

# The Washington Health Workforce Sentinel Network

## Spring 2025 Update and Preliminary Findings

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Health Workforce Council Meeting  
June 25, 2025

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# Washington's Health Workforce Sentinel Network

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## Partnership between

- Washington Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board
- University of Washington Center for Health Workforce Studies

**Funding** provided by the Washington State Legislature

**Employers and hiring managers** surveyed once per year

Focus on identifying emerging **signals and trends** over time

# Our most recent data collection effort

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Spring 2025 data collection: 4/28 – 6/1

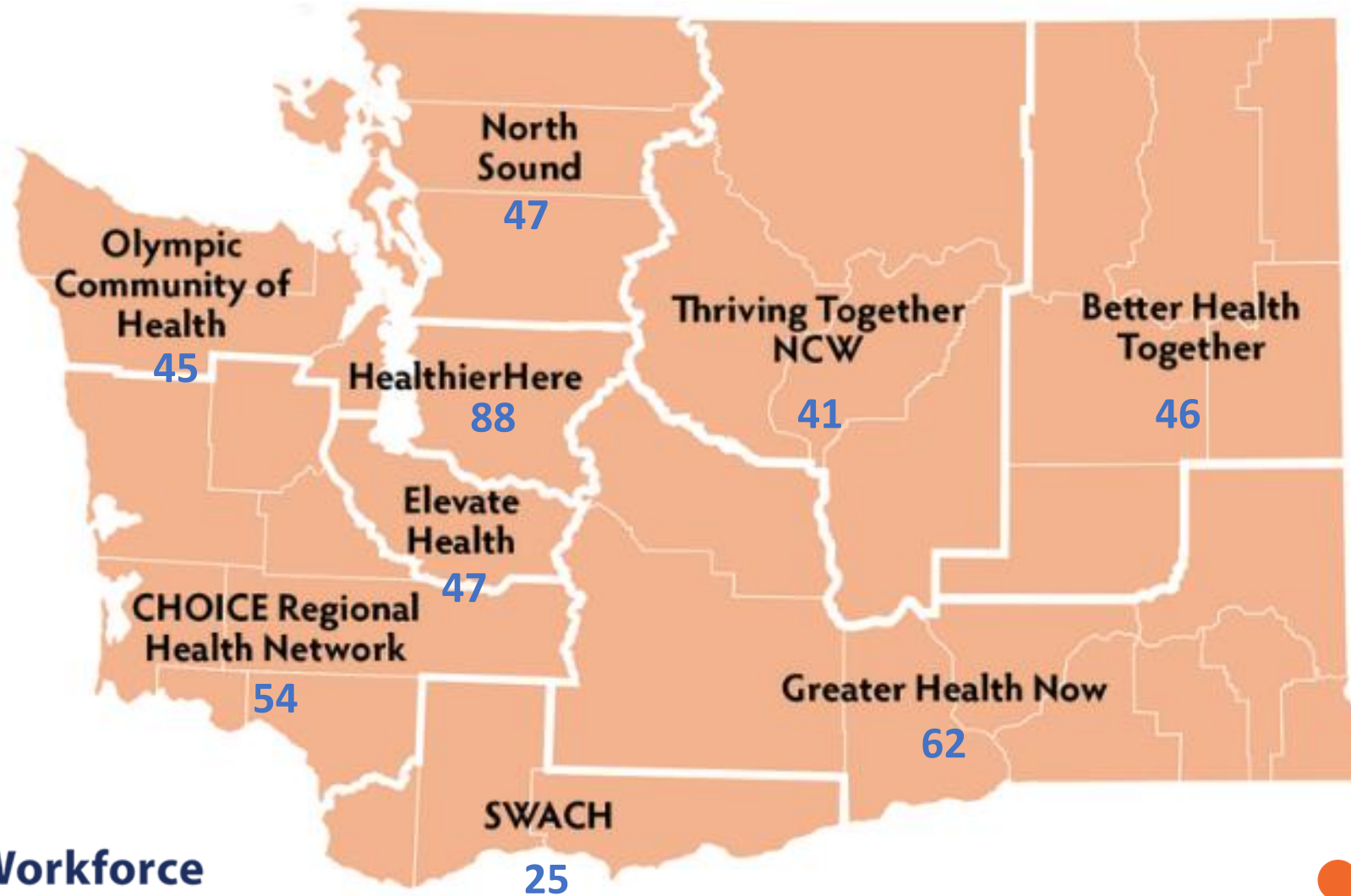
Continued focus on effective recruitment

Improved questionnaire:

- Vacancies and turnover for each facility
- Organizational priorities and challenges
- Behavioral health module (peer counselors)
- Dental module (recruitment and retention strategies)

# Number of responses by Accountable Community of Health (ACH)

## Reported to Sentinel Network - Spring 2025



# Statewide responses by facility type - Spring 2025

Facility Type	#
Dentist office/dental clinic	75
BH - Behavioral health agency - WA DOH certified	31
LTC - Nursing home or skilled nursing facility	16
Pharmacy - Hospital/clinical	16
Acute care hospital (25 beds or fewer)	15
K-12 school	15
Rural health clinic	15
Specialty medical clinic	15
Federally qualified health center (FQHC) or community clinic providing care free or on sliding fee scale	15
Medical/diagnostic laboratory	14
LTC - Assisted living facility	13
Primary care medical clinic (not FQHC/community clinic or rural health clinic)	13

Facility Type	#
Higher education/research organization	12
BH - Behavioral health clinic or practice	11
Acute care hospital (more than 25 beds)	11
Public health organization	9
Home health agency	7
BH - Other residential treatment facility	6
BH - Other outpatient behavioral health organization	5
Pharmacy - Community/retail	5
BH - Freestanding evaluation & treatment facility	4
LTC - Other nursing/personal care facility	4
Other home health or hospice	4
Hospice agency or hospice care center	3
Other	3

# Preliminary Findings – Spring 2025

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# Preliminary themes from all settings and locations

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Meeting **wage demands** and competing for a **limited pool of candidates** continue to be the top hiring barriers reported by employers

*“Our biggest challenge is offering a competitive wage so caregivers will apply. We are on the same street as the hospital, 2 skilled nursing facilities, and memory care. All those other providers pay more than assisted living, so getting caregivers to choose us is the challenge. I find we have good retention if we can just get them to choose us.”*  
[Assisted living facility]

*“There is a lot of competition in the community for Nursing Assistant-certified. Our local community college does have a program but it doesn't turn out enough to meet the need of the community. Also, being a Nursing Assistant- certified in a doctor office or hospital is much different than working in a community behavioral health clinic.”*  
[Behavioral health agency]

## Preliminary themes from **all settings and locations**

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Employers continue to report **cost of living** and access to **childcare, housing and transportation** as factors that

- Are hard for them to influence
- Affect their ability to hire and retain workers
- Can be especially challenging in rural settings

*“Our area has limited childcare availability. Sometimes everything you'd make at work would go to childcare and that doesn't make sense.”*

*“Limited inventory and housing is very expensive for a rural community.”*



# Preliminary themes from rural locations

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## Challenges reported by employers in rural areas

- Lack of local education and training opportunities
- Attracting workers and their families to rural areas
- Long-term retention once people are hired

*“Our geographical area is extremely rural. Not many opportunities for housing, daycare or amenities. Few restaurants and not many opportunities for activities other than outdoor recreation. Cities with shopping or other amenities are at least 50 miles away in all directions.”*

*“Provider turnover & burnout is a real issue, especially since the pandemic! We have been using locums to fill those gaps, but then we get complaints that people want to see a provider who is going to ‘stick around!’ ”*

# Preliminary themes - licensing and testing

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Some employers report delays for **nursing assistants** and **home care aides**

*“There's been a massive backlog in processing the paperwork for renewed licenses and HCA license applications. And with Prometrics as the only testing organization, it's more expensive than it needs to be and takes longer than it needs to.”*

Also reports of difficulty meeting educational requirements for Agency Affiliated Counselors or for behavioral health providers coming from other states.

*“We recently hired someone from out of state and found out that even though she had a master's degree in general psychology, she was unqualified for the Licensed AAC. They wouldn't accept her experience.”*

## Preliminary themes – staff reductions

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Most employers indicate they continue to focus on recruitment and retention. However, there are **some reports of reductions in staff**, especially non-clinical staff, from organizations that receive state or federal funding.

*“As a refugee resettlement agency, many of our contracts and staff positions were eliminated in 2025 due to federal policy changes”*

*“Given the federal funding landscape, we have instituted a hiring freeze at our Research Institute. We will be taking precautions to plan for potential federal cuts to Medicaid by slowing hiring for non-clinical roles.” [Large hospital]*

## Preliminary themes - alternative training/education efforts

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A small number of employers report that they are exploring options or have decided against these programs

*“We are exploring this now, but worry about having staff away from their current positions. We are a smaller organization and currently have staff in a free Masters program. Their time away from the job for class and internship hours has been a burden to the organization.” [Behavioral health agency]*

*“The cost is too high. With [one resource we’ve used] they only cover a portion of the cost related to paying employees when they are in school. While this helps, for a program funded by Medicaid, any additional costs are detrimental to the program” [Behavioral health agency]*

## Preliminary themes - alternative training/education efforts

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### Many employers have implemented “grow-your-own” programs

“We offer a WABON Certified CNA program, with four class cohorts each year. Usually, hiring several CNAs in the LTC after each course and license completion. We have hosted several successful MA-C apprenticeships over the past five years and retained our staff.” [Large hospital]

“We have programs that include Medical Assistant career ladder, APC recent graduate training program, Pharmacy Technician in training program, and Dental Assistant training program.” [Community health center]

“Therapists (masters degree), and Case Managers/ Counselors (bachelor's degree) internships with a variety of schools have positive impact on role fulfillment. Many interns are hired into full time roles.” [ Behavioral health agency]

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[wa.sentinelnetwork.org](http://wa.sentinelnetwork.org)

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## Contact Information

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