registered nurse	Nursing assistant	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Nursing assistant	Licensed practical nurse Nursing assistant	Licensed practical nurse
3	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse Dentist	Licensed practical nurse	Licensed practical nurse	Occupational therapist Physical therapist	Nursing assistant
4	Dentist Physician/ Surgeon	Occupational therapy assistant Physical therapist Social worker Psychologist	Speech-language therapist	Multiple occupations cited at same frequency	Occupational therapy assistant Physical therapist Physical Therapy Assistant	Occupational therapist Physical therapist Social worker Speech-language therapist	Speech-language therapist	Cook / Food services
5	Multiple occupations cited at same frequency	Multiple occupations cited at same frequency	Multiple occupations cited at same frequency		Multiple occupations cited at same frequency	n/a	Multiple occupations cited at same frequency	Environmental services

← Most cited

\* Findings prior to Summer 2018 can be viewed on the Sentinel Network Dashboard: [wa.sentinelnetwork.org](http://wa.sentinelnetwork.org)

# Sentinel Network Example Responses - Spring 2022

## *Dentist Offices/Dental Clinics*

Top occupations cited as having exceptionally long vacancies by date of reporting							
Rank	Spring 2019	Fall 2019	Spring 2020	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Fall 2021	Spring 2022
1	Dental hygienist	Dental assistant	Dental Hygienist	Dental assistant	Dental assistant	Dental assistant	Dental hygienist
				Dental hygienist	Dental hygienist		
2	Dental assistant	Dental hygienist	Dental assistant	No additional occupations reported	Dentist	Dental hygienist	Dental assistant
3	Dentist	Dentist	Dentist		Office personnel	Dentist	Office personnel
			Office personnel			Medicaid navigator	
4	Office personnel	Multiple occupations cited at same frequency	Multiple occupations cited at same frequency		No additional occupations reported	Office personnel	Dentist

↑ Most cited

\*Responses prior to Spring 2019 not shown due to space constraints

# Sentinel Network Example Responses

## Spring 2022

---

### *Example reasons for exceptionally long vacancies*

#### RNs

- Lured by travel nurses, lucrative sign on bonuses, or nurses leaving profession

#### Nursing assistants

- Just not getting applicants. Healthcare facilities are offering higher and higher wages along with high hiring bonuses. The WA vaccination mandate is hurting our recruitment efforts....Criminal background checks ...have gotten longer and longer and many from the young generation are just not able to enter this field due to mistakes in their juvenile years

#### Mental health counselors

- Applicants have not had the qualifications for the position; applicants have not been wanting to relocate; not able to compensate at the rates the bigger cities are paying



# Sentinel Network Example Responses

## *Spring 2022*

---

*Examples of recent changes in orientation/onboarding priorities*

### Nursing assistants/ Home care aides

- We are now offering to pay for HCA license for non-experienced individuals to try and fill positions. New Hire training general orientation has been extended by 8 hrs.

### Across occupations

- Due to COVID all onboarding and orientation was remote and we are now moving back to an in-person with enriched subject matter expertise content. We feel this had a significant impact on our retention and quality of experience for our employees. It negatively impacted our culture.

# Sentinel Network Example Responses

From Spring 2022 supplementary overarching/pandemic questions

---

## *Strategies to cover absences and fill vacancies caused by turnover*

### Primary care clinics & Rural health clinics

- Travelers and scheduling patients in a staggered pattern to allow the MA staff to room patients efficiently
- Refined workflows to decrease low priority duties.
- Hired a dedicated recruitment/retention coordinator.
- Implemented an MA-C Apprentice program 1/2022...too early to rate success.
- Staff work with multiple providers and have gone to a team approach instead of with individual providers.
- Increase hours of remaining staff, just flat out worked with less staff, and others have pitched in to help where they could. We have used hiring sites to recruit more staff, but have not been successful.

# Sentinel Network Discussion

---

*Did you find*

- Retention insights from recent SN responses?
- Related policy recommendations?
  
- Planning for Fall 2022  
(Expected data collection dates: Late Sept to mid/late Oct)
  - What “supplementary and pandemic-related questions” should we ask?

# Sentinel Network

## Discussion

---

- Planning for Fall 2022  
(Expected data collection dates: Late Sept to mid/late Oct)
  - *What “supplementary and pandemic-related questions” should we ask?*
    - *Consider a focus on retention?*
  - Behavioral health workforce module under development – will only be asked of facilities that employ BH occupations

# Supplementary and Pandemic-Related Questions

Questions	Dates asked
<p>What are your top workforce needs that could be alleviated by new or modified policies, regulations, and/or payment rules?</p>	<p>S2022, F2021, S2021, F2020, S2020</p>
<p>What strategies has your organization used over the past 6 months to cover worker absences and fill vacancies caused by worker turnover (e.g, recruited new regular staff, used contract/traveler agencies, increased hours of remaining staff)? How successful have these strategies been?</p> <p>What employee benefits (e.g., childcare, family leave, behavioral health services, flexible schedules) are, or would be, the most helpful to improve your facility’s ability to retain its workforce? If you been able to implement or increase access to any of these benefits within the past 6 months what effect have they had on retention?</p> <p>How would you describe your facility’s use of telehealth/virtual visits now compared with your use a year ago?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We <u>did not</u> provide services via telehealth/virtual visits a year ago and still do not now</li> <li>• We <u>did</u> provide services via telehealth/virtual visits a year ago but do not now</li> <li>• We’re still providing telehealth/virtual visits, but fewer than a year ago</li> <li>• We’re still providing telehealth/virtual visits, and about as often as a year ago</li> <li>• We’ve increased the amount of telehealth/virtual visits compared with a year ago</li> </ul> <p>If your organization provides telehealth/virtual visits, how would you describe the impact on recruiting and retaining your workforce?</p>	<p>S2022</p>

## Supplementary and Pandemic-Related Questions

Questions	Dates asked
<p>How have your facility's staffing arrangements/configurations affected your ability to respond to patient demand during the past 6 months?</p>	<p>F2021, S2021, F2020, S2020</p>
<p>How has the pandemic affected your ability to support <b>educational/training opportunities</b>? Have you found strategies to help support these activities during the pandemic?</p> <p>To what extent has your organization used <b>recruitment incentives</b> like sign-on bonuses during the pandemic? What recruitment strategies have been most successful?</p> <p>Have you implemented new <b>retention strategies</b> during the pandemic? Please describe.</p> <p>Compared with 2 years ago (before the pandemic), <b>how would you describe the number of vacancies you're now trying to fill</b>? If you've recently had changes in staff vacancies at your facility, were they due mostly to increases or decreases in service demand, changes in staff turnover, or a combination of these factors?</p>	<p>F2021</p>

## Supplementary and Pandemic-Related Questions

Questions	Dates asked
Recently (within the past 6 months) what about the staffing arrangements at your [facility type] made it easier to respond to the pandemic? What made it harder?	S2021, F2020, S2020
Thinking of your experiences over the past 6 months, please describe the workforce impact, if any, of the use of <b>telehealth</b> at your facility.	S2021, F2020
Did your organization do anything to encourage your staff to receive the <b>COVID-19 vaccine</b> ? If so, what strategies were or were not successful?	S2021
Were any of your <b>staff disproportionately affected</b> by COVID-19? If so, please describe.	F2020
Are there <b>additional important workforce issues</b> resulting from the COVID-19 emergency at your facility(ies) that you feel should be recognized and addressed?	S2020

# Notes:



Washington's Health Workforce  
**SENTINEL NETWORK**

**More details and information:**

<https://depts.washington.edu/fammed/chws>

<https://wa.sentinelnetwork.org>

Contact:

Susan Skillman, Senior Deputy Director

[Skillman@uw.edu](mailto:Skillman@uw.edu)

Ben Stubbs, Sentinel Network  
Operations Director

[bstubbs@uw.edu](mailto:bstubbs@uw.edu)

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter  
**@uwchws**