

North Carolina Health Workforce Sentinel Network *Findings Brief: Hospitals*

In May through June 2023, healthcare employers in North Carolina reported on their current workforce needs related to staff vacancies, turnover, training/onboarding priorities, and the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic over the past 6 months (roughly January-June 2023) This brief summarizes the responses from **hospitals**.

More findings and responses from other health care settings may be viewed at nc.sentinelnetwork.org/findings/.

Highlights

19 Hospital Survey Responses	4	Acute care hospital (25 beds or fewer) (all in rural locations)
	15	Acute care hospital (more than 25 beds)

- In the last 6 months, acute care hospital (25 beds or fewer) survey respondents reported:
 - Exceptionally long **vacancies** for **registered nurses (RNs)** and **physicians/surgeons**
 - Highest **turnover** for **physicians, environmental services, med techs, RNs, physical therapists**
 - **Burnout improved** for **25%** of respondents in the last 6 months
 - **Burnout stayed the same** for **50%** of respondents in the last 6 months
 - **Impact of staff shortages** due to the pandemic **remained the same** for **50%** of respondents

- In the last 6 months, acute care hospital (more than 25 beds) survey respondents reported:
 - Exceptionally long **vacancies** for **RNs** and **certified nursing assistants (CNAs)**
 - Highest **turnover** for **RNs and CNAs**
 - **Burnout improved** for **57%** of respondents and **remained the same** for another **29%**
 - **Impact of staff shortages** due to the pandemic **improved** for **38%** of respondents and **remained the same** **31%** of respondents

- Presence of **telehealth/virtual visits** varied in hospitals:
 - **28%** of all hospital respondents are providing **more** of these visits than a year ago,
 - **22%** of all hospital respondents are providing the **same level** as a year ago,
 - **22%** of all hospital respondents **decreased** their level
 - **22%** of all hospital respondents **discontinued** their level

Exceptionally long vacancies

by Hospital Facility Type

- Acute care hospital (25 beds or fewer):
- RNs (75% of respondents)
 - Physicians/Surgeons (75% of respondents)

- Acute care hospital (more than 25 beds):
- RNs (80% of respondents)
 - CNAs (60% of respondents)

Reasons for Vacancies

“We rely on experienced individuals taking positions but are unable to compete with salaries. The labor pool shortage is another issue. Even with sign on bonuses, we are having trouble getting staff.” -25+ bed hospital response

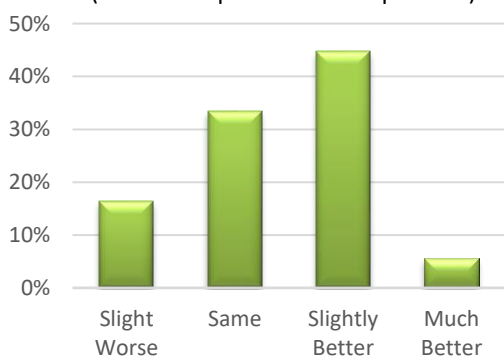
“There is a shortage of qualified [RN] candidates; these roles are in high demand. Being in a rural community, it's challenging to compete with larger urban areas and ensure competitive wages.” -25 or fewer bed hospital response

Top workforce needs that changes to policy, regulations, or payment could alleviate

Need	Suggested Changes
Increase pool of qualified candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase tuition reimbursement forgiveness for students • Forgive student loans for executives and department leaders to agree to work in a Critical Access Hospital for a set time frame in rural hospitals • Encourage students to complete a certificate or 2-year degree program to enter the workforce while completing their programs • Retain students in rural areas or NC generally with incentives • Increase class sizes of medical schools, nursing and allied health programs • Increase pay for academic instructors to obtain more faculty and decrease teacher/student ratios • Create structure for collaboration between all community colleges and 4-year programs in the state • Create and fund high school curricula to expose students to healthcare careers • Offer organizations the ability to write off training costs for current staff in an effort to train and retain them
Ability to offer competitive wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control, regulate, or cap traveler rates and/or staffing agency rates
Decrease workplace violence (WPV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Craft legislation that prohibits violence in the emergency department with more stringent penalties for offenders • Empower employees to file charges against any person for WPV
Support mental health patients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby for additional places to treat mental health patients • Move mental health patients from hospitals to treatment facilities faster by having more facilities available and appropriate staff

In the past 6 months, has burnout as a workforce issue at your facility gotten better, stayed the same, or gotten worse for hospitals in NC?

(% of 19 responses to this question)



[Slightly Better]

“Our survey results note our staff is able to take time off when they feel they need to and we have seen a small uptick in our usage of well-being resources.”

[Slightly Worse]

“Staff are still tired from COVID. Not being able to recruit new staff to help current staff is causing them to burnout.”

Data Limitations

Findings presented in the brief represent the responses from a convenience sample of health system administrators who voluntarily participated in the Summer 2023 survey collection representing January to June of 2023. Generalizability of these findings to the broader North Carolina health care system may be limited.

About the North Carolina Health Workforce Sentinel Network

The Health Workforce Sentinel Network links the healthcare sector with policymakers, workforce planners, and educators to identify and respond to changing needs for healthcare workers.

To view an interactive version of all responses from all types of health care organizations and to join the network to provide information on your organization’s workforce needs and challenges, visit: <https://nc.sentinelnetwork.org/>

Questions? Contact: nc@sentinelnetwork.org