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## WHA Workforce Forum Focuses on Partnering to Grow Faster

WHA members from across Wisconsin gathered in Stevens Point on May 14, 2025 for WHA's Health Care Workforce Forum. Key partners joined health care leaders to focus on strategies to grow, sustain and support the workforce necessary for access to Wisconsin's high-quality health care.



The day started off with WHA's Senior Vice President of Workforce and Clinical Practice Ann Zenk sharing an in-depth review of the demographic, supply and demand challenges facing Wisconsin employers and the Wisconsin health care workforce. The WHA 2025 Wisconsin Health Care Workforce Report provided the foundation for the session. Zenk noted signs of improvement and an upgrade of the Wisconsin health care workforce condition from "critical but stable" to "serious but stable."

Zenk was followed by WHA Senior Vice President of Government Relations Kyle O'Brien. O'Brien described how rising pressures and competing priorities are impacting hospitals, health systems and the health care workforce. "Stagnant reimbursement and shrinking hospital and health system margins are an issue we must seriously address," he noted. "Hospital margins support

areas of the health system that lose money, including behavioral health services, primary care and other critical community needs."

O'Brien also pointed out that as reimbursement is not keeping pace with rising workforce, supply and overhead costs, profits for insurers are growing, as is the burden payer practices like denials and prior authorization place on patients and the workforce.



Forum attendees spent the rest of the day focused on how to create a culture where people, results and growth flourish amidst all the challenges they face. Keynote speaker Sue Tetzlaff noted that in hospitals and health systems where people take care of people, the employee experience and the patient experience must be leveraged for growth of the business. When this happens, the financial results will come. Participants were challenged to rate the culture of their hospitals and health systems and then utilize the framework and culture changing tactics provided by Tetzlaff's organization, Capstone Leadership Solutions, to create a take-away plan to positively impact their workplace culture.

This year's annual workforce forum provided an opportunity for WHA members to learn about the current Wisconsin health care environment, the biggest challenges hospitals and health care teams are facing and the solutions needed to grow, recruit, retain and support the workforce.

Contact Ann Zenk with questions about the forum or any other workforce issue.

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## EDUCATION EVENTS

### **May. 27, 2025**

Critical Access Hospital (CAH) Conditions of Participation Series

### **Jun. 4, 2025**

2025 Wisconsin Rural Health Conference

### **Aug. 8, 2025**

WHA Financial Workshop