

Vol. 70, Issue 35

Thursday, September 3, 2026

WHA's Ann Zenk Announces Retirement; Recruitment Begins for New Workforce Lead

Wisconsin Hospital Association Senior Vice President of Workforce and Clinical Practice Ann Zenk will retire on June 1, 2027, concluding 10 years of service to WHA and a distinguished health care career spanning patient care, hospital leadership, public policy and advocacy.

"Ann has been an invaluable member of the WHA team and a trusted resource for hospital leaders, policymakers and the public," said WHA President and CEO Kyle O'Brien. "She understands what is happening at the bedside, connects it to the broader forces affecting health care and translates it into meaningful policy and action."

Zenk joined WHA in June 2017 after more than 30 years in health care, including nursing and leadership roles in hospitals, clinics and long-term care. Her experience in patient care, quality and safety, risk management and utilization review proved especially valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic. WHA relied heavily on Zenk to help interpret rapidly changing clinical and workforce guidance, understand the challenges facing hospitals and their teams and communicate those realities to state leaders and the public. She also advised the Healthy Wisconsin Alliance's Stop the COVID Spread campaign and participated in numerous media interviews during a period of unprecedented pressure on Wisconsin hospitals.



Ann Zenk

As WHA's lead on workforce policy and clinical practice, Zenk led the development of the annual Wisconsin Health Care Workforce Report. The report has become a relied-upon resource for hospital leaders, educators, policymakers and the media—and a policy agenda for growing Wisconsin's health care workforce, expanding training pathways and removing unnecessary barriers to patient care.

Zenk's work extended beyond identifying challenges to implementing solutions. She helped shape, implement and monitor WHA-initiated investments in Wisconsin's health care workforce, including graduate medical education grants and the launch of allied health professional and advanced practice clinician training grants. These programs created new partnerships among hospitals, educators and the state while expanding training opportunities in communities across Wisconsin.

Zenk frequently brought this work to the State Capitol, presenting workforce findings and testifying on recruitment and retention, professional licensure and workplace violence protections. Since 2018, she has also represented health care on the Governor's Council on Workforce Investment and contributed to the Governor's Task Force on the Health Care Workforce.

Zenk was equally committed to inspiring the next generation. She advised the WHA Foundation's *So Many Options* campaign and health care career exploration website, helping introduce students to the wide range of careers available in Wisconsin hospitals.

Zenk also became one of WHA's most recognizable public voices through countless interviews about workforce shortages, health care demand and access to care. Her appearances included interviews with *PBS Wisconsin*, *Wisconsin Public Radio*, *Spectrum News*, the *Wisconsin Examiner* and television stations across the state.

"Serving WHA and its members has been one of the great privileges of my career," said Zenk. "I am proud of what we have accomplished together, and confident WHA and its members will continue finding ways to grow and support the health care workforce Wisconsin needs. It's going to be hard to leave one of the best jobs I've ever had but I'm ready to spend more time with family, friends and fishing."



WHA has partnered with The QTI Group to launch a search for its next Vice President, Workforce & Clinical Practice. Zenk will remain with WHA through May 2027, assisting with the recruitment process and helping ensure a smooth transition. WHA encourages members to share this opportunity profile with potential candidates interested in joining the state's leading health care advocacy association.

"Ann has been a loyal, hardworking and passionate advocate for our members. Her decades of experience have provided invaluable insight and credibility to our work with WHA members and in the State Capitol," said O'Brien. "We will miss a colleague and friend who has given so much to WHA and its members. But we will always be grateful for her tremendous contributions that have helped our state's hospitals care for patients."

IN THIS ISSUE

- Wisconsin Hospitals Lead the Nation in Five-Star Patient Experience Ratings
- WHA's Ann Zenk Announces Retirement; Recruitment Begins for New Workforce Lead
- Wisconsin Implements APRN Licensure
- WHA Presents Recommendations to Legislative Study Committee on AI in Health Care
- WHA Expresses Concern Over Cuts to WI Hospitals in 2027 Outpatient Rule

EDUCATION EVENTS

Sep. 10, 2026

Caring for Wisconsin's Caregivers: 2026 WHA Healthcare Workforce Well-being Summit

Sep. 16, 2026

2026 Annual Wisconsin Organization of Nurse Leaders (WONL) Conference

Sep. 21, 2026

Swing-bed Fundamentals