



A COMPOUNDING CRISIS

COVID-19 and the Hospital Workforce

COVID-19 is causing significant disruption in the health care workforce. The pandemic has made the long- and short-term challenges for care delivery and workforce sustainability considerably more pronounced.

What's Happening:

Front-line health care workers — nurses, therapists and other clinicians — are facing burnout after nearly two years of pandemic response. According to national research from [Morning Consult](#), nearly **20% of the health care workforce reported quitting their job** since November 2020. Among those who have not quit, **20% have considered quitting**.

Vacancy and turnover in the health care workforce were at troubling levels before the onset of the pandemic. These signals of instability likely have increased since the last year of reporting.

Agency staffing has been used to fill vacant positions temporarily in the past. **Staffing demands have exponentially increased the rates travelers can demand.** This has left long-term employees working side-by-side with workers making 150% to 200% of the standard hourly rates. Moreover, the influx of high-cost agency staff has disrupted workplace cultures that support worker satisfaction and resulted in hospitals' staffing costs skyrocketing. According to [Premier](#), compared to a pre-pandemic baseline period in 2019, **clinical labor costs are up by an average of 8% per day**, nationally.

Pre-pandemic workforce pipeline challenges are magnified. Schools are struggling to access essential clinical rotations for student training because of a lack of hospital staff. And, increasing shortages of nursing faculty are making it difficult for schools to accept all the interested students. The Missouri State Board of Nursing 2020 annual reporting for the 90 Missouri pre-licensure nursing programs indicates there are at least 45 unfilled full-time and 44 open part-time/adjunct nurse faculty positions.

There were 10,424 nursing students enrolled in 2020; however, 1,296 qualified applicants had to be turned away. While some of these applicants may have applied to multiple schools, **the number of qualified applicants that cannot be accommodated is staggering.** Missouri's nursing programs report that **an additional 87 full-time faculty positions would be necessary to accommodate all applicants deemed qualified for admission.** And, annual reports suggest that at least 126 Missouri nurse educators plan to retire within the next five years.

What Hospitals Are Doing:

Hospitals are working to reallocate and retrain nurses and other personnel to try and meet the greatest demands. In addition, they are using tools to recruit, retain and reward staff, including financial incentives, new flexibility and support systems within the workplace, and personal wellness programs.

A Call For Action:

This looming crisis is important to all Missourians. The ability for hospitals and other health care providers to deliver essential services to communities is being severely threatened. The collaboration and attention of business leaders, policymakers and lawmakers with the health care community is urgently needed. We ask for your participation in a coalition of stakeholders to improve the supply and availability of nursing faculty and investments in the state's health care workforce.