

## Washington's Health Workforce Sentinel Network

### Findings for Registered Nurses

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 Registered Nurses (RNs).

## Registered Nurses (RNs)

*By facility type:*

**RNs are the top occupation with exceptionally long vacancies recently reported by**

- Small acute care hospitals
- Home health care services

**RNs were also among occupations with long vacancies in:**

- FQHCs/community clinics
- Behavioral health/mental health clinics
- Psychiatric/substance abuse hospital
- Large acute care hospitals
- Schools
- Skilled nursing facilities
- Specialty medical clinics

*By geography:*

**RNs were the top ranked occupation with exceptionally long vacancies**

- July 2016: in 7 of 9 Accountable Communities of Health (ACHs)
- Nov. 2016: in 9 of 9 ACHs
- April 2017: in 7 ACHs (2nd in Better Health Together and 3rd in Greater Columbia)
- Oct. 2017: in 4 ACHs (2nd or 3rd in 4 other ACHs)

## Examples of reasons for RNs' exceptionally long vacancies:

### RNs in Hospitals

- New grads looking for acute care wage and experience; workforce does not meet demand.
- Difficulty in recruitment for more rural areas; lack of experienced specialty nurses who wish to come to a rural area.
- Nights hard to fill.
- Too many open positions elsewhere and traveling companies are scooping up what is out there promising them almost \$100 an hour.
- Increased need for EXPERIENCED RN's. Applicants are all new grads. Due to our size we cannot take on more than one new grad/year.
- We've been fortunate, but I anticipate that good fortune to wane in the next 2 years due to fewer program grads.
- We have not had any troubles staffing new graduate nurses into our Acute Care (general Med/Surg) Unit, but find experienced RNs difficult to recruit for specialty areas (i.e. ER, ICU & Surgical Svcs).

*(examples of reasons for RNs' exceptionally long vacancies, cont.)*

#### RNs in FQHCs/Community clinics

- Lack of qualified applicants; some offers turned down because of pay (can't compete with hospitals).
- Challenge to find RNs with FQHC or outpatient experience; need RNs with management/supervisory experience.
- ...seeking candidates that are bi-lingual in English and Spanish.
- ...far more openings in the local area than there are RNs to fill them, most go to the hospital.

#### RNs in Long Term Care (home health, skilled nursing, nursing and personal care)

- Not enough RN's for all the facilities and hospitals and a new regulation requiring skilled nursing facilities to have 24 hour RN coverage. (SNF)
- Nursing homes are unattractive to potential candidates, ... competition with local hospital (NH)
- A local hospital opened over 100 RN positions. Severe impact on community. (SNF)
- Lack of experienced RNs willing to work in this capacity (HH)
- Wage compression from new minimum wage (SNF)

#### RNs in Behavioral health

- Salaries not competitive.
- Hardships of working for a community mental health provider.

#### RNs in Specialty medical clinics

- High demand for RNs – newly created positions.

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

- EHR training and responsibilities; new EMRs; HIT. (hospital)
- Knowledge of quality data tracking. (FQHC)
- Customer service. (hospital)
- Behavioral training. (multiple facility types)
- Dementia knowledge. (SNF)
- Ongoing training to support nursing faculty in their roles as instructors. (hospital)
- Root cause/SBAR/Assessments/Care plans. (SNF)
- Investing in staff by offering more training. (SNF)
- Address needs of workers with little prior experience. (SNF)
- New grad nurses getting more orientation and training; we are spending more time with new employees during the onboarding/orientation process. (SNF)

### **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/SNDataCollection>