

## Washington's Health Workforce Sentinel Network

### Findings for Medical Assistants

Sentinel employers in Washington provided information to the Washington State Health Workforce Sentinel Network every 4 to 5 months from July 2016 to October 2017. This report summarizes the information they provided about Medical Assistants (MAs).

### Medical Assistants (MAs)

*By facility type:*

**MAs were among the top occupations with exceptionally long vacancies recently reported by**

- FQHCs/community clinics
- Other primary care clinics
- Specialty medical clinics
- Acute care hospitals
- Psychiatric/substance abuse hospitals

*By geography:*

**MAs were among occupations with exceptionally long vacancies**

- July 2016: in 8 of 9 Accountable Communities of Health (ACHs)
- Nov. 2016: in 9 of 9 ACHs
- April 2017: in 9 of 9 ACHs
- Oct. 2017: in 8 of 9 ACHs

**Examples of reasons for MAs' exceptionally long vacancies:**

- Difficulty finding MAs with needed skills.
- Very limited workforce and all organizations need them. Some organizations are thinking of developing their own MA programs.
- Competition with other facilities that are able to pay more.
- Difficulty attracting candidates to rural areas.
- Not enough MAs in region, extremely tight & expensive housing market in our local area.
- Not a lot of medical assistants in the area. Nearest school is 75 miles away.
- High cost of living in some counties (King) makes recruitment and retention of MAs more difficult.

## Changes in MAs' onboarding and training priorities – examples of comments:

### EHR/HIT

- EHR training/more EHR skills.
- Knowledge of quality data tracking.
- Onboarding curriculum tailored to focus on EHR competency and documentation of clinical measures.

### Other Skills

- Gathering SO/GI [sexual orientation/gender identity] demographics.
- Enhanced training to work to full scope of role.
- Expansion of customer service training.
- Organization-wide training and implementation of AIDET customer service model; increased localized trainings on integration of care with an emphasis on a care team based approach to healthcare and synchronization of services.
- Training being developed to align with behavioral health patients in primary care.

### **About the Washington Health Workforce Sentinel Network**

The Sentinel Network links the healthcare sector with policymakers, workforce planners and educators to identify and respond to changing demand for healthcare workers, with a focus is on identifying newly emerging skills and roles required by employers.

The Sentinel Network is an initiative of Washington's Health Workforce Council, conducted collaboratively by Washington's Workforce Board and the University of Washington's Center for Health Workforce Studies. Funding to initiate the Sentinel Network came from the Healthier Washington initiative, with ongoing support from Governor Inslee's office.

#### **Why become a Sentinel? *As a Sentinel, you can:***

--Communicate your workforce needs and ensure that the state is prepared to respond to the transforming healthcare environment.

--Have access to current and actionable information about emerging healthcare workforce needs.

--Compare your organization's experience and emerging workforce demand trends with similar employer groups.

Interactive summary of findings: [www.wasentinelnetwork.org](http://www.wasentinelnetwork.org). Contact: [healthworkforce@wasentinelnetwork.org](mailto:healthworkforce@wasentinelnetwork.org)

To provide information from your organization: <https://tinyurl.com/SNDDataCollection>