

HEALTHCARE SOCIAL WORKERS in the FAR NORTH REGION



Healthcare is one of the largest employers in California, providing a wide range of well-paying career opportunities for residents. In 2014, the Centers of Excellence partnered with the Health Workforce Initiative (HWI) and the California Hospital Association (CHA) on two healthcare surveys to **assess workforce needs** at both state and regional levels. The surveys targeted three healthcare sectors:

- **Hospitals** provide medical, diagnostic, and treatment services to inpatients and some outpatient services.
- **Ambulatory Healthcare Services** provide healthcare services to outpatients in settings such as offices of physicians, outpatient care centers, and laboratories.
- **Nursing and Residential Care Facilities** provide residential care combined with either nursing, supervisory, or other types of care as needed.

Statewide, 190 hospitals responded to the hospital survey and 1,600 clinics, labs and facilities responded to the ambulatory and residential care survey, providing an excellent sample to analyze healthcare workforce demand across the state and in several regions. The research focused on identifying: (1) labor market demand for key occupations in healthcare industries, (2) training supply supporting healthcare industries, and (3) key issues impacting supply and demand.

This report is one in a series of reports profiling healthcare occupations in the Far North region.¹ There are nine occupational profiles in the series: certified nursing assistants, healthcare social workers, home health aides, licensed vocational nurses, medical assistants, medical coders, occupational therapy assistants, physician’s assistants, and registered nurses.

Labor Market Demand

In the Far North region, there are approximately 240 healthcare social worker jobs in the ambulatory and residential care subsectors. Over the next 12 months, employers in these subsectors will need to fill over 40 openings created by replacement needs. This demand will be offset by a projected decline of 7 positions.

Projected Employment for Healthcare Social Workers²

Ambulatory & Residential Care Industries	2014 Employment	12-Month Growth	Replacement Jobs	Total Openings (Growth + Replacements)
	237	-7	40	40

California Hospital Association members that responded to the survey employ 21 healthcare social workers. This sample does not include an estimate of total hospital employment because only a small percentage of hospitals in the region provided information about healthcare social workers.

Current Employment for Healthcare Social Workers

Hospitals	Current Employment*	Full-time Positions	Part-time Positions	Per Diem Jobs
	21	13	8	8

*Ending headcount for the 4th quarter of 2013.

¹ The Far North region includes: Butte, Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake Lassen, Mendocino, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Tehama and Trinity counties.

² Ambulatory/residential care and hospital employment counts include full-time and part-time employment. Additional data on per diem employment for hospitals is totaled separately.

Difficulty Hiring

Two-thirds of employers in the ambulatory and residential care subsectors reported difficulty finding qualified applicants for entry-level healthcare social worker positions.³ Minimum qualifications may include Master's degree, licensure from the California Board of Behavioral Sciences, and excellent communication skills.



Training Supply

There are two social work programs in the Far North region. CSU-Chico and Humboldt State University confer 166 Bachelor and Master's degrees in social work annually.⁴

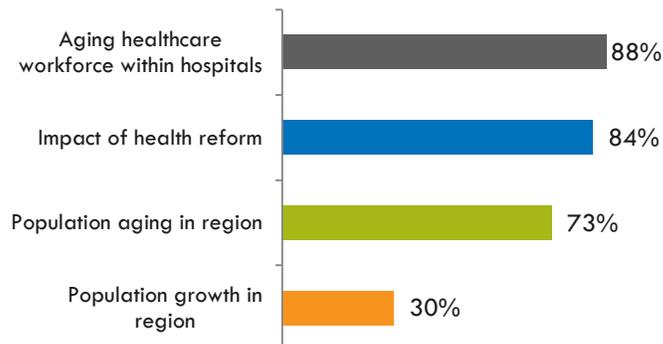
Degrees/Certificates Conferred (3-yr annual average)	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree
	79	87

Supply Challenges

Across California, the majority of hospitals are concerned that health reform, the aging hospital workforce, and the aging population will have a significant impact on the state's ability to keep up with healthcare workforce demand. Healthcare reform is expanding coverage to thousands of uninsured residents, increasing demand for healthcare services across the board. An aging population will expand demand for certain types of services, creating additional need for skilled workers.

While these two factors will increase demand for new workers, the aging healthcare workforce creates a need for replacements as workers retire or otherwise exit an occupation. In the hospital setting, one out of four healthcare social workers is in the age cohort of 56 or older.⁵

Percent of Hospitals Concerned Over Factors Impacting the Workforce Supply



Employer Perspective

Two-thirds (64%) of ambulatory and residential care facilities provide professional development (either in-house or sponsored training) for their healthcare social workers. Some of the options include: continuing education units keep licensure current, hospice services, death and dying, therapeutic crisis intervention, attachment theory, effects of trauma on youth, HIPPA regulations, and ethics. Ambulatory and residential care employers discussed the topics that community colleges could offer or improve upon to support professional development for their existing staff. The following suggestions were offered:

Offer

- Offer workshops on social services, community resources and customer service
- Provide training on customer service, end of life issues, and on ethics and law for the helping professions
- Provide training on assessing/diagnosing mental health issues, developing appropriate treatment options, and psychotropic therapy and behavior management

Improve

- Integrate professional etiquette into existing curriculum (i.e. maintaining appropriate boundaries, etc.)
- Integrate quality management and improvement into existing curriculum
- Add satellite or online courses

³ Hospitals were not asked about the level of difficulty they experienced in finding qualified applicants for entry-level RN positions.

⁴ This estimate is based on data reported to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Higher education institutions are required to report completion data to NCES if they participate in any federal financial assistance program authorized by Title IV of the Higher Education Act. Completion data not reported to the NCES were not included in the estimate.

⁵ Hospital Survey, statewide data.

In Summary

Key issues affecting supply and demand for healthcare social workers include:

- Nearly two-thirds of ambulatory and residential care employers report difficulty finding qualified applicants for entry-level healthcare social workers.
- In the hospital setting, one out of four healthcare social workers is approaching retirement age (56+).
- Hospitals are concerned that health reform, the aging hospital workforce, and the aging population will have a significant impact on the state's ability to keep up with healthcare workforce demand.

Community colleges can play a role in removing barriers in the training supply by working with healthcare employers to address key issues, such as improving articulation and transfer agreements with four-year universities. Community colleges and other training institutions should continue to monitor the impact of the aging population, aging workforce and healthcare reform. By staying connected with local healthcare employers, community colleges can be responsive to their workforce needs.

For More information

This document and others are available to download at www.coeccc.net/health.

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Health Workforce Initiative

More about the Health Workforce Initiative: The HWI provides education and training programs to meet emerging demands for healthcare industry workers; to determine needs, facilitate development of innovative solutions and to locate resources to implement planned responses; to evaluate and initialize health-related educational programs. More information about the Health Workforce Initiative is available at www.ca-hwi.org.



More about the Centers of Excellence: The Centers of Excellence (COE), in partnership with business and industry, deliver regional workforce research customized for community college decision making and resource development. This information has proven valuable to colleges in beginning, revising, or updating economic development and Career Technical Education (CTE) programs, strengthening grant applications, assisting in the accreditation process, and in supporting strategic planning efforts. More information about the Centers of Excellence is available at www.coeccc.net.

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