

Alaska faces a debilitating healthcare workforce shortage

The Alaska Hospital & Healthcare Association (AHHA) commissioned Juneau-based Rain Coast Data to conduct a healthcare workforce statistical analysis which was published in December 2023. Key study findings are below.

Download the full report at alaskahha.org.

Alaska's Top Industry

Healthcare is a leading economic sector in Alaska, paying out over \$3 billion in direct wages in 2022 - more than any other sector.

- Healthcare was responsible for 13% of all workforce earnings, outpacing military and natural resource sectors.
- Healthcare employs 11% of Alaska's entire workforce with nearly 43,000 healthcare jobs in 2022.
- When including the multiplier effect, the total impact of Alaska's healthcare sector was 75,400 jobs across the state's economy with a total income impact of \$4.75 billion in 2022.

#1
Economic sector in Alaska:
43,000 jobs
\$3 billion wages

Healthcare Worker Shortage

There are too few Alaska healthcare workers to fill current service demands and vacancies are increasing. Alaska is projected to have the most significant shortages of any state moving forward.

- In 2022, Alaska training programs graduated fewer than 900 healthcare workers, including 324 registered nurses, a fraction of what is needed.
- While travel nurses can be used to meet short-term staffing needs, it comes at a higher cost. Travel nurses earned an estimated 57% more on average than non-traveling RNs in Alaska.
- A survey of Alaska hospitals shows that nurse openings at our facilities have ballooned to 21% and, on average, it takes 118 days to fill a position.

21%
Vacancy rate for nurses in Alaska's hospitals

Thousands of New Workers Needed Annually

Workforce growth projections show the healthcare sector is expected to add 4,500 new jobs over the next 10 years, more jobs than any other sector in the state. Additionally, turnover means that replacement workers are continually needed.

- Approximately 8,000 new healthcare workers must be hired across Alaska every year to keep up with service needs.
- This includes a need for nearly 1,400 new registered nurses each year in Alaska.

8K
New healthcare workers needed annually

AHHA's Workforce Strategy



Pipeline: Forge strong partnerships between the healthcare industry, schools, and students (K-12+) to recruit, train, and graduate healthcare professionals to build a sustainable workforce pipeline in Alaska.



Pathways: Develop healthcare career pathways and professional development opportunities to provide training and advance skills that will improve patient care and employee retention.



Protection: Develop and implement practices that support wellness, increase resiliency, and address burnout, violence, and other treats to retention. Remove barriers that overburden the industry and workers.