Wisconsin’s Health Care Workforce Challenge: Growing Demands on a Shrinking Pool of Workers

Wisconsin Workers at Retirement Age

| 2010 | 2020 | 2030 |

Wisconsin’s aging workforce means health care workers are retiring faster than they can be replaced.

The Need for Health Care Goes Up as We Age

- < 35 years old
  - 44% of the population
  - 20% of health care demand
- > 65 years old
  - 20% of the population
  - 40% of health care spending

Health care workforce vacancy rates that skyrocketed between 2021 and 2022 are stabilizing, but still critical, in 2023, with high vacancy rates for 8 of 18 health care professions. Wisconsin’s nursing workforce vacancy rate crossed over to the double digits in the course of a year to 10.1%.

Vacancy Rates for Selected Hospital Professions

Source: WHA Information Center annual hospital survey
Lagging behind the growth needed to meet current and future demand, public and private partners need to work together to promote interest in health professions, make sure classroom seats are available and expand career pathway options to grow Wisconsin’s health care workforce.

Clearly defined, accessible and satisfying career pathways play an important role in growing the health care workforce and provide an advantage for health care over other industries. In February 2024 WHA and the WHA Foundation launched a digital media campaign and a hospital career exploration website highlighting the many career options hospitals and health systems provide. The campaign, called So Many Options, is aimed at middle and high school students and their adult influencers, such as parents and teachers.