

Health Care Worker Recruitment and Retention in New York State: What Are the Issues?



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CHWS

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AT-A-GLANCE

Health Care Worker Recruitment and Retention in New York State: What Are the Issues?

This report summarizes health workforce recruitment and retention difficulties reported by providers across health care settings in New York State, including documenting the reasons for these difficulties. The report also summarizes strategies that health care providers are using to address these difficulties.

PROFESSIONS & SETTINGS

Registered nurses (RNs) and licensed practical nurses (LPNs) are among the most difficult to recruit and retain in ALL health care settings throughout New York State

In Addition:

- **Hospitals:** Clinical laboratory technologists are among the most difficult to recruit and surgical technicians are among the most difficult to retain
- **Nursing Homes:** Certified nurse aides (CNAs) are the most difficult to recruit and retain
- **Adult Care Facilities:** Home health aides and personal care aides are among the most difficult to recruit and retain
- **Home Health Care Agencies:** Home health aides and personal care aides are among the most difficult to recruit and retain, especially in upstate regions
- **Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs):** Oral health and behavioral health providers are among the most difficult to recruit and retain

REASONS

Shortages of workers and non-competitive salaries were the main reasons for recruitment and retention difficulties

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Overall, health care providers indicated that increased hourly pay and increased pay for extra shifts or longer/irregular hours were effective solutions for recruiting and retaining health care workers

- Hospitals and nursing homes and adult care facilities also reported that career advancement opportunities were effective strategies
- Nursing homes and adult care facilities and home health care agencies also identified providing health care insurance as an effective solution
- FQHCs indicated that expanding J-1 Visa waivers to behavioral health professionals, increasing the use of J-1 Visa waivers for physicians, and increasing the use of National Health Service Corps (NHSC) and Nurse Corps were potential solutions

PREFACE

This report summarizes health workforce recruitment and retention difficulties reported by providers across health care settings in New York State, including documenting the reasons for these difficulties. The report also summarizes strategies that health care providers are using to address these difficulties.

This report was prepared by the Center for Health Workforce Studies (CHWS) staff, Robert Martiniano and Sage Shirey. This report was funded by the Evidence Based Clinical Research Collaboration Program of the State University of New York.

Established in 1996, CHWS is an academic research organization, based at the College of Integrated Health Sciences, University at Albany, State University of New York. The mission of CHWS is to provide timely, accurate data and conduct policy-relevant research about the health workforce. The research conducted by CHWS supports and promotes health workforce planning and policymaking at local, regional, state, and national levels. Today, CHWS operates 2 of 9 federally-funded health workforce research centers in the US and is a national leader in the field of health workforce studies.

The views expressed in this report are those of CHWS and do not necessarily represent positions or policies of the College of Integrated Health Sciences or the University at Albany.

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TECHNICAL REPORT

BACKGROUND

Workforce recruitment and retention difficulties continue to present significant challenges within the health care industry, contributing to widespread shortages in various health care occupations nationally and world-wide.¹ These shortages are particularly pronounced in lower-resourced areas, including rural regions and inner-city neighborhoods.² Consequently, these shortages hinder access to health care services for many individuals and ultimately diminish the quality of care provided to patients.³

While the COVID-19 pandemic has subsided, its impact on health care workers in the United States (US) persists. Initially, the pandemic precipitated a significant decline in health care employment. Health care employment declined by 5% nationally between 2019 and 2020.⁴ However, by March 2023, national health care employment levels had surpassed pre-pandemic levels.⁵ Similarly, overall health care employment in New York State (NYS) exceeded pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2023.⁶ However, regional differences persisted. In areas outside New York City, health care employment in 2023 still remained below pre-pandemic levels, particularly within hospitals.⁶ Additionally, nursing home employment was particularly hard-hit by the pandemic. The pandemic exacerbated existing nursing home staff turnover due to workload challenges and heightened risk of exposure.⁷ These staffing difficulties have not abated, with the vast majority of nursing homes reporting continued challenges in recruiting new staff.⁸

Many health care occupations have experienced recruitment and retention challenges over the past several years. In 2023 in NYS, registered nurses (RNs) were among the most difficult health care professionals to recruit and retain.⁹ An analysis of nurse reviews on Glassdoor revealed that RNs frequently expressed dissatisfaction with their jobs due to high workloads, burnout, and poor workplace cultures, leading to higher attrition rates.¹⁰ Additionally, many nurses were leaving the profession to seek higher pay or better professional development opportunities.¹¹ Home care workers, another critical component of the health care workforce, are facing a similar crisis. The demand for home health and personal care aides in NYS is projected to increase by nearly 40% between 2020 and 2030,⁶ while home health care providers cited continued difficulties meeting demand due to a shortage of workers.¹²

Despite these challenges, many strategies have been identified for helping to recruit and retain health care workers. In NYS, popular strategies include service-obligated scholarships and loan repayment programs, as well as partnerships with local education programs to help provide career advancement opportunities.⁹ Nursing leaders report using recognition programs, preceptor incentives, stay interviews, and tuition reimbursement programs to help recruit and retain RNs.¹³ In home care, strategies such as health benefits and transportation assistance are also shown to improve retention.¹⁴ Despite these efforts, the recruitment and retention of health care workers remain difficult for a number of health care occupations, and addressing these recruitment and retention challenges is crucial to maintaining a robust health care workforce capable of meeting the growing demand for health care services.

This study was designed to identify and understand the recruitment and retention difficulties of health care workers across health care settings. The study also reports provider-identified solutions to addressing those difficulties, including the perceived effectiveness of those solutions.

METHODS

The Center for Health Workforce Studies (CHWS), in conjunction with statewide and regional provider organizations, conducts annual surveys of human resources staff from home health care agencies, hospitals, nursing homes, and adult care facilities across NYS. Provider associations assisted in designing the survey questions and informed their membership about the availability of the surveys for completion. CHWS does not contact the providers directly.

The surveys were conducted in the fall of 2023. The provider organizations included:

- Association on Aging in New York
- Empire State Association of Assisted Living
- Greater New York Hospital Association
- Healthcare Association of New York State, Inc.
- Healthcare Association of Western and Central New York
- Home Care Association of New York State, Inc.
- Iroquois Healthcare Association
- LeadingAge New York
- New York State Association of Healthcare Providers, Inc.
- New York State Center for Adult Care
- New York State Health Facility Association
- Suburban Hospital Alliance

The surveys asked questions on:

- The professions and occupations that posed the greatest recruitment and retention problems in 2023 on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “not at all difficult” to “extremely difficult”
- Reasons for those difficulties
- Potential solutions for addressing current recruitment and retention difficulties

Findings from the surveys are reported statewide and by NYS Department of Labor region. Hospitals, nursing homes, and adult care facilities could respond for their respective organization alone or as a system. Though home health care agencies report as one organization, they may report services across multiple counties and multiple regions. Consequently, one response for hospitals, nursing homes, adult care facilities, and home health care agencies could be reported in more than one region, though only once for statewide findings. Finally, when a specific region had less than 5 survey responses, it was combined with one or more neighboring regions for reporting purposes.

Across the 3 surveys, there were 292 responses, accounting for 373 organizations. The hospital survey received responses from 54 organizations accounting for 97 hospitals. The nursing home and adult care facility survey received responses from 77 organizations accounting for 115 long-term care facilities. One hundred and sixty-one home health care agencies responded to their survey. For purposes of this report, recruitment and retention challenges were broken out for nursing homes and adult care facilities at the statewide level but not at the regional level due to cell size issues. Finally, information on Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) was collected through a focus group of the Community Health Care Association of New York State (CHCANYS) Workforce Committee on November 19, 2023, and are reported statewide only.

The DOL regions used in this report are broken out by county as described below:

- *Capital District*: The counties of Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren, and Washington
- *Central New York*: The counties of Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga, and Oswego
- *Finger Lakes*: The counties of Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates
- *Hudson Valley*: The counties of Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester
- *Long Island*: The counties of Nassau and Suffolk
- *Mohawk Valley*: The counties of Fulton, Herkimer, Montgomery, Oneida, Otsego, and Schoharie
- *New York City*: The counties of Bronx, Kings (Brooklyn), New York (Manhattan), Queens, and Richmond (Staten Island)
- *North Country*: The counties of Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence
- *Southern Tier*: The counties of Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Delaware, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, and Tompkins
- *Western New York*: The counties of Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, and Niagara

FINDINGS

Recruitment and Retention Challenges

Hospitals

Clinical laboratory technologists are among the most difficult to recruit at NYS hospitals.

Across all hospitals in NYS, clinical laboratory technologists emerged as one of the most challenging positions to fill, as indicated in **Table 1**. Additionally, behavioral health professionals such as psychiatrists, behavioral health nurse practitioners, licensed clinical social workers, and RNs were also identified as particularly difficult to recruit at hospitals.

TABLE 1. Occupations Most Difficult to Recruit As Reported by NYS Hospitals by Rank and Region, 2023

Upstate New York ^a	Hudson Valley	Long Island	New York City
(1) Psychiatrists	(1) Respiratory Therapists	(1) Clinical Laboratory Technicians	(1) Clinical Laboratory Technologists
(2) Clinical Laboratory Technologists	(2) Clinical Laboratory Technologists	(2) Clinical Laboratory Technologists	(2) Respiratory Therapists
(3) Registered Nurses	(3) Surgical Technicians	(3) Licensed Clinical Social Workers	(3) Psychiatrists
(4) Respiratory Therapists	(4) Nurse Practitioners (Behavioral Health)	(4) Licensed Masters Social Workers	(4) Surgical Technicians
(5) Licensed Practical Nurses	(5) Psychiatrists	(5) Nurse Practitioners (Behavioral Health)	(5) Nurse Practitioners (Behavioral Health)
(6) Licensed Laboratory Technicians	(6) Registered Nurses	(6) Pharmacists	(6) Physician Assistants
(7) Surgical Technicians	(7) Physician Assistants	(7) Physician Assistants	(7) Licensed Clinical Social Workers
(8) Nurse Practitioners (Behavioral Health)	(8) Licensed Masters Social Workers	(8) Respiratory Therapists	(8) Licensed Masters Social Workers
(9) Licensed Clinical Social Workers	(9) Licensed Practical Nurses	(9) Registered Nurses	(9) Registered Nurses
(10) Nurse Aides/Nurse Assistants	(10) Licensed Clinical Social Workers	(10) Surgical Technicians	(10) Licensed Practical Nurses

^a Upstate New York includes the Capital District, Central New York, Finger Lakes, Mohawk Valley, North Country, Southern Tier, and Western New York regions.

RNs and surgical technicians are among the most difficult to retain at NYS hospitals.

According to findings from the hospital survey, RNs and surgical technicians were identified as highly challenging to retain, as highlighted in **Table 2**. Downstate regions specifically noted psychiatrists as another critical retention challenge. In contrast, upstate hospitals cited nurse aides/nurse assistants and licensed practical nurses (LPNs) as positions particularly difficult to retain.

TABLE 2. Occupations With the Most Retention Difficulties at NYS Hospitals by Rank and Region, 2023

Upstate New York ^a	Hudson Valley	Long Island	New York City
(1) Nurse Aides/Nurse Assistants	(1) Nurse Practitioners (Behavioral Health)	(1) Clinical Laboratory Technologists	(1) Registered Nurses
(2) Registered Nurses	(2) Psychiatrists	(2) Respiratory Therapists	(2) Nurse Practitioners (Behavioral Health)
(3) Licensed Practical Nurses	(3) Respiratory Therapists	(3) Registered Nurses	(3) Psychiatrists
(4) Surgical Technicians	(4) Registered Nurses	(4) Surgical Technicians	(4) Licensed Clinical Social Workers
(5) Licensed Masters Social Workers	(5) Surgical Technicians	(5) Psychiatrists	(5) Surgical Technicians

^a Upstate New York includes the Capital District, Central New York, Finger Lakes, Mohawk Valley, North Country, Southern Tier, and Western New York regions.

The shortage of workers and low salaries contribute to difficulties recruiting health care workers in hospitals.

Hospitals identified workforce shortages as the primary cause of recruitment difficulties across most health care roles, as detailed in **Table 3**, followed by non-competitive salaries. In contrast, non-competitive salaries were cited as the primary challenge in recruiting both licensed master’s social workers and LPNs. For retention challenges, hospitals pointed to better salary offerings elsewhere as the predominant issue. Career changes (seeking jobs outside of health care) and better benefits elsewhere were also noted as significant factors contributing to retention difficulties.

TABLE 3. Top Reasons for Recruitment and Retention Difficulties at NYS Hospitals for Selected Health Care Occupations, 2023

Occupations	Top Reasons for Difficulties	
	Recruitment	Retention
Nurse Aides/Nurse Assistants	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Non-competitive salaries	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Career change
Clinical Laboratory Technicians	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Non-competitive salaries	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Better benefits elsewhere
Clinical Laboratory Technologists	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Non-competitive salaries	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Career change
Licensed Clinical Social Workers	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Non-competitive salaries	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Career change
Licensed Masters Social Workers	(1) Non-competitive salaries (2) Shortage of workers	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Career change
Licensed Practical Nurses	(1) Non-competitive salaries (2) Shortage of workers	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Career change
Nurse Practitioners (Behavioral Health)	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Non-competitive salaries	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Better benefits elsewhere
Physician Assistants	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Non-competitive salaries	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Better benefits elsewhere
Psychiatrists	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Non-competitive salaries	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Better benefits elsewhere
Respiratory Therapists	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Non-competitive salaries	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Retirements
Registered Nurses	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Non-competitive salaries	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Retirements
Surgical Technicians	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Non-competitive salaries	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Career change

Nursing Homes and Adult Care Facilities

Nursing homes reported that certified nurse aides/assistants (CNAs) are the most difficult to recruit and retain.

Adult care facilities indicated that experienced RNs are the most difficult to recruit and among the most difficult to retain.

Differences in recruitment and retention challenges were observed between nursing homes and adult care facilities that responded to the survey. In nursing homes, CNAs were identified as the most challenging to recruit and retain, as outlined in **Table 4**. Additionally, RNs and LPNs were reported as difficult to recruit and retain in nursing homes. Adult care facilities identified experienced RNs as the most difficult to recruit and among the most challenging to retain.

TABLE 4. Occupations With the Most Recruitment and Retention Difficulties at NYS Nursing Homes and Adult Care Facilities by Facility Type, 2023

Nursing Homes		Adult Care Facilities	
Recruitment Difficulties	Retention Difficulties	Recruitment Difficulties	Retention Difficulties
(1) Certified Nurse Aides/ Assistants	(1) Certified Nurse Aides/ Assistants	(1) Experienced Registered Nurses	(1) Home Health Aides
(2) Licensed Practical Nurses	(2) CNA Trainees/ Temp Nurse Aides	(2) Personal Care Aides	(2) Personal Care Aides
(3) Experienced Registered Nurses	(3) Licensed Practical Nurses	(3) Home Health Aides	(3) Residential Care Aides
(4) Newly Licensed Registered Nurses	(4) Newly Licensed Registered Nurses	(4) Licensed Practical Nurses	(4) Experienced Registered Nurses
(5) Nurse Directors/ Managers	(5) Experienced Registered Nurses	(5) Residential Care Aides	(5) Licensed Practical Nurses

RNs (experienced and new) and LPNs were the most difficult to recruit (**Table 5**) across most of the regions. CNAs were also among the most difficult to recruit in all upstate regions. Respondents from the New York City and Long Island regions reported that LPNs were the most difficult to recruit.

TABLE 5. Occupations With the Most Recruitment Difficulties at NYS Nursing Homes and Adult Care Facilities by Region, 2023

Region	Most Difficult to Recruit				
Capital District/ North Country	(1) Licensed Practical Nurses	(2) Certified Nurse Aides/ Assistants	(3) CNA Trainees/ Temp Nurse Aides	(4) Nurse Directors/ Managers	(5) Experienced Registered Nurses
Central New York	(1) Certified Nurse Aides/ Assistants	(2) Licensed Practical Nurses	(3) Nurse Directors/ Managers	(4) Dietitians/ Nutritionists	(5) Licensed Masters Social Workers
Finger Lakes	(1) Experienced Registered Nurses	(2) Certified Nurse Aides/ Assistants	(3) Newly Licensed Registered Nurses	(4) Respiratory Therapists	(5) Licensed Practical Nurses
Hudson Valley	(1) Experienced/ New Registered Nurses	(2) Licensed Practical Nurses	(3) Home Health Aides	(4) Certified Nurse Aides/ Assistants	(5) Personal Care Aides
Long Island	(1) Licensed Practical Nurses	(2) Experienced Registered Nurses	(3) Personal Care Aides	(4) Residential Care Aides	(5) Home Health Aides
Mohawk Valley	(1) Certified Nurse Aides/ Assistants	(2) Nurse Directors/ Managers	(3) Experienced Registered Nurses	(4) Physical Therapists	(5) Licensed Practical Nurses
New York City	(1) Licensed Practical Nurses	(2) Nurse Directors/ Managers	(3) Experienced Registered Nurses	(4) Newly Trained Registered Nurses	(5) Respiratory Therapists
Southern Tier	(1) Experienced Registered Nurses	(2) Certified Nurse Aides/ Assistants	(3) Personal Care Aides	(4) Licensed Practical Nurses	(5) Residential Care Aides
Western New York	(1) Experienced/ New Registered Nurses	(2) Licensed Practical Nurses	(3) Certified Nurse Aides/ Assistants	(4) MDS Coordinator	(5) Nurse Educators

CNAs are the most difficult to retain in nursing homes and adult care facilities.

CNAs and CNA trainees emerged as the most challenging to retain both in nursing homes and in adult care facilities across the majority of regions, as indicated in **Table 6**. Additionally, many regions also indicated that RNs and LPNs were among the most difficult to retain in both types of facilities.

TABLE 6. Occupations With the Most Retention Difficulties at NYS Nursing Homes and Adult Care Facilities by Region, 2023

Region	Most Difficult to Retain				
Capital District/ North Country	(1) Certified Nurse Aides/ Assistants	(2) CNA Trainees/ Temp Nurse Aides	(3) Licensed Masters Social Workers	(4) Nurse Directors/ Managers	(5) Licensed Practical Nurses
Central New York	(1) CNA Trainees/ Temp Nurse Aides	(2) Certified Nurse Aides/ Assistants	(3) Licensed Clinical Social Workers	(4) Licensed Practical Nurses	(5) Experienced Registered Nurses
Finger Lakes	(1) Certified Nurse Aides/ Assistants	(2) CNA Trainees/ Temp Nurse Aides	(3) Newly Licensed Registered Nurses	(4) Residential Care Aides	(5) Respiratory Therapists
Hudson Valley	(1) Personal Care Aides	(2) CNA Trainees/ Temp Nurse Aides	(3) Certified Nurse Aides/ Assistants	(4) Newly Licensed Registered Nurses	(5) Home Health Aides
Long Island	(1) Home Health Aides	(2) Residential Care Aides	(3) Licensed Practical Nurses	(4) Experienced Registered Nurses	(5) Personal Care Aides
Mohawk Valley	(1) Certified Nurse Aides/ Assistants	(2) CNA Trainees/ Temp Nurse Aides	(3) Licensed Practical Nurses	(4) Nurse Directors/ Managers	(5) Experienced Registered Nurses
New York City	(1) Certified Nurse Aides/ Assistants	(2) Newly Licensed Registered Nurses	(3) Licensed Practical Nurses	(4) Experienced Registered Nurses	(5) Respiratory Therapists
Southern Tier	(1) Certified Nurse Aides/ Assistants	(2) Licensed Practical Nurses	(3) Residential Care Aides	(4) Personal Care Aides	(5) Home Health Aides
Western New York	(1) Newly Licensed Registered Nurses	(2) Experienced Registered Nurses	(3) Certified Nurse Aides/ Assistants	(4) CNA Trainees/ Temp Nurse Aides	(5) Licensed Practical Nurses

The shortage of workers and low salaries were cited as the main reasons for recruitment and retention difficulties in nursing homes and adult care facilities.

Nursing homes and adult care facilities identified workforce shortages as the primary reason for recruitment difficulties, as detailed in **Table 7**, for most occupations. Additionally, non-responsive candidates (ghosting) and non-competitive salaries were noted as contributing factors to recruitment challenges. Moreover, better salary offers from competing employers were cited as a significant cause of retention difficulties across all regions. Finally, nursing homes and adult care facilities reported that unsatisfactory performance was cited as a retention issues for CNAs, CNA trainees, home health aides, personal care aides, and residential care aides.

TABLE 7. Top Reasons for Recruitment and Retention Difficulties at NYS Nursing Homes and Adult Care Facilities for Selected Health Care Occupations, 2023

Occupations	Top Reasons for Difficulties	
	Recruitment	Retention
Certified Nurse Aides/ Assistants	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Applicants non-responsive	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Unsatisfactory performance
CNA Trainees/ Temp Nurse Aides	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Applicants non-responsive	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Unsatisfactory performance
Dietitians/ Nutritionists	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Non-competitive salaries	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Too few available hours
Home Health Aides	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Applicants non-responsive	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Unsatisfactory performance
Licensed Masters Social Workers	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Applicants non-responsive (2) Non-competitive salaries	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Lack of career mobility (2) Transportation/location
Licensed Practical Nurses	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Applicants non-responsive	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Scheduling challenges
MDS Coordinator	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Applicants non-responsive	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Lack of career mobility
Nurse Directors/ Managers	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Applicants non-responsive	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Paperwork burdens
Nurse Educators	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Applicants non-responsive	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Paperwork burdens
Personal Care Aides	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Applicants non-responsive	(1) Unsatisfactory performance (2) Better salaries elsewhere
Physical Therapists	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Non-competitive salaries	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Transportation/location
Experienced Registered Nurses	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Applicants non-responsive	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Scheduling challenges
Newly Licensed Registered Nurses	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Applicants non-responsive	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Scheduling challenges (2) Transportation/Location
Residential Care Aides	(1) Applicants non-responsive (2) Shortage of workers	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Unsatisfactory performance
Respiratory Therapists	(1) Shortage of workers (2) Non-competitive salaries	(1) Better salaries elsewhere (2) Better benefits elsewhere

Home Health Care

Home health care agencies reported that LPNS and RNs are among the most difficult to recruit.

According to findings from the survey of home health care agencies, LPNs were identified as among the most challenging occupations to recruit in all regions, as shown in **Table 8**. RNs were also identified as among the most difficult to recruit in most regions. Additionally, home health agencies noted difficulty in recruiting home health aides in all regions but New York City. Finally, half of the regions reported difficulties recruiting licensed master’s social workers.

TABLE 8. Occupations With the Most Recruitment Difficulties at NYS Home Health Agencies by Region, 2023

Region	Most Difficult to Recruit				
Capital District	(1) Licensed Practical Nurses	(2) Registered Nurses	(3) Personal Care Aides	(4) Home Health Aides	(5) Intake Coordinators/Schedulers
Central New York	(1) Licensed Practical Nurses	(2) Registered Nurses	(3) Home Health Aides	(4) Personal Care Aides	(5) Intake Coordinators/Schedulers
Finger Lakes	(1) Licensed Practical Nurses	(2) Registered Nurses	(3) Home Health Aides	(4) Personal Care Aides	(5) Licensed Master’s Social Workers
Hudson Valley	(1) Licensed Practical Nurses	(2) Registered Nurses	(3) Licensed Master’s Social Workers	(4) Licensed Clinical Social Workers	(5) Home Health Aides
Long Island	(1) Licensed Practical Nurses	(2) Personal Care Aides	(3) Registered Nurses	(4) Licensed Master’s Social Workers	(5) Home Health Aides
Mohawk Valley	(1) Licensed Practical Nurses	(2) Home Health Aides	(3) Registered Nurses	(4) Personal Care Aides	(5) Homemakers
New York City	(1) Licensed Master’s Social Workers	(2) Speech-Language Pathologists	(3) Licensed Practical Nurses	(4) Physical Therapists	(5) Occupational Therapists
North Country	(1) Licensed Practical Nurses	(2) Registered Nurses	(3) Home Health Aides	(4) Physical Therapists	(5) Occupational Therapists
Southern Tier	(1) Licensed Clinical Social Workers	(2) Speech-Language Pathologists	(3) Registered Nurses	(4) Home Health Aides	(5) Licensed Practical Nurses
Western New York	(1) Home Health Aides	(2) Licensed Practical Nurses	(3) Personal Care Aides	(4) Registered Nurses	(5) Licensed Master’s Social Workers

Home health care agencies reported that home health aides and personal care aides are among the most difficult to retain.

Home health aides and personal care aides were among the most difficult to retain, especially in upstate regions, according to home health care agencies (Table 9). LPNs and RNs were also difficult to retain in most regions according to survey respondents. The Hudson Valley, Long Island, and New York City regions also reported difficulties retaining speech-language pathologists.

TABLE 9. Occupations With the Most Retention Difficulties at NYS Home Health Agencies by Region, 2023

Region	Most Difficult to Retain				
Capital District	(1) Home Health Aides	(2) Licensed Practical Nurses	(3) Personal Care Aides	(4) Occupational Therapists	(5) Physical Therapists
Central New York	(1) Home Health Aides	(2) Personal Care Aides	(3) Licensed Practical Nurses	(4) Registered Nurses	(5) Intake Coordinators/Schedulers
Finger Lakes	(1) Personal Care Aides	(2) Home Health Aides	(3) Licensed Practical Nurses	(4) Homemakers	(5) Licensed Clinical Social Workers
Hudson Valley	(1) Personal Care Aides	(2) Licensed Practical Nurses	(3) Speech-Language Pathologists	(4) Registered Nurses	(5) Home Health Aides
Long Island	(1) Speech-Language Pathologists	(2) Occupational Therapists	(3) Registered Nurses	(4) Physical Therapists	(5) Licensed Practical Nurses
Mohawk Valley	(1) Homemakers	(2) Home Health Aides	(3) Licensed Practical Nurses	(4) Registered Nurses	(5) Personal Care Aides
New York City	(1) Speech-Language Pathologists	(2) Occupational Therapists	(3) Physical Therapists	(4) Licensed Practical Nurses	(5) Registered Nurses
North Country	(1) Personal Care Aides	(2) Home Health Aides	(3) Licensed Practical Nurses	(4) Registered Nurses	(5) Physical Therapy Assistants
Southern Tier	(1) Home Health Aides	(2) Licensed Practical Nurses	(3) Personal Care Aides	(4) Homemakers	(5) Registered Nurses
Western New York	(1) Home Health Aides	(2) Personal Care Aides	(3) Homemakers	(4) Licensed Practical Nurses	(5) Licensed Clinical Social Workers

The shortage of applicants and inadequate salary were cited as the main reasons for recruitment and retention of health care workers in home health care agencies.

Home health care agencies from all regions indicated that a shortage of applicants was primary reason for recruitment difficulties among health care workers, as outlined in **Table 10**. Home health agencies from almost all regions indicated that inadequate salary was also a reason for recruitment difficulties. Additionally, health care agencies in all regions identified higher pay and better benefits offered by other employers as the main factor contributing to retention challenges.

TABLE 10. Top Reasons for Recruitment and Retention Difficulties at NYS Home Health Care Agencies for Selected Health Care Occupations, 2023

Occupations	Top Reasons for Difficulties	
	Recruitment	Retention
Home Health Aides	(1) Not enough applicants (2) Lack of scheduling flexibility for applicant	(1) Higher pay and benefits elsewhere (2) Left for other employment sectors
Homemakers	(1) Not enough applicants (2) Inadequate salary	(1) Higher pay and benefits elsewhere (2) Pay/hours limited to protect safety net benefit eligibility
Intake Coordinators/ Schedulers	(1) Not enough applicants (2) Inadequate salary	(1) Higher pay and benefits elsewhere (2) Scheduling challenges
Licensed Clinical Social Workers	(1) Not enough applicants (2) Inadequate salary	(1) Higher pay and benefits elsewhere (2) Left for other employment sectors
Licensed Master's Social Workers	(1) Not enough applicants (2) Inadequate salary	(1) Higher pay and benefits elsewhere (2) Left for other employment sectors
Licensed Practical Nurses	(1) Not enough applicants (2) Inadequate salary	(1) Higher pay and benefits elsewhere (2) Left for other employment sectors
Occupational Therapists	(1) Not enough applicants (2) Inadequate salary	(1) Higher pay and benefits elsewhere (2) Paperwork and regulatory burdens (2) Scheduling challenges
Personal Care Aides	(1) Not enough applicants (2) Inadequate salary	(1) Higher pay and benefits elsewhere (2) Left for other employment sectors
Physical Therapists	(1) Not enough applicants (2) Inadequate salary	(1) Higher pay and benefits elsewhere (2) Paperwork and regulatory burdens (2) Scheduling challenges
Registered Nurses	(1) Not enough applicants (2) Inadequate salary	(1) Higher pay and benefits elsewhere (2) Paperwork and regulatory burdens
Speech-Language Pathologists	(1) Not enough applicants (2) Inadequate salary	(1) Retirements (2) Higher pay and benefits elsewhere (2) Scheduling challenges

Federally Qualified Health Centers

Participants from the FQHC focus group identified the following occupations as the most difficult to recruit and retain:

- RNs, LPNs, and medical assistants
- Experienced RN managers
- Dentists (especially in rural areas), dental hygienists, and dental assistants
- Behavioral health occupations
- Physicians

Participants from the FQHC focus group also emphasized the necessity for bilingual employees and for a more diverse workforce.

Key factors contributing to recruitment and retention challenges at FQHCs included:

- SED licensure requirement for a 1-year residency for dentists
- Competition for workers within and outside of health care
- Decline in RN graduations
- Ghosting
- Not wanting to work in rural areas
- Quality of candidates
- Salary expectations
- Schedule flexibility
- Violence on public transportation
- Work-life balance/no weekends

Potential Strategies to Address Health Care Worker Recruitment and Retention Difficulties

Increased pay was identified as an effective strategy for addressing workforce recruitment and retention issues across all settings.

Increased compensation in general and, specifically, for off-shifts or irregular hours emerged universally as a highly effective strategy for recruiting and retaining health care workers across the different health care settings (Table 11). Additionally, respondents from hospitals and nursing homes and adult care facilities emphasized the importance of offering career advancement opportunities as a pivotal strategy in improving workforce retention and recruitment. Perception of effectiveness for some strategies varied by setting. For examples, home health agencies indicated that providing health insurance was an effective strategy while nursing homes and adult care facilities did not.

TABLE 11. Potential Strategies to Address Health Care Worker Recruitment and Retention Difficulties by Region, 2023

Hospitals	Nursing Home/ Adult Care Facilities	Home Health Agencies
(1) Increased Hourly Pay	(1) Increased Hourly Pay	(1) Paid Sick Time Off
(2) Sign-on Bonuses	(2) Sign-on Bonuses	(2) Health Insurance
(3) Retention Bonuses	(3) Increased pay for extra shifts or longer/irregular hours	(3) Paid Vacation Days
(4) Tuition Assistance	(4) Career Advancement Opportunities	(4) Retirement/401K
(5) Career Advancement Opportunities	(5) Health Insurance	(5) Increased Hourly Pay
(6) Increased pay for extra shifts or longer/irregular hours	(6) Retention Bonuses	(6) Increased pay for extra shifts or longer/irregular hours

Strategies that respondents indicated as effective were highlighted in bold.

FQHCs focus group participants identified a number of key strategies that could be implemented or expanded to address workforce recruitment and retention challenges, including:

- Expanding J-1 Visa waivers to behavioral health professionals
- Increasing the availability of childcare services
- Increasing salaries
- Increasing the use of J-1 Visa waivers for physicians
- Increasing the use of the National Health Service Corps (NHSC)/Nurse Corps
- Providing tax incentives for health care workers who travel
- Using recruitment/sign-on bonuses

While recruitment and sign-on bonuses have been found to assist in recruiting employees, focus group participants indicated that many leave after collecting their bonus payments.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

Results from this report may be limited by selection bias. Health care organizations that responded to the survey were self-selected and may not be representative of their respective organizational types regionally or statewide. Finally, the lack of responses from hospitals for certain regions necessitated multiple regions being combined and reduced the specificity of some findings.

DISCUSSION

Findings indicated that while the COVID-19 pandemic has largely subsided, the pre-existing workforce shortages in health care, exacerbated by the pandemic, persist unabated. These shortages pervade all health care settings, with the underlying reasons for recruitment and retention challenges varying by both setting and geographic location. Increased employment opportunities both within and outside the health care sector, coupled with the heightened pressures of providing care amidst ongoing workforce shortages, underscore the urgent need to address these workforce issues comprehensively.

Persistent workforce shortages severely impede access to care, disproportionately impacting marginalized communities and underserved regions where health care services are already limited. While increasing salaries was identified as an effective solution for addressing health care workforce recruitment and retention issues, solutions necessitate multi-faceted approaches that go beyond salaries, including strategies already identified, such as:

- **Outreach Initiatives:** Implementing open houses, job fairs, and other events targeting high school students to introduce a broader and more diverse audience to health care careers.
- **Investments in Education and Training:** Enhancing education and training pipelines to ensure a steady influx of qualified students into health care fields.
- **Educational Assistance:** Providing the existing workforce with opportunities for skill development and for career advancement.
- **Programs and Financing for Working Conditions:** Developing and funding programs aimed at improving working conditions and enhancing professional satisfaction within the health care workforce.

CONCLUSIONS

Addressing health workforce recruitment and retention difficulties is critical for ensuring a stable and effective health care system. Different regions and health care settings have unique challenges and needs. Solutions effective in one area may not be applicable or as successful in another. Thus, a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to be effective. Creating platforms for sharing successful strategies can also help health care providers learn from each other. Finally, to ensure the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of recruitment and retention strategies, it is important to regularly evaluate their progress and outcomes. This evaluation should look at both immediate and long-term impacts, considering factors like job satisfaction, employee turnover rates, and patient care quality.



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