

The Washington Health Workforce Sentinel Network

Spring 2026 Data Collection

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Washington's Health Workforce Sentinel Network

Partnership between

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

Employers and hiring managers surveyed once per year



Spring 2026 Data Collection

April 6 – May 3

Link to questionnaire:

wa.sentinelnetwork.org/join

How you can help

Ask your colleagues to complete the questionnaire

- Goal to reach **hiring and planning decisionmakers** (clinic managers, HR directors, nursing directors, etc.)
- Email/newsletter templates and flyers available
 - Contact Ben Stubbs – bstubbs@uw.edu

Informing Council Work

Health Workforce

2025 Annual Report



Recommendation 1:

Expand Healthcare Pathway Opportunities for Rural Youth

In 2025, the Health Workforce Council addressed issues affecting healthcare workers, employers, and the education system with an emphasis on challenges in rural communities. Both quantitative and qualitative data point to a wide variety of healthcare occupations remaining in high demand in Washington's rural counties.

Understanding Employer Experiences and Needs

The Council partners with the University of Washington Center for Health Workforce Studies to deploy [Washington's Health Workforce Sentinel Network](#). This qualitative data collection tool links the state's healthcare industry with partners in education and training, policy, and planning to identify and respond to emerging demand changes in the health workforce. Employers ("Sentinels") from across the state share their top workforce challenges.

The Sentinel Network questionnaire asks respondents to report the rural/urban composition of their service area. In Spring 2025, 25% of responding facilities indicated that they served mostly rural residents. Unless otherwise indicated, the information below highlights responses from facilities that serve mostly rural residents. According to Office of Financial Management, as of April 2025, about 20% of Washington's total population lived in a rural or frontier county under the state's definition.⁹

In the Spring 2025 data collection period, 80% of rural health clinics and small hospitals who responded reported that they serve mostly rural residents. Full finding briefs for [Rural Health Clinics](#) and [Small Hospitals](#) are available online.)

Two main themes that emerged from facilities that report serving mostly rural residents were:

- Many employers reported they have created their own training programs because many of the education and training programs for healthcare workers are not located in rural areas.
- Attracting workers to rural areas to stay long-term is something that many employers struggle with. Many use temporary or travel contract workers to fill gaps but recognize that this is not a long-term solution.

Rural Employer Comments Regarding Training Their Own Staff Members

"Recruitment to rural areas is a challenge, as rural healthcare delivery is not always attractive to healthcare staff and providers. Finding interested applicants and having those be the "right fit" for a very rural area can be a challenge."

"Support staff and OJT [on the job training] is the only way we get employees and it's a trial by fire situation."

- Sentinel Network 2025 Findings

⁹ Washington rural population total calculated using OFM [April 1 Official Population Estimates](#) and OFM [Rural County Designation](#).

Spring 2026 Questionnaire

Question Topics

- Occupations experiencing vacancies/turnover
- Strategies for navigating change
- Early-career development strategies
- Integration of new technologies

Modules

- Primary care
- Long-term care
- Behavioral health

Thank you!

Contact: bstubbs@uw.edu

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