

Kentucky's Critical Health Care Workforce Shortage



Kentucky hospitals and health care systems are facing critical workforce shortages, exponential growth in labor costs, and the possibility of further funding cuts. The pandemic and rising incidence of workplace violence, especially among health care workers, have taken a toll on health care staff and nurses. Many are retiring and leaving bedside care just when our population is aging, and hospitals are treating sicker patients.

A current
shortfall of
2,821
RNs and
LPNs

► CURRENT CHALLENGES FACING HOSPITALS

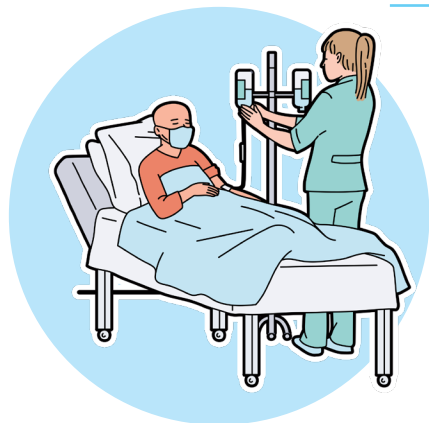
- A current shortfall of **2,821** registered nurses (RNs)
- **One in five RN positions** in medical/surgical units vacant (**17%**)
- By 2030, nearly **25% of all psychiatric nurses** and more than **18% of all OR nurses** will have retired.
- More than **15% Turnover Rate** for RNs
- Mental Health Techs - **12% vacancy** with **56% turnover**

► FUTURE CHALLENGES

There is also a significant gap between the number of vacancies and the number of new nurses coming into the profession.

- **More than 5,000 new students enrolled** in RN programs during the academic year 2023-24.
- More than 3,500 new RN graduates in 2024.
- **Almost 93% of nursing students PASSED** the National Council Licensure Exam (NCLEX) in 2023.

Too few new students are entering the nursing programs.



► NURSES CARING FOR A SICKER POPULATION

Not only is there a severe shortage of nurses, but the nurses working in hospitals are caring for far more complex patients. Because so many delayed care during the pandemic, hospital patients are sicker and require longer times in the hospital. **Since 2017, the average length of stay has grown by nearly an entire additional day.** This puts a greater burden on caregivers in hospitals and takes a toll on the entire healthcare workforce.

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**Kentucky
Hospital
Association**

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