



Investing in RNs and LPNs: A Crucial Step for Aging Services

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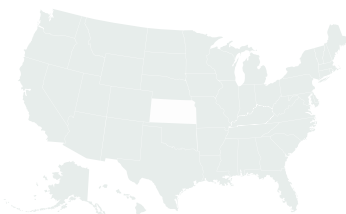
As many as 43,000 Kansans have found their calling providing essential care and services to our friends, neighbors and loved ones. Whether they work in residential care settings like nursing homes and assisted living or in home and community-based services like home care or PACE, these Kansans are critical to ensuring the dignity and quality of life of our rapidly aging population.

But today, our aging services workforce faces a number of headwinds. While employment across the Kansas economy has grown 4% since January, 2020, aging service employment is still around 1% lower. Especially given the increasing demand for aging services in Kansas, this puts enormous pressure on people working one of the most physically and emotionally demanding jobs in our communities.

As our first annual aging services workforce survey outlines:

- Providers are challenged to fill direct care positions in particular.
- Providers are challenged to compete with the wages offered in other healthcare settings around the state.
- They are encountering obstacles to find trained/qualified workers, or to pay the high fees charged by temporary staffing agencies to fill their workforce gaps.
- They are deeply concerned what these workforce challenges mean for the health and well being of both their clients, and their workforce.
- They expect new federal minimum staffing mandates will stretch the aging services sector to the breaking point.

This report provides a window into the challenges facing all aging services providers in Kansas, and what Kansas policymakers can do to help.

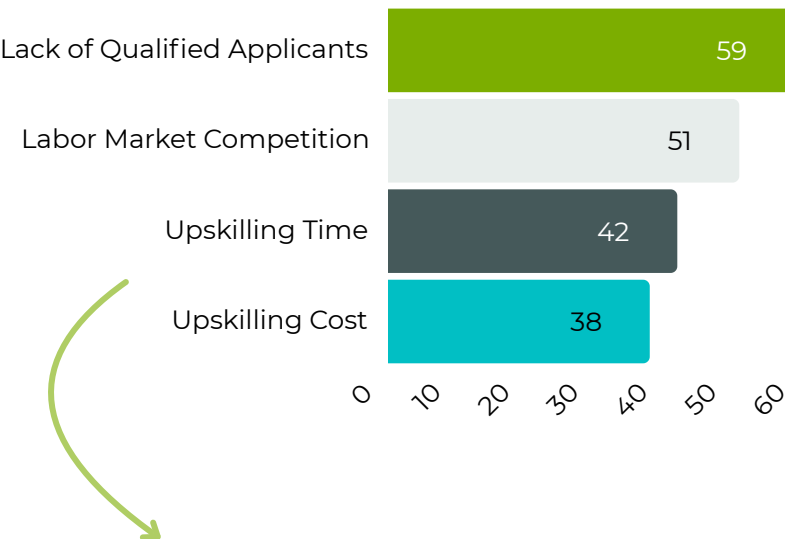
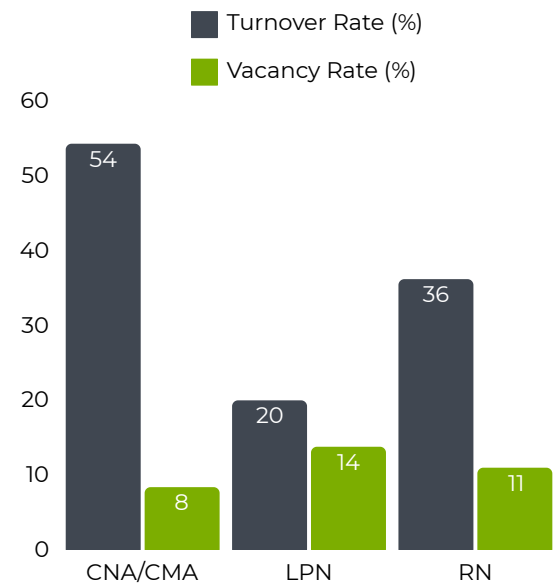


Current Staffing Challenges

The long-term care sector in Kansas faces significant workforce challenges, particularly in recruiting and retaining Registered Nurses (RNs), Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs), and Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs). These issues are compounded by a growing population of older adults and increased demands for skilled care.

Recruitment and Retention Challenges

- **74%** of providers report that recruiting and retaining nursing staff is "more difficult," highlighting widespread difficulties to maintain a stable workforce.
- Turnover and vacancy rates further exacerbate the crisis:
 - Turnover: CNAs experience the highest turnover rate at **54%**, followed by RNs at **36%**, and LPNs at **20%**.
 - Vacancy: LPNs face the highest vacancy rate at **14%**, followed by RNs at **11%**, and CNAs at **8%**.



Key Barriers

- Limited Workforce Pool: Over **56%** of providers cite the limited pool of RNs as a primary obstacle to filling critical roles.
- Labor Market Competition: Nearly **59%** of providers report competing with hospitals and other healthcare settings as a major challenge.
- Rural Challenges: Facilities in rural areas face even greater difficulties, with limited access to qualified applicants and smaller labor markets.

Top Recruitment Challenges

Providers identify the following as the primary barriers to workforce recruitment:

- **59%** cite a lack of qualified applicants.
- **51%** identify competition from other healthcare sectors.
- **42%** highlight the time required to upskill LPNs to RNs, and **38%** mention the cost of upskilling as a barrier.

These challenges are compounded by burnout, low wages, and limited professional development opportunities, further straining an already overburdened workforce.

CMS Minimum Staffing Standards and Compliance

The CMS Minimum Staffing Standards, finalized in 2024, have set critical benchmarks for long-term care providers to improve the quality of care for residents. However, compliance with these requirements has proven to be a significant challenge for providers, especially in rural areas where workforce shortages are more pronounced.

CMS Requirements Overview

Facilities must provide 3.48 hours per resident day (HPRD) of direct nursing care, including:

- 0.55 HPRD from RNs
- 2.45 HPRD from nurse aides
- An RN must be onsite 24 hours a day, seven days a week

CMS Compliance Gaps

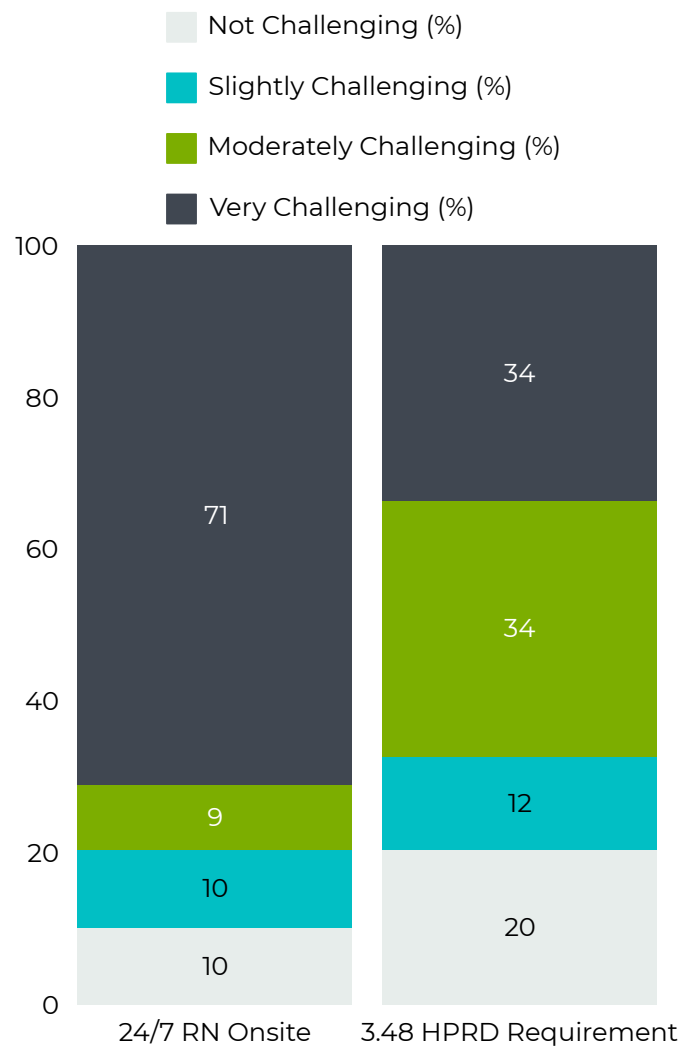
Survey data highlights the challenges providers face in meeting these standards:

- Only **38%** of providers currently meet all CMS staffing requirements, underscoring a significant gap in compliance.
- **71%** of respondents report it is "very challenging" to meet the 24/7 RN onsite requirement.
- **68%** find meeting the 3.48 HPRD requirement either "moderately challenging" or "very challenging."

Impact on Providers

The staffing requirements place immense pressure on long-term care facilities, particularly those in rural Kansas. These facilities often face:

- A smaller labor pool to recruit qualified RNs and nurse aides.
- Higher costs associated with training and retaining staff.
- The risk of non-compliance, which could lead to penalties or reduced funding.



Meeting these requirements will require substantial investments in workforce development, wage support, and innovative staffing solutions to address the challenges faced by rural and urban providers alike.

Impact of Staffing Shortages on Care

66%

of providers report delays in care, leading to compromised resident outcomes and dissatisfaction.



56%

note impacts on resident safety, as fewer staff members are available to meet the increasing complexity of care needs.



54%

cite reductions in overall quality of care, affecting both operational metrics and compliance standards.



76%

of providers report increased workloads, which contribute to burnout, reduced morale, and turnover among employees.



While long-term care providers always strive to meet the highest standards of care, providers are deeply concerned about the far-reaching consequences of the critical staffing challenges we face. Among their top concerns are increased burnout driving higher turnover, and concerns about how the staffing crisis could affect their ability to serve residents.

The bottom line is clear: greater investment in workforce development is essential to help providers meet the long-term care needs of people across Kansas.

Solutions Tried and Their Effectiveness

Long-term care providers in Kansas have implemented a variety of strategies to address staffing shortages. While some approaches have been widely adopted, their effectiveness remains mixed, highlighting gaps that still need to be addressed.

The most commonly implemented strategies include:

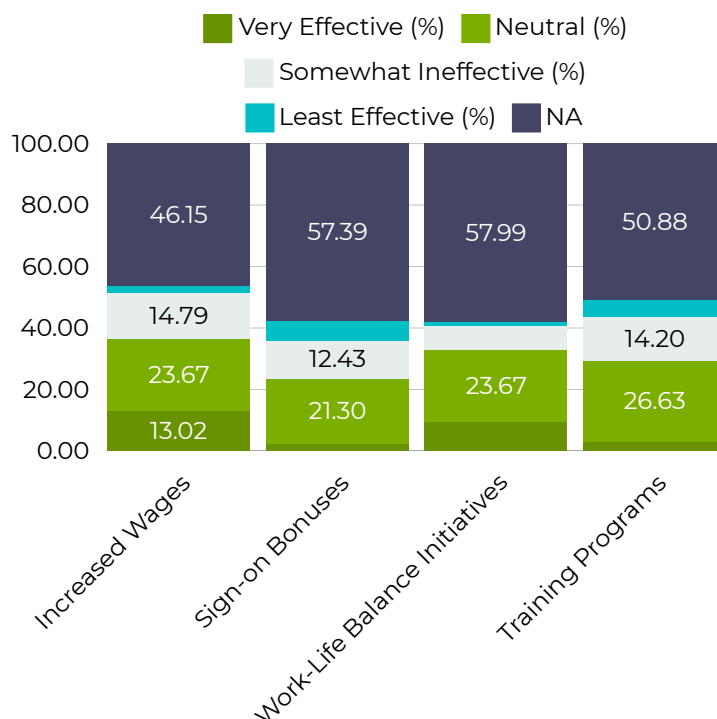
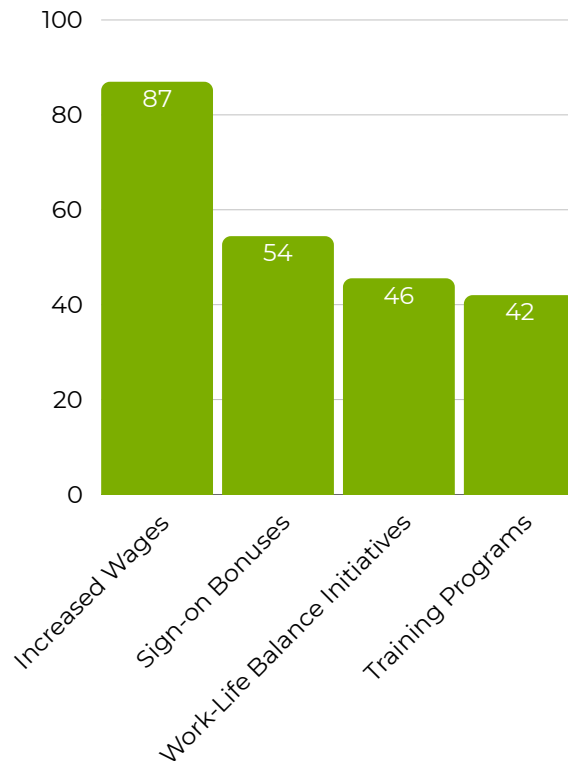
- **87%** of providers have increased wages, recognizing the importance of competitive compensation to attract and retain staff.
- **54%** have offered sign-on or retention bonuses as short-term incentives.
- **46%** have introduced work-life balance initiatives, aiming to reduce burnout and improve job satisfaction.
- **42%** have provided training programs to upskill existing staff and build a sustainable workforce pipeline.

Despite the widespread adoption of these strategies, their reported effectiveness varies significantly:

- **Increased Wages:** Only **13%** of providers rate this strategy as "very effective," while **24%** consider it "neutral."
- **Sign-on Bonuses:** A mere **2%** find this approach "very effective," with most reporting "neutral" or "somewhat ineffective" outcomes.
- **Work-Life Balance Initiatives:** Although **9%** rate these as "very effective," **24%** find them "neutral," and **8%** report limited effectiveness.
- **Training Programs:** Only **3%** see this strategy as "very effective," while **27%** view it as "neutral."

These results suggest that while providers are investing heavily in recruitment and retention strategies, the impact remains insufficient to address the underlying challenges.

A more holistic approach, potentially supported by increased funding, workforce development programs, and organizational culture improvements, may yield better results.



Funding Needs and Policy Recommendations

The challenges facing long-term care facilities in Kansas require targeted funding and policy solutions to stabilize the workforce and ensure compliance with CMS Minimum Staffing Standards. Investments in recruitment, retention, and workforce development are critical to sustaining quality care for Kansas seniors.

Increased Recruitment and Retention Funding

- Competitive wages and benefits are essential to attract and retain qualified staff, particularly RNs and CNAs.
- Financial incentives, such as bonuses and improved work conditions, can help reduce turnover and boost morale.

Support for Upskilling Programs

- Significant time and cost barriers exist for LPNs to transition into RN roles.
- Funding for training programs, tuition reimbursement, and hybrid learning models will help expand the RN workforce while addressing staffing shortages.

Incentives for Rural Providers

- Rural facilities face unique challenges, including limited access to qualified applicants and higher costs to recruit and retain staff.
- Offering rural-specific incentives, such as loan forgiveness or housing stipends, can help bridge this gap.

Partnerships with Nursing Schools and Stakeholders

- Collaborative programs with nursing schools, community colleges, and workforce agencies can create a pipeline of new healthcare professionals.
- Partnerships can also enable training opportunities for existing staff and support internships to foster interest in aging services.

Appendix

The appendix provides detailed data on vacancy and turnover rates, average hourly wages, and workforce challenges across various care settings, including nursing homes, hospice, and home health. It highlights disparities between full-time and agency staff, wage gaps, and role-specific metrics for direct care, administrative, and support staff. This comprehensive data underscores the recruitment and retention challenges faced by Kansas providers and serves as a key resource for informing funding requests and workforce strategies.

Vacancy and Turnover Rates (Overall)

Job Title	Average Hourly Rate, Full-Time Staff	Average Hourly Rate, Agency/Contract Staff	Employee Vacancy	Employee Turnover
Direct Care				
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA/CMA)	\$18.00	\$35.00	8.3%	54.2%
Home Health Aide (HHA)	\$15.00	NA	13.4%	30.5%
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)	\$29.88	\$51.50	13.7%	19.9%
Occupational Therapist (OT)	\$60.00	\$67.60	12.5%	12.5%
Occupational Therapist Aide (OTA)	\$32.55	\$55.97	15.8%	163.2%
Physical Therapist (PT)	\$55.65	\$67.60	10.7%	10.7%
Physical Therapist Aide (PTA)	\$30.54	\$55.97	17.9%	110.7%
Registered Nurse (RN)	\$35.00	\$68.00	10.9%	36.1%
Social Worker	\$23.50	\$57.50	0.0%	93.6%
Administration				
Administrator/Director	\$43.25	\$48.00	1.5%	11.8%
Assistant Administrators	\$30.28	NA	8.3%	0.0%
Directors	\$33.00	\$40.00	7.4%	14.8%
Executive Director	\$45.00	NA	0.0%	6.7%
Operator	\$36.00	NA	5.6%	22.2%
Dietary				
Certified Dietary Manager	\$25.00	NA	5.4%	8.9%
Registered Dietician	\$41.25	\$61.00	3.1%	9.4%
Environmental Services				
Facilities Technician	\$22.51	\$55.00	2.2%	14.3%
Housekeeper	\$14.50	\$26.00	3.6%	27.8%

Vacancy and Turnover Rates (Assisted Living)

Job Title	Average Hourly Rate, Full-Time Staff	Average Hourly Rate, Agency/Contract Staff	Employee Vacancy	Employee Turnover
Direct Care				
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA/CMA)	\$17.00	\$30.00	8.0%	80.0%
Home Health Aide (HHA)	NA	NA	NA	NA
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)	\$26.00	NA	11.0%	30.0%
Occupational Therapist (OT)	NA	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Occupational Therapist Aide (OTA)	NA	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Physical Therapist (PT)	NA	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Physical Therapist Aide (PTA)	NA	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Registered Nurse (RN)	\$35.00	NA	0.0%	5.0%
Social Worker	NA	NA	NA	NA
Administration				
Administrator/Director	\$50.48	NA	0.0%	6.0%
Assistant Administrators	\$22.50	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Directors	NA	NA	NA	NA
Executive Director	NA	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Operator	\$31.94	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Dietary				
Certified Dietary Manager	\$27.50	NA	0.0%	3.0%
Registered Dietician	NA	\$120.00	0.0%	0.0%
Environmental Services				
Facilities Technician	\$23.00	NA	0.0%	5.0%
Housekeeper	\$13.80	NA	2.0%	28.0%

Vacancy and Turnover Rates (Home Health)

Job Title	Average Hourly Rate, Full-Time Staff	Average Hourly Rate, Agency/Contract Staff	Employee Vacancy	Employee Turnover
Direct Care				
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA/CMA)	\$13.75	NA	0.0%	75.0%
Home Health Aide (HHA)	\$15.00	NA	13.0%	10.0%
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)	\$23.36	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Occupational Therapist (OT)	NA	NA	25.0%	25.0%
Occupational Therapist Aide (OTA)	NA	NA	33.0%	33.0%
Physical Therapist (PT)	NA	NA	29.0%	29.0%
Physical Therapist Aide (PTA)	NA	NA	29.0%	29.0%
Registered Nurse (RN)	\$37.12	NA	11.0%	11.0%
Social Worker	\$32.30	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Administration				
Administrator/Director	\$36.16	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Assistant Administrators	\$35.56	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Directors	NA	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Executive Director	NA	NA	NA	NA
Operator	NA	NA	NA	NA
Dietary				
Certified Dietary Manager	NA	NA	NA	NA
Registered Dietician	NA	NA	NA	NA
Environmental Services				
Facilities Technician	NA	NA	NA	NA
Housekeeper	NA	NA	NA	NA

Vacancy and Turnover Rates (Home Plus)

Job Title	Average Hourly Rate, Full-Time Staff	Average Hourly Rate, Agency/Contract Staff	Employee Vacancy	Employee Turnover
Direct Care				
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA/CMA)	\$18.00	\$30.00	10.0%	96.0%
Home Health Aide (HHA)	NA	NA	NA	NA
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)	\$27.50	NA	12.0%	50.0%
Occupational Therapist (OT)	NA	NA	NA	NA
Occupational Therapist Aide (OTA)	NA	NA	NA	NA
Physical Therapist (PT)	NA	NA	NA	NA
Physical Therapist Aide (PTA)	NA	NA	NA	NA
Registered Nurse (RN)	\$28.00	NA	0.0%	11.0%
Social Worker	NA	NA	NA	NA
Administration				
Administrator/Director	\$30.00	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Assistant Administrators	NA	NA	NA	NA
Directors	\$28.11	NA	0.0%	25.0%
Executive Director	\$25.00	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Operator	\$33.23	NA	0.0%	8.0%
Dietary				
Certified Dietary Manager	NA	NA	NA	NA
Registered Dietician	NA	NA	NA	NA
Environmental Services				
Facilities Technician	\$18.75	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Housekeeper	\$16.15	NA	0.0%	0.0%

Vacancy and Turnover Rates (Hospice)

Job Title	Average Hourly Rate, Full-Time Staff	Average Hourly Rate, Agency/Contract Staff	Employee Vacancy	Employee Turnover
Direct Care				
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA/CMA)	NA	NA	NA	NA
Home Health Aide (HHA)	\$20.00	NA	0.0%	67.0%
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)	\$29.00	NA	0.0%	100.0%
Occupational Therapist (OT)	NA	\$70.00	NA	NA
Occupational Therapist Aide (OTA)	NA	\$45.00	NA	NA
Physical Therapist (PT)	\$58.00	\$70.00	0.0%	0.0%
Physical Therapist Aide (PTA)	\$45.00	\$45.00	0.0%	0.0%
Registered Nurse (RN)	\$36.00	NA	0.0%	121.0%
Social Worker	\$26.00	NA	0.0%	50.0%
Administration				
Administrator/Director	\$52.00	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Assistant Administrators	NA	NA	NA	NA
Directors	\$38.00	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Executive Director	\$44.00	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Operator	NA	NA	NA	NA
Dietary				
Certified Dietary Manager	NA	NA	NA	NA
Registered Dietician	NA	\$45.00	NA	NA
Environmental Services				
Facilities Technician	NA	NA	NA	NA
Housekeeper	NA	\$26.00	0.0%	0.0%

Vacancy and Turnover Rates (Nursing Home)

Job Title	Average Hourly Rate, Full-Time Staff	Average Hourly Rate, Agency/Contract Staff	Employee Vacancy	Employee Turnover
Direct Care				
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA/CMA)	\$18.70	\$35.00	9.0%	42.0%
Home Health Aide (HHA)	NA	NA	NA	NA
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)	\$29.99	\$53.00	15.0%	14.0%
Occupational Therapist (OT)	\$56.30	\$65.19	11.0%	11.0%
Occupational Therapist Aide (OTA)	\$36.60	\$56.93	8.0%	250.0%
Physical Therapist (PT)	\$50.25	\$65.19	6.0%	6.0%
Physical Therapist Aide (PTA)	\$28.60	\$56.93	13.0%	187.0%
Registered Nurse (RN)	\$35.08	\$68.00	13.0%	39.0%
Social Worker	\$23.00	\$57.50	0.0%	104.0%
Administration				
Administrator/Director	\$43.25	\$48.00	4.0%	22.0%
Assistant Administrators	\$34.98	NA	20.0%	0.0%
Directors	\$33.00	\$40.00	11.0%	17.0%
Executive Director	\$45.12	NA	0.0%	8.0%
Operator	\$31.06	NA	33.0%	100.0%
Dietary				
Certified Dietary Manager	\$25.00	NA	8.0%	12.0%
Registered Dietician	\$41.25	\$59.50	3.0%	10.0%
Environmental Services				
Facilities Technician	\$22.90	\$55.00	4.0%	21.0%
Housekeeper	\$14.50	NA	4.0%	29.0%

Vacancy and Turnover Rates (Residential Healthcare Facility)

Job Title	Average Hourly Rate, Full-Time Staff	Average Hourly Rate, Agency/Contract Staff	Employee Vacancy	Employee Turnover
Direct Care				
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA/CMA)	\$ 19.45	\$35.00	18.0%	45.0%
Home Health Aide (HHA)	\$15.00	NA	16.0%	46.0%
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)	\$32.58	\$50.00	33.0%	67.0%
Occupational Therapist (OT)	\$60.00	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Occupational Therapist Aide (OTA)	\$28.50	NA	33.0%	0.0%
Physical Therapist (PT)	\$57.74	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Physical Therapist Aide (PTA)	\$36.50	NA	33.0%	33.0%
Registered Nurse (RN)	\$45.19	\$70.00	20.0%	0.0%
Social Worker	\$32.32	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Administration				
Administrator/Director	NA	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Assistant Administrators	NA	NA	NA	NA
Directors	NA	NA	NA	NA
Executive Director	NA	NA	NA	NA
Operator	\$60.59	NA	0.0%	0.0%
Dietary				
Certified Dietary Manager	\$25.00	NA	50.0%	50.0%
Registered Dietician	NA	\$63.00	0.0%	0.0%
Environmental Services				
Facilities Technician	\$23.80	NA	0.0%	33.0%
Housekeeper	\$18.59	NA	0.0%	0.0%



LeadingAge Kansas, an association of 160 not-for-profit and mission-driven aging services providers, is dedicated to addressing this urgent challenge. Serving nearly 25,000 seniors each day, LeadingAge Kansas supports its members through advocacy, education, and partnerships aimed at improving aging services across the state.

This report is based on a survey conducted by LeadingAge Kansas between October 24, 2024 and November 18, 2024. The survey targeted all aging services providers with an opinion survey as well as a standard workbook to track turnover and vacancy in key aging services roles. A total of 209 surveys and 44 workbook responses were collected, resulting in a response rate of 18.7% and 3.9% respectively. The survey was administered through Microsoft Forms, and participants self-selected from a pool of 1,115 aging services providers across the state.

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