

2026 MHA HOSPITAL NURSING WORKFORCE SURVEY RECRUITMENT & RETENTION BARRIERS

What Hospitals Told Us

TOP RECRUITMENT BARRIERS



Insufficient Number of Applicants
Too few applicants overall and too few qualified.



Lack of Experienced RNs
Need nurses with 3–5+ years of experience.



Competition from Other Employers
Higher pay, bonuses and better benefits elsewhere.



Night/Off-Shift Challenges
Difficulty recruiting for nights, weekends and 12-hour shifts.



Limited Pipeline of New Nurses
Too many new grads with limited acute care experience.



Rural & Geographic Challenges
Hard to recruit to rural and resource-limited areas.

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES HOSPITALS FACE



ADDITIONAL FACTORS CITED



Compensation not competitive



Heavy documentation & EHR burden



Inadequate orientation & transition support



Team dynamics & communication issues



Physical & mental health of staff



Need for stronger manager & leadership support

TOP RETENTION BARRIERS



Burnout & Compassion Fatigue
High patient acuity, workload and stress.



Better Opportunities Elsewhere
Higher pay, flexibility and better benefits.



Staffing Shortages
Constant staffing gaps increase workload on remaining staff.



Work-Life Balance Challenges
Scheduling, mandatory overtime and time off.



Recognition & Support Deficiencies
Need more appreciation, feedback and resources.



Career Growth & Development
Limited advancement opportunities.

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Hospitals are working hard to recruit and retain experienced, skilled nurses, but competing demands, workload pressures and burnout continue to strain the workforce.

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ADDRESSING THESE BARRIERS IS ESSENTIAL TO ENSURE SAFE CARE AND A SUSTAINABLE NURSING WORKFORCE.