

Health Care Workforce

Current Status, Looking Forward, and Possible Solutions

- Health systems are among the top 10 employers of North Carolinians, yet we face shortages of nurses, direct care workers, and behavioral health professionals
- The rebound in health care workers has not met pre-pandemic projections
- Policy opportunities include:
 - Expanding available data on existing workforce
 - Addressing burnout and safety concerns
 - Ensuring adequate salaries

Nursing in North Carolina

Nurses are frontline health care workers who provide direct patient care and are integral in contributing to the delivery of high-quality care. They provide care in a variety of settings, such as public health, schools, primary care, hospitals, and long-term care facilities.

In North Carolina, the projected needs for nurses outpaces the projected supply; NC Nursecast projects a shortage of nearly 12,500 registered nurses and 5,000 licensed practical nurses across the state by 2033. There are many key challenges facing the nursing workforce in North Carolina:

- Mental Health and Burnout
- Safety in the Workplace
- Faculty Shortages
- Lack of Competitive Wages
- Changing Demographics

Direct Care

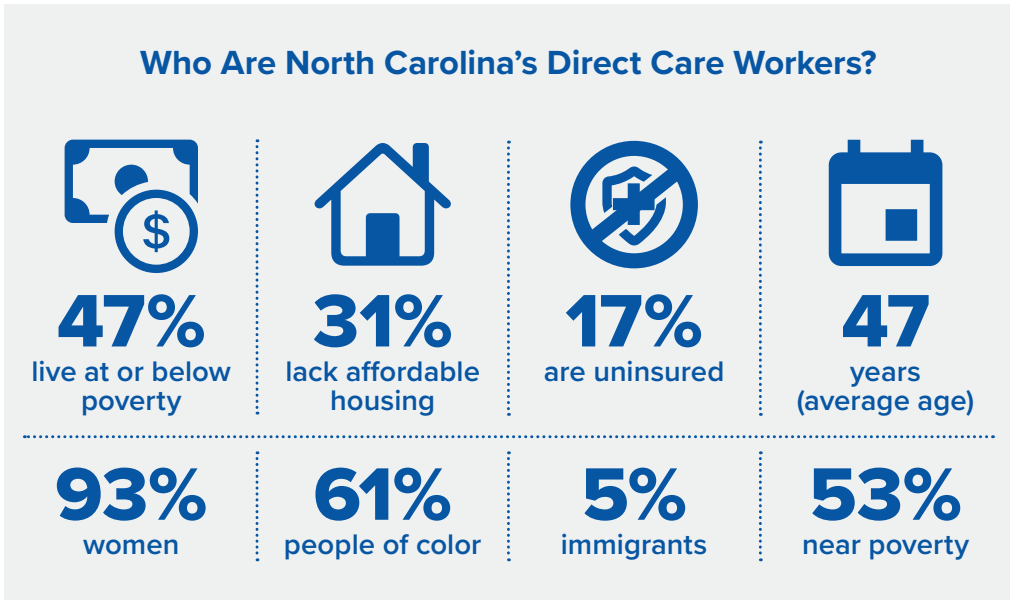
The direct care workforce provides services in both institutional settings (such as nursing homes) and home-based settings, as well as adult day programs. Direct care workers typically support older adults and people with disabilities with daily living activities such as bathing, dressing, eating, and mobility, as well as preparing meals, shopping, and housekeeping.

Direct care workers are categorized into three professions:

- Certified nursing assistants
- Home health aides
- Personal care aides

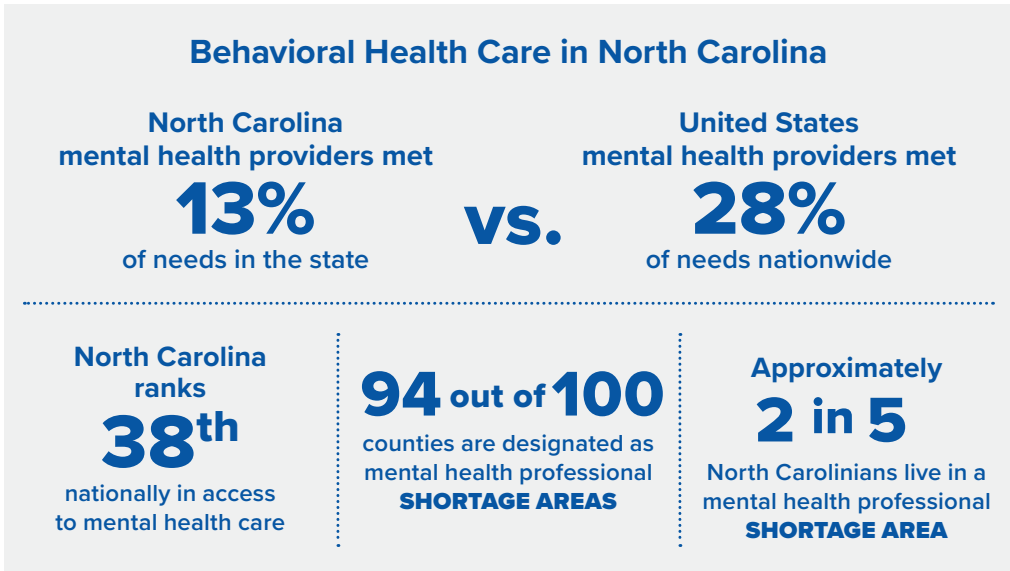
Between 2016 and 2021, North Carolina lost more than 9% of its direct care workforce. North Carolina projects more than 186,000 job openings in the direct care sector between 2018 and 2028. At the same time, it is projected that 1 in 6 needed jobs in North Carolina will be in the direct care workforce sector.

In North Carolina in 2022, the median wage of direct care workers was \$12.59 per hour. The average fast food worker wage in North Carolina is \$12.76 per hour.



Behavioral Health

Behavioral health professionals work within a variety of roles that assess and treat individuals with mental, emotional, or substance use problems. They may provide therapy, crisis intervention, case management, prevention, and education. Behavioral health care includes the prevention, diagnoses, and treatment of mental conditions.



Policy Opportunities and Possible Actions for Change

Nursing

- Expand clinical instructor programs
- Adjust salaries to meet inflation rates
- Address issues related to workplace culture
- Increase loan repayment programs

Direct Care

- Create a living wage
- Increase available data on existing workforce
- Increase availability of apprenticeship programs

Behavioral Health

- Expand available data on existing workforce
- Incentivize publicly funded roles
- Increase rate-adjustment intervals