# Care for the **Common Good**

## Addressing Health Care Workforce Challenges

Trinity Health is one of the largest not-for-profit, Catholic health care systems in the nation, serving diverse communities across 26 states. We advocate for public policies that promote care for the common good and advance our mission, including fair payment, a strong workforce, coverage for all that bridges social care, and total cost of care payment models.

The men and women religious who founded Trinity Health early ministries were healers, engaged in nursing for those experiencing poverty, the elderly and the disadvantaged. This commitment dates to the 1800s and includes the establishment of schools of nursing including current academic institutions such as Mount Carmel College of Nursing in Ohio and Mercy College of Health Sciences in Iowa.

### Trinity Health Workforce Challenges: By the Numbers

- Almost 15% registered nurse vacancy rate and as high as 21% vacancy rate for home care nurses.
- Shortages reduce Trinity Health at Home program capacity, effecting up to 200 patients a week.
- Occupancy levels are down 10% from pre-pandemic at Trinity Health's skilled nursing communities due to shortages.

### Workforce Shortages Across Health Care Professions

Health care workforce shortages in our country are not new. However, over the last several years, shortages have increased due to a near retirement population, burnout, increasing violence in the workplace, and a lack of faculty, among other issues. The reality is that the pandemic accelerated the shortage of health care workers.

More than 40% of active physicians in the U.S. will be 65 years of age or older within the next decade;[1] and approximately 20% of registered nurses are projected to leave the health care workforce by 2027;[2] 92% of nursing homes and nearly 70% of assisted living centers report significant or severe workforce shortages.[3] If not addressed, these workforce challenges will limit access to health care across the nation.

Trinity Health has developed innovative solutions to these workforce shortages: created a mobile workforce with redeployed colleagues across the country; created flexible and per-diem shifts for recently retired, nursing students and others; invested in workforce training programs; and leveraged telehealth and virtual care modalities. However, these measures are not sufficient to address the workforce shortages currently faced.

### What Can Policymakers Do?

*Build a Strong Workforce Pipeline*

- Provide funding for educational loan pay-downs for clinicians and other front-line workers across the care continuum.
- Increase the number of medical residency slots eligible for Medicare funding.
- Provide expedited temporary employment-based visa classifications for foreign health care workers.
- Reauthorize the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Titles VII and VIII workforce programs.
- Support efforts to facilitate health care worker movement across states, including expedited licensure review and expansion of licensure compacts.
- Provide grants to expand, modernize and support schools of medicine and nursing, especially in rural and underserved areas.
- Create incentives for health systems to establish and maintain nursing and allied health programs.

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[1] HS Markit Ltd. (June 11, 2021). The Complexities of Physician Supply and Demand: Projections From 2019 to 2034. Association of American Medical Colleges. https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/press-releases/aamc-report-reinforces-mounting-physician-shortage.
[2] Martin, B., Kaminski-Ozturk, N., O'Hara, C., & Smiley, R. (April 2023). Examining the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Burnout and Stress Among U.S. Nurses. Journal of Nursing Regulation. file:///H:/Workforce/JNR0423_04-12_Martin_Workforce%20(1).pdf.
[3] Bateman, T., Hobaugh, S., Pridgen, E., & Reddy, A. (2021). US Healthcare Labor Market. Mercer. https://www.mercer.us/content/dam/mercer/assets/content-images/north-america/united-states/us-healthcare-news/us-2021-healthcare-labor-market-whitepaper.pdf.

# Trinity Health: Health Care Workforce Challenges

- Provide funding for faculty recruitment including development programs and financial incentives.
- Fund the development of "earn and learn" programs, like apprenticeships, that use competency-based training.
- Expand workforce training capacity by growing real-time labor force data, supporting reskilling programs including digital skill needs and providing tax incentives for training programs led by industry, educators and non-profit organizations.
- Build a diverse health care workforce that understands community needs and can build relationships and trust.
- Establish grants for cultural and linguistic competency training in medical residency programs and in-service training for health care professionals.
- Provide funding for research and demonstration programs related to clinician wellbeing.
- Expand the availability of affordable childcare.

*Support Innovative Care Delivery Models*

- Allow nurses and other clinicians to practice in collaborative, team-based environments according to their highest level of education, training and licensure.
- Fund new and existing multi-disciplinary team clinical care models.
- Oppose rigid nurse staffing ratios that inhibit innovative models of care.
- Maintain telehealth flexibilities and incentivize investments in accessible technology such as applications that support remote monitoring and virtual caregiving.
- Increase Medicaid reimbursement to support higher staff wages in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

*Address Workplace Violence*

- Enact protections for health care workers against violence and intimidation.
- Fund hospital violence prevention and infrastructure programs.
- Support policies and programs that encourage partnerships between health systems and law enforcement.

## Trinity Health Workforce Best Practices

**Supporting Colleague Mental Well-Being: Colleague Care Program (CCP)** In June 2020, Trinity Health launched a system-wide Colleague Care Program (CCP). CCP Teams ensure that all colleagues—particularly those working in high stress, demanding units—are supported through a variety of onsite, supportive and comfort services designed to alleviate some of the emotional and physiological stressors that could negatively impact caregivers. The program includes Resiliency Rounding: a real-time human one-on-one connection to colleagues in high-volume, highly demanding areas either in person, virtually or telephonically.

**Solving Workforce Shortages to Scale: FirstChoice** Trinity Health's clinical staffing agency allows colleagues, including nurses and other clinicians, to serve in short- and long-term roles in our hospitals and care locations across our national system at a premium rate of pay.

**Creating Innovative Approaches to Care Delivery** Trinity Health is implementing a new transformational team care model to improve patient care. The care team includes an experienced virtual registered nurse (RN), a bedside RN and a care partner. This unique model offers a new virtual role for the experienced nurse to care for patients, coordinate complex care and provide mentoring to early career nurses. Bedside nurses also benefit from having an RN mentor for support in patient care.

**Implementing Workforce Development Programs** Trinity Health has implemented more than 12 U.S. Department of Labor apprenticeship and other programs that help increase workforce diversity for in-demand jobs. Programs include career development services and pathways that have resulted in $1 million in economic wage increases for colleagues in entry-level roles.

**Addressing Violence** Trinity Health has employed a variety of strategies and tactics to combat escalating violence toward colleagues including de-escalation and workplace violence prevention training, tools for early identification of high risk of violence patients and behavioral emergency response team.