

**Strategic Staffing
Analysis and Workforce
Plan
For the Planning Period
2023-2027**

**As Required by
Texas Government Code
Section 2056.0021**

**Health and Human Services System
May 2022**



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

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1. Executive Summary

The Health and Human Services (HHS) System Strategic Staffing Analysis and Workforce Plan is an integral part of HHS' staffing plan. Workforce planning is a business necessity due to many factors, including:

- constraints on funding;
- increasing demand for HHS services;
- increasing number of current employees reaching retirement age resulting in fewer, less experienced workers available as replacements; and
- increasing competition for highly skilled employees.

HHS agencies are proactively addressing this challenge by preparing for the future and reducing risks. Designed for flexibility, the HHS System Strategic Staffing Analysis and Workforce Plan allows HHS executive management to make staffing adjustments according to the changing needs of HHS agencies.

State leaders in Texas recognize the importance of workforce planning. As part of their strategic plans, state agencies are required under the Texas Government Code, Section 2056.0021, to develop a workforce plan in accordance with the guidelines developed by the State Auditor's Office (SAO). To meet these requirements, this HHS Workforce Plan – a Schedule attachment to the HHS System Strategic Plan for the Fiscal Years 2023–2027 - analyzes the following key elements for the entire HHS System:

- **Current Workforce Demographics** – Describes how many employees work for the HHS agencies, where they work, what they are paid, how many of them are return-to-work retirees, how many have left HHS, how many may retire, and whether minority groups are underutilized when compared to the state Civilian Labor Force (CLF) for Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) job categories. The workforce is examined by gender, race, age and length of state service.
- **Expected Workforce Challenges** – Describes anticipated staffing needs based on population trends, projected job growth and other demographic trends. A detailed examination of each identified shortage occupation was conducted to identify and understand retention and recruitment problems.

- **Strategies to Meet Workforce Needs** – Describes recruitment and retention strategies that address expected workforce challenges for shortage occupation jobs.

The following is the detailed HHS System Strategic Staffing Analysis and Workforce Plan.

2. Health and Human Services

The Health and Human Services System, as reflected in Article II of the General Appropriations Act, consists of the two agencies described below:

- Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). HHSC began services in 1991. HHSC provides leadership to the HHS agencies, manages the day-to-day operations of state supported living centers and state hospitals, and administers programs that deliver benefits and services, including:
 - ▶ Medicaid for families and children.
 - ▶ Long-term care for people who are older or who have disabilities.
 - ▶ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program food benefits and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families cash assistance.
 - ▶ Behavioral health services.
 - ▶ Services to help keep people who are older or who have disabilities in their homes and communities.
 - ▶ Services for women.
 - ▶ Services for people with special health needs.

The agency also oversees regulatory functions including:

- ▶ Licensing and credentialing long-term care facilities, such as nursing homes and assisted living.
- ▶ Health care facilities regulation.
- ▶ Licensing child-care providers.
- Department of State Health Services (DSHS). DSHS includes programs previously administered by the Texas Department of Health, the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, and the Health Care Information Council. The agency began services on September 1, 2004 and continues to administer programs to promote and protect public health by creating better systems that include prevention, intervention and effective partnerships with communities across the state. The agency works to:
 - ▶ Improve health outcomes through public and population health strategies, including prevention and intervention.

- ▶ Optimize public health response to disasters, disease threats, and outbreaks.
- ▶ Improve and optimize business functions and processes to support delivery of public health services in communities.
- ▶ Enhance operational structures to support public health functions of the state.
- ▶ Improve recognition and support for a highly skilled and dedicated workforce.
- ▶ Foster effective partnership and collaboration to achieve public health goals.
- ▶ Promote the use of science and data to drive decision-making and best practices.

HHS Vision

Making a positive difference in the lives of the people we serve.

HHS Mission

Improving the health, safety and well-being of Texans with good stewardship of public resources.

3. Workforce Demographics

With a total of 36,991 full-time and part-time employees, the HHS workforce has decreased by approximately seven percent (2,552 employees) in the period from August 31, 2019 to August 31, 2021.^{1 2 3}

Figure 1: HHS System Workforce for FY 19 - FY 21

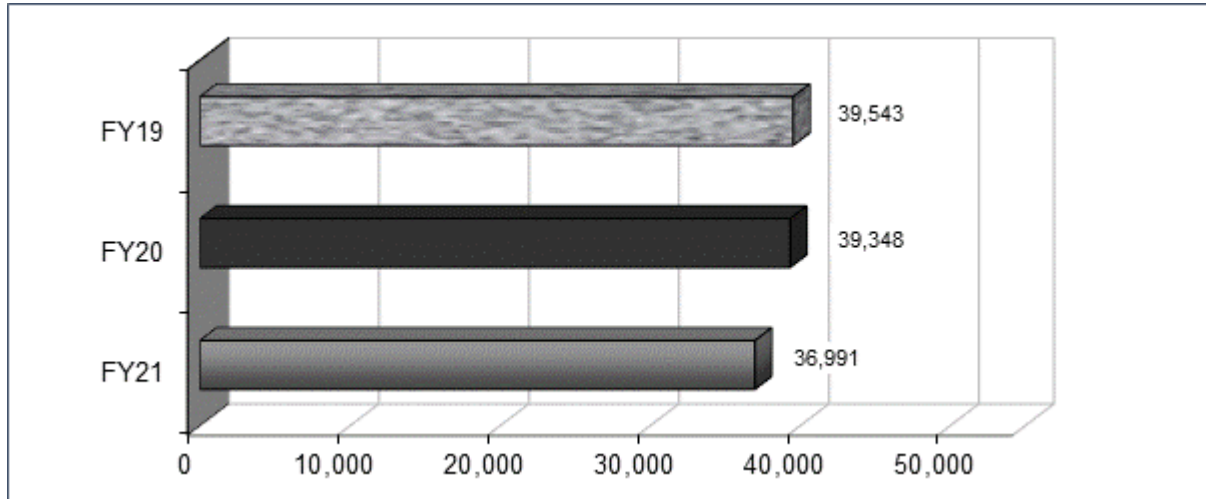
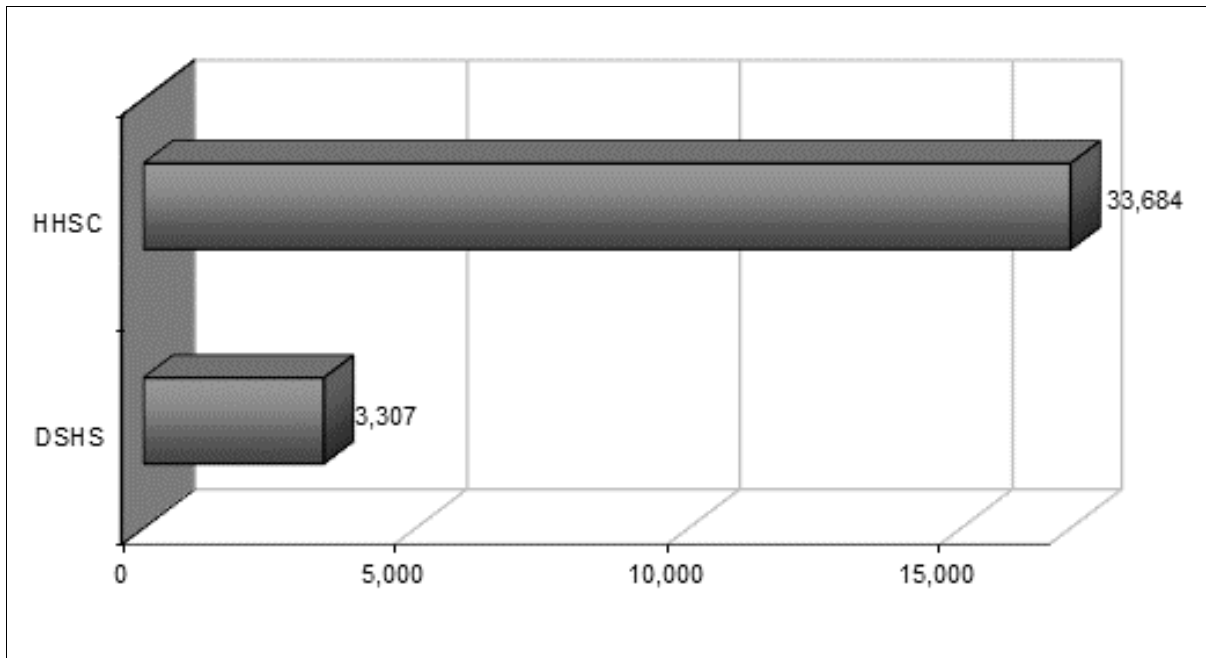


Figure 2: HHS System Workforce by Agency for FY 21



Job Families

Approximately 80 percent of HHS employees (29,676 employees) work in 23 job families.⁴

Table 1: Largest Program Job Families

| Job Family | Number of Employees |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Direct Care Workers ⁵ | 6,623 |
| Eligibility Workers ⁶ | 4,978 |
| Clerical Workers | 3,108 |
| Program Specialists | 2,207 |
| Registered Nurses (RNs) ⁷ | 1,965 |
| Managers | 1,204 |
| Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs) | 870 |
| Program Supervisors | 876 |
| Rehabilitation Technicians | 864 |
| System Analysts | 764 |
| Food Service Workers ⁸ | 748 |
| Inspectors | 740 |
| Custodial Workers | 598 |
| Directors | 577 |
| Maintenance Workers | 566 |
| Investigators | 529 |
| Contract Specialists | 413 |
| Security Workers | 404 |
| Accountants | 376 |
| Claims Examiners | 373 |
| Public Health Technicians | 328 |
| Training Specialists | 315 |

Gender

Most HHS employees are female, making up approximately 72 percent of the HHS workforce. This breakdown is consistent across all HHS agencies.⁹

Table 2: HHS System Workforce Gender for FY 19 – FY 21^{10 11 12}

| Gender | FY 19 | FY 20 | FY 21 |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| Male | 27.4% | 27.8% | 27.8% |
| Female | 72.6% | 72.2% | 72.2% |

Figure 3: HHS System Workforce by Gender for FY 21

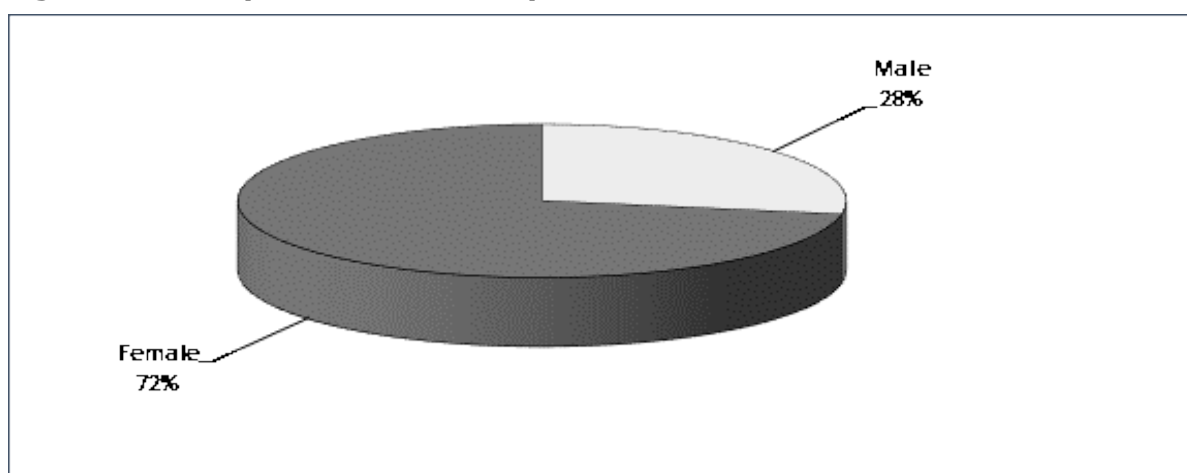


Table 3: HHS Agencies by Gender

| Agency | Percentage Male | Percentage Female |
|--------|-----------------|-------------------|
| HHSC | 27.9% | 72.1% |
| DSHS | 27.8% | 72.2% |

Ethnicity

The workforce is diverse, with approximately 37 percent White, 31 percent Hispanic, 27 percent Black, and six percent Other.¹³ This breakdown is consistent across all HHS agencies.¹⁴

Table 4: HHS System Workforce Ethnicity for FY 19 – FY 21^{15 16 17}

| Race | FY 19 | FY 20 | FY 21 |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|
| White | 37.5% | 37.1% | 37.1% |
| Black | 28.7% | 27.8% | 26.5% |
| Hispanic | 29.9% | 30.4% | 30.8% |
| Other | 3.5% | 4.7% | 5.6% |

Figure 4: HHS System Workforce by Ethnicity for FY 21

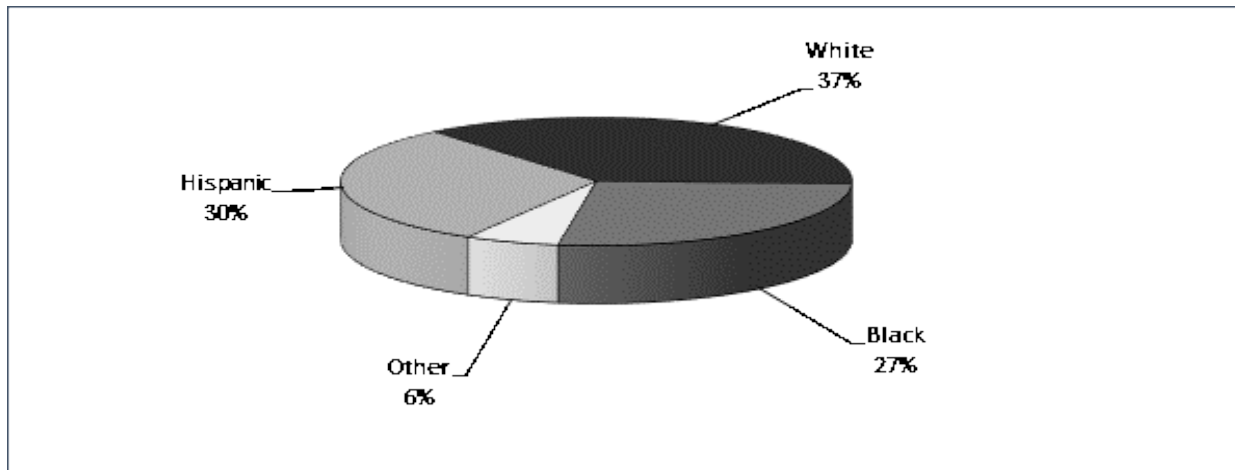


Table 5: HHS Agencies by Ethnicity¹⁸

| Agency | Percentage White | Percentage Black | Percentage Hispanic | Percentage Other |
|--------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| HHSC | 36.4% | 27.7% | 30.6% | 5.3% |
| DSHS | 44.7% | 14.8% | 32.3% | 8.3% |

Age

The average age of an HHS worker is 45 years. This breakdown is consistent across all HHS agencies.¹⁹

Table 6: HHS System Workforce Age for FY 19 – FY 21^{20 21 22}

| Age | FY 19 | FY 20 | FY 21 |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Under 30 | 14.6% | 14.4% | 12.3% |
| 30-39 | 23.7% | 23.5% | 23.4% |
| 40-49 | 25.1% | 25.2% | 25.8% |
| 50-59 | 24.6% | 24.7% | 25.5% |
| 60 and Over | 12.0% | 12.2% | 13.1% |

Figure 5: HHS System Workforce by Age for FY 21

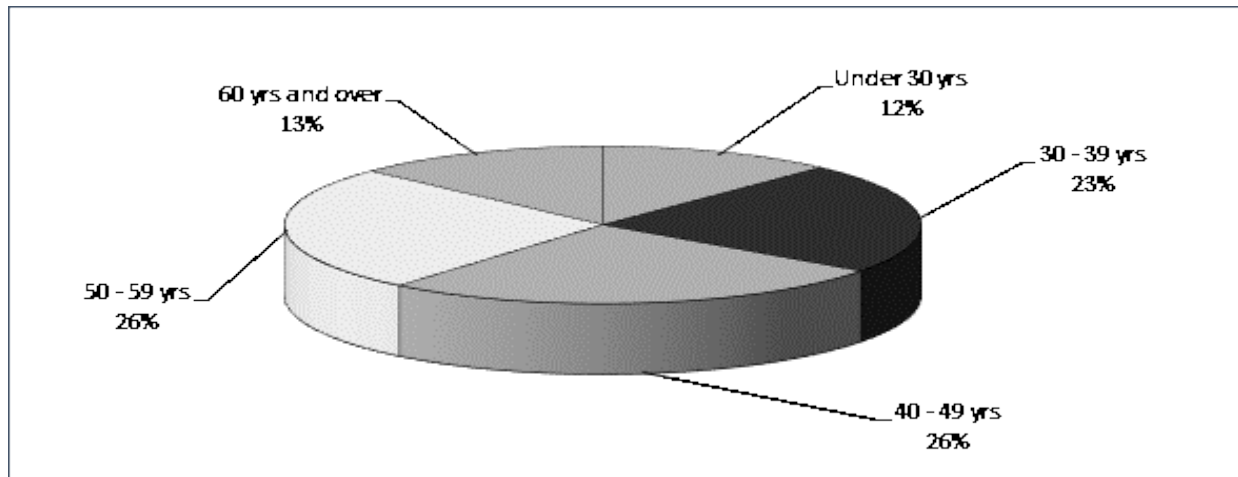


Table 7: HHS Agencies by Age²³

| Agency | Percentage Under 30 | Percentage 30-39 | Percentage 40-49 | Percentage 50-59 | Percentage 60 and over |
|-------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| HHSC | 12.3% | 23.1% | 25.9% | 25.6% | 13.0% |
| DSHS | 11.6% | 26.4% | 23.9% | 23.8% | 14.3% |

Utilization Analysis

Texas law requires that each state agency analyze its workforce and compare the number of Blacks, Hispanics and females employed by the agency to the available state Civilian Labor Force (CLF) for each job category.

The utilization analysis was conducted for each HHS agency using the 80 percent rule. This rule compares the actual number of employees to the expected number of employees based on the available state CLF for Black, Hispanic and Female employees. For purposes of this analysis, a group is considered potentially

underutilized when the actual representation in the workforce is less than 80 percent of what the expected number would be based on the CLF.

The HHSC Civil Rights Office (CRO) reviewed and conducted analyses for each individual agency’s workforce to identify potential underutilization.

The utilization analysis of the HHS agencies for fiscal year 2021 indicated potential underutilization in the HHSC workforce. The following table summarizes the results of the utilization analysis for the HHS System.

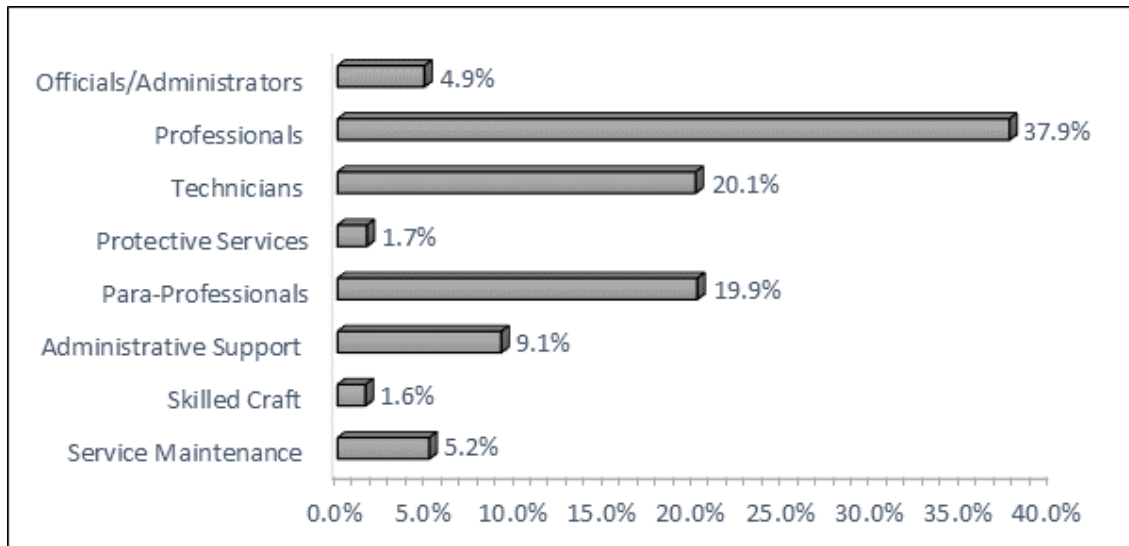
Table 8: HHS System Utilization Analysis Results^{24 25 26}

| Job Category | HHS System | HHSC | DSHS |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Officials/Administrators | No | No | No |
| Professionals | No | No | No |
| Technicians | No | No | No |
| Protective Service | No | No | N/A |
| Administrative Support | No | No | No |
| Skilled Craft | Black | Black | N/A |
| | Hispanic | Hispanic | N/A |
| | Female | Female | N/A |
| Service Maintenance | Hispanic | Hispanic | Black |

Although potential underutilization was identified in the Skilled Craft job category, it should be noted that the job category comprises 1.6% of the HHS System workforce.

The other job category showing potential underutilization is Service Maintenance, which comprises 5.2% of the HHS System workforce.

Figure 6: HHS System – Percent of Employees by Job Category



Veterans

About four percent of the workforce (1,646 employees) are veterans.

Table 9: HHS System Workforce by Veterans Status²⁷

| Agency | Number of Veterans | FY 21 Percentage |
|------------|--------------------|------------------|
| HHSC | 1,432 | 4.3% |
| DSHS | 214 | 6.5% |
| HHS System | 1,646 | 4.4% |

State Service

Approximately 40 percent of the workforce has 10 or more years of state service. About 19 percent of the workforce have been with the state for less than two years. This breakdown is consistent across all HHS agencies.²⁸

Table 10: HHS System Workforce Length of State Service for FY 19 – FY 21^{29 30 31 32}

| State Service | FY 19 | FY 20 | FY 21 |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| less than 2 years | 25.4% | 23.8% | 18.5% |
| 2-4 years | 16.5% | 17.8% | 19.9% |
| 5-9 years | 20.7% | 20.5% | 21.9% |
| 10 years or more | 37.4% | 37.9% | 39.7% |

Figure 7: HHS System Workforce by Length of State Service³³

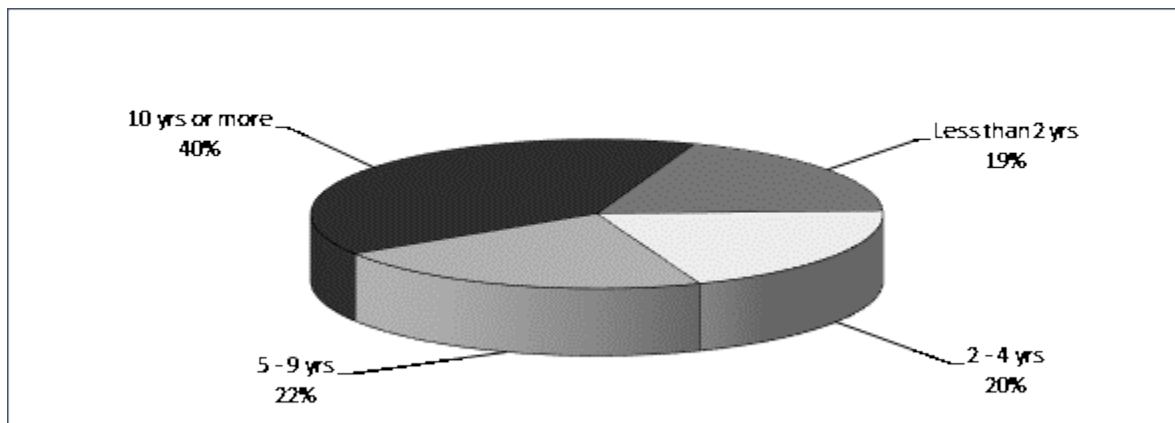


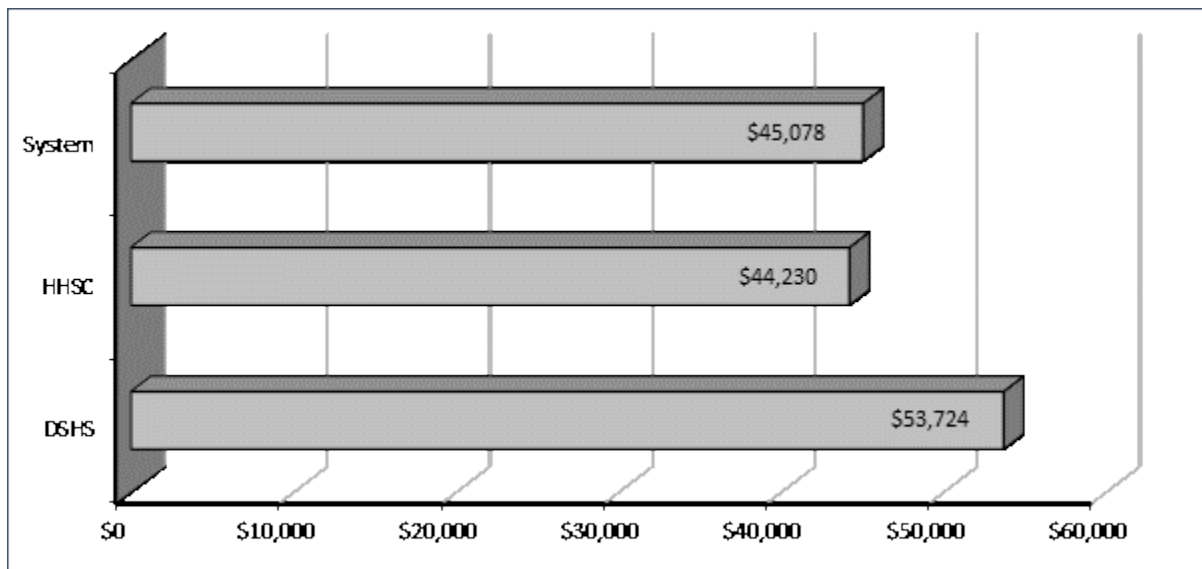
Table 11: HHS Agencies by Length of State Service³⁴

| Agency | Percentage Less than 2 yrs. | Percentage 2-4 yrs. | Percentage 5-9 yrs. | Percentage 10 yrs. or more |
|--------|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| HHSC | 18.4% | 19.9% | 22.0% | 39.7% |
| DSHS | 19.0% | 19.8% | 21.0% | 40.2% |

Average Annual Employee Salary

On average, the annual salary for an HHS System employee is \$45,078.³⁵

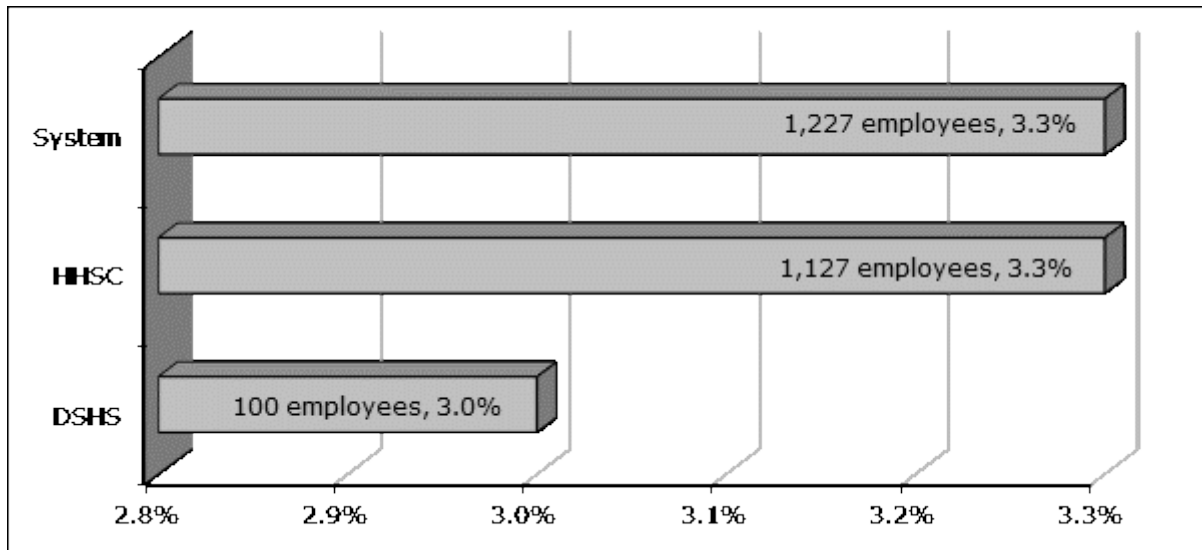
Figure 8: HHS Average Annual Salary by Agency



Return-to-Work Retirees

HHS agencies hire retirees to support both ongoing operational needs and to assist in implementing new initiatives. When recruiting for shortage occupations, special skill required positions or for special projects, retirees provide a good source of relevant program-specific knowledge. Rehired retirees constitute about three percent of the total HHS workforce.³⁶

Figure 9: HHS Return-to-Work Retirees by Percent of Workforce



HHS management understands that demographic trends over the next decade will increasingly impact recruitment from typical sources. Retired workers who have institutional knowledge will be needed to pass their expertise to others.

Dealing with an aging workforce will require HHS agencies to attract more people to apply for work, encourage them to work longer and help make them more productive. Creative strategies are being planned to keep older workers on the job, such as hiring retirees as temporary status employees; letting employees phase into retirement by working part time; having experienced workers mentor younger employees; promoting telecommuting, flexible hours and job-sharing; and/or urging retirement-ready workers to take sabbaticals instead of stepping down.

4. Turnover

The HHS System turnover rate for fiscal year 2021 was 26.1 percent, about five percent higher than the statewide turnover rate of 21.5 percent.^{37 38}

Table 12: HHS System Workforce - Turnover for FY 19 – FY 21 (excludes inter-HHS agency transfers)³⁹

| Agency | FY 19 | FY 20 | FY 21 |
|------------|-------|-------|-------|
| HHS System | 27.6% | 24.2% | 26.1% |

Of the two HHS agencies, HHSC experienced the highest turnover rate (27.1 percent).⁴⁰

Table 13: Turnover by HHS Agency for FY 21 (includes inter-HHS agency transfers and excludes legislatively mandated transfers)

| Agency | Average Annual Headcount | Total Separations | Turnover Rate |
|--------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| HHSC | 37,199 | 10,085 | 27.1% |
| DSHS | 3,386 | 517 | 15.3% |
| Grand Total | 40,585 | 10,602 | 26.1% |

Turnover at HHS agencies was highest for Males at HHSC (at 28.4 percent) and lowest for Females at DSHS (at 15.1 percent). Turnover across ethnic groups ranged from a high of 32.7 percent for Black employees to a low of 23.5 percent for White and Hispanic employees.⁴¹

Table 14: HHS Agency Turnover by Gender for FY 21 (includes inter-HHS agency transfers and excludes legislatively mandated transfers)

| Agency | Gender | Average Annual Headcount | Total Separations | Turnover Rate |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| HHSC | Female | 26,770 | 7,134 | 26.6% |
| | Male | 10,373 | 2,951 | 28.4% |
| DSHS | Female | 2,443 | 370 | 15.1% |
| | Male | 934 | 147 | 15.7% |
| HHS System | Female | 29,213 | 7,504 | 25.7% |
| | Male | 11,307 | 3,098 | 27.4% |

Table 15: HHS Agency Turnover by Ethnicity for FY 21 (includes inter-HHS agency transfers and legislatively mandated transfers and excludes legislatively mandated transfers)

| Agency | White | Black | Hispanic | Other ⁴² |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|
| HHSC | 24.5% | 33.1% | 24.6% | 28.8% |
| DSHS | 14.7% | 23.1% | 11.9% | 18.3% |
| HHS System | 23.5% | 32.7% | 23.5% | 27.5% |

Of the total losses during fiscal year 2021, approximately 79 percent were voluntary separations and 20 percent were involuntary separations.^{43 44} Voluntary includes resignation, transfer to another agency and retirement. Involuntary includes dismissal for cause, resignation in lieu of separation, and separation at will.⁴⁵

Table 16: Reason for Separation

| Type of Separation | Reason | Separations | Percentage ⁴⁶ |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| Voluntary | Personal reasons | 6,824 | 64.01% |
| | Transfer to another agency | 531 | 4.98% |
| | Retirement | 1,046 | 9.81% |
| Involuntary | Termination at Will | 47 | .44% |
| | Resignation in Lieu of Termination | 171 | 1.60% |
| | Dismissal for Cause | 1,954 | 18.33% |

Certain job families have significantly higher turnover than other occupational series, including direct care workers⁴⁷ at 53.2 percent, food service workers⁴⁸ at 43.8 percent, laboratory technicians at 22.0 percent, and licensed vocational nurses (LVNs) at 28.6 percent.⁴⁹

Table 17: FY 21 Turnover for Significant Job Families⁵⁰

| Job Title | Average Annual Headcount | Separations | Turnover Rate |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Direct Care Workers ⁵¹ | 8,472 | 4,509 | 53.2% |
| Food Service Workers ⁵² | 881 | 386 | 43.8% |
| Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs) | 994 | 284 | 28.6% |
| Social Workers | 263 | 72 | 27.4% |
| Registered Nurses (RNs) ⁵³ | 1,738 | 431 | 24.8% |
| Psychologists ⁵⁴ | 227 | 56 | 24.7% |
| Laboratory Technicians | 50 | 11 | 22.0% |
| Eligibility Workers ⁵⁵ | 5,332 | 1,123 | 21.1% |
| Eligibility Clerks ⁵⁶ | 949 | 192 | 20.2% |
| Guardianship Specialists | 72 | 14 | 19.4% |
| Epidemiologists | 132 | 25 | 18.9% |
| CCL and RCCL Specialists ⁵⁷ | 409 | 75 | 18.3% |
| Health Physicists | 57 | 10 | 17.5% |
| Veterinarians | 18 | 3 | 16.7% |
| Dentists | 32 | 5 | 15.7% |
| Physicians | 100 | 13 | 13.0% |
| Microbiologists ⁵⁸ | 148 | 19 | 12.8% |
| Registered Therapists ⁵⁹ | 312 | 36 | 11.5% |
| Nurse Practitioners ⁶⁰ | 89 | 10 | 11.3% |
| Psychiatrists | 124 | 13 | 10.5% |
| Chemists | 58 | 5 | 8.6% |
| Sanitarians | 128 | 11 | 8.6% |

5. Retirement Projections

Currently, about 11 percent of the HHS workforce is potentially eligible to retire and leave state employment. About 2.6 percent of the eligible employees retire each fiscal year. If this trend continues, approximately 13 percent of the current workforce is expected to retire in the next five years.⁶¹

Table 18: HHS System Retirements - Percent of Workforce (FY 17 – FY 21)

| Fiscal Year | Retirement Losses | Retirement Turnover Rate |
|-------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 2017 | 989 | 2.4% |
| 2018 | 1,175 | 2.9% |
| 2019 | 1,069 | 2.6% |
| 2020 | 956 | 2.3% |
| 2021 | 1,045 | 2.6% |

Table 19: HHS System First-Time Retirement Eligible Projection (FY 21 – FY 26)

| Agency | FY 21 | | FY 22 | | FY 23 | | FY 24 | | FY 25 | | FY 26 | |
|--------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| HHSC | 582 | 1.7% | 830 | 2.5% | 852 | 2.5% | 983 | 2.9% | 1003 | 3.0% | 1052 | 3.1% |
| DSHS | 64 | 1.9% | 80 | 2.4% | 91 | 2.8% | 94 | 2.8% | 103 | 3.1% | 113 | 3.4% |
| Grand Total | 646 | 1.7% | 910 | 2.5% | 943 | 2.5% | 1077 | 2.9% | 1106 | 3.0% | 1165 | 3.1% |

The loss of this significant portion of the workforce means the HHS agencies will lose some of their most knowledgeable workers, including many employees in key positions. Effective succession planning and employee development will be critical in ensuring there are qualified individuals who can replace those leaving state service.

6. Critical Workforce Skills

The current climate of the information age, advances in technology, increasing population for the state, consolidation of services, right-sizing and outsourcing will continue to place increased emphasis on the demand for well-trained and skilled staff.

The outsourcing and self-service automation of major HR functions, such as employee selection, have made it critical for HHS managers and employees to improve and commit to a continual learning of human resource policy, employee development, conflict resolution, time management, project management and automation skills.

It is important for HHS to employ professionals who have the skills necessary for the development, implementation and evaluation of the health and human services programs. These skills include:

- analytic/assessment skills;
- policy development/program planning skills;
- communication skills;
- cultural competency skills;
- basic public health sciences skills;
- financial planning and management skills;
- contract management skills; and
- leadership and systems-thinking skills.

As the Spanish speaking population in Texas increases, there will be an increased need for employees with bilingual skills, especially Spanish-English proficiency.

In addition, most management positions require program knowledge. As HHS continues to lose tenured staff, effective training will be needed to ensure that current employees develop the skills necessary to transfer into management positions.

To promote this staff development, HHS must continue to grow the skills and talents of managers as part of a plan for succession. HHS has demonstrated this belief by establishing the HHS Leadership Academy, a formalized interagency

training and mentoring program that provides opportunities to enhance the growth of high-potential managers as they take on greater responsibility in positions of leadership. The primary goals of the academy are to:

- prepare managers to take on higher and broader roles and responsibilities;
- provide opportunities for managers to better understand critical management issues;
- provide opportunities for managers to participate and contribute while learning; and
- create a culture of collaborative leaders across the HHS system.

Through this planned development of management skills and the careful selection of qualified staff, HHS will continue to meet the challenges posed by increased retirements.

7. Environmental Assessment

COVID-19

In early 2020, the nation experienced both a public health emergency and an economic crisis as the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) spread across the country. The federal government declared COVID-19 a national emergency on March 13, 2020,⁶² and government entities at the state and local levels took measures to help stop the spread of the virus. Every state declared a state of emergency, and the majority put stay-at-home orders in place.

The effects of the pandemic struck the economy almost immediately in 2020: Over 22 million jobs were lost from February to April of that year.⁶³ In response to these challenges, Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (2020) on March 25, 2020. CARES provided direct financial assistance to families, workers, and small businesses.⁶⁴

Subsequently, as positive COVID-19 cases fell across the country, consumer confidence grew and employment levels increased.⁶⁵ Employment rose by 428,000 jobs in March 2022 and the unemployment rate for the country currently stands at 3.6 percent.⁶⁶

The Texas Economy

Texas, which had sustained years of positive job growth, and added over 250,000 jobs in 2019,⁶⁷ lost 1.4 million jobs between February and April of 2020⁶⁸ due to the initial stages of the pandemic. The unemployment rate reached a high of 12.9 percent in April 2020, but the rate dropped to 6.9 percent for the year. In 2021, the annual average unemployment rate for Texas fell to 5.7 percent.⁶⁹

Texas' economy began to bounce back as COVID cases decreased in 2021. Texas added approximately 657,300 jobs from June 2020 to June 2021 and by December 2021 all the jobs lost during the pandemic were recovered.⁷⁰ In addition, the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas predicts employment to grow 3.3 percent in 2022.⁷¹ The Texas Leading Index rose 17 times in the last 19 months, which shows consumer confidence in spending and saving. This also suggests strong job growth in the future.⁷²

Poverty in Texas

As the number of families living in poverty increases for the state, combined with the challenges created by the pandemic, the demand for services provided by the HHS System will continue to increase.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defined the poverty level for 2021 according to household/family size as follows:

- \$26,500 or less for a family of four;
- \$21,960 or less for a family of three;
- \$17,420 or less for a family of two; and
- \$12,880 or less for individuals.⁷³

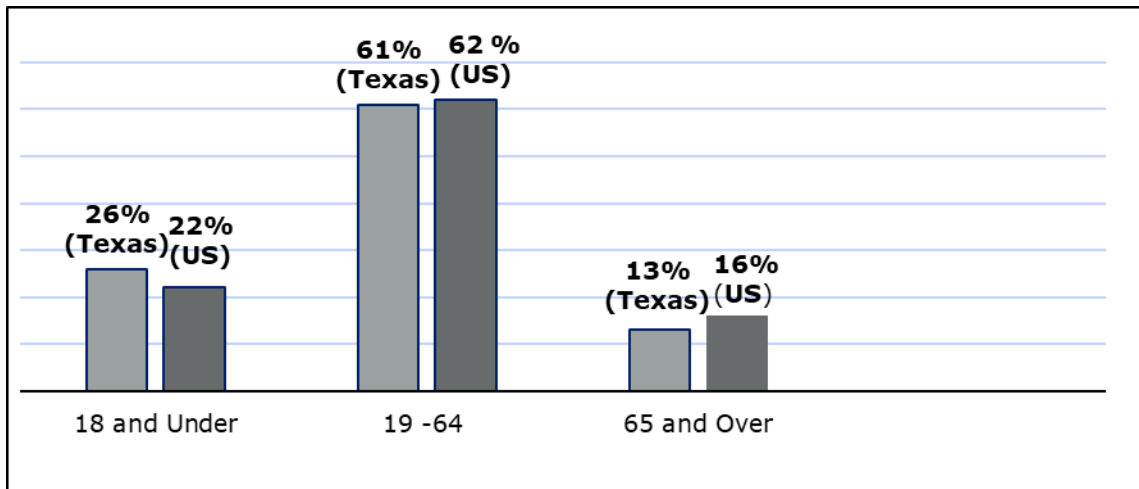
It is estimated that 13.4 percent of Texas residents live in families with annual incomes below the poverty level. This rate is slightly higher than the national poverty rate of 11.4 percent.⁷⁴

Population Growth

According to the 2020 United States Census Bureau, as of July 2021, the estimated population of Texas was over 29 million people, which represents a 1.3 percent increase from 2020 and 15.9 percent increase from the census count in April 2010.⁷⁵

The distribution of age groups in Texas closely mirrors that of the nation, with the largest percentage of Texas residents (61 percent) being between ages 19 to 64, followed by those 18 and under (26 percent) and those 65 and over (13 percent).⁷⁶

Figure 10: Population Distribution by Age⁷⁷



According to long term population projections by the Texas State Data Center, it is estimated that by 2050, Texans older than age 65 will triple in size from 2010-2050, approaching 8.3 million.⁷⁸

8. Expected Workforce Challenges

HHS will need to continue to recruit and retain health and human services professionals. Certain jobs will continue to be essential to the delivery of services throughout the HHS System. Many of the jobs are low paying, highly stressful and experience higher than normal turnover.

Additionally, the demand for certain public health positions is expected to increase as the response to the COVID-19 pandemic continues.

Direct Care Workers (Direct Support Professionals and Psychiatric Nursing Assistants)

There are approximately 6,624 direct care workers employed within HHS. The direct care worker group is made up of direct support professionals in state supported living centers and psychiatric nursing assistants in the state hospitals. Though these positions require no formal education to perform the work, employees must develop interpersonal skills to effectively engage with residents and patients. The physical requirements of the position may be challenging due to the nature of the work and the pay is low.⁷⁹

The overall turnover rate for employees in this group is very high, at about 53 percent annually.⁸⁰ State supported living centers and state hospitals have historically had trouble in both recruiting and retaining these valuable workers.

Direct Support Professionals at State Supported Living Centers

There are 4,418 direct support professionals in state supported living centers across the state, representing approximately 18 percent of the System's total workforce.⁸¹ These employees provide 24-hour direct care to residents in state supported living centers. They directly support these individuals by providing services including basic hygiene needs, dressing, and bathing, general health care, and dining assistance. They support life-sustaining medical care such as external feeding and lifting individuals with physical challenges. A trained and experienced direct care staff is essential to ensure resident safety, health, and well-being.

There are no formal education requirements to apply for a job in this series; however, extensive on-the-job training is required. It takes six to nine months for a new direct support professional to become proficient in the basic skills necessary to carry out routine job duties.

A typical HHS direct support professional is 40 years of age and has about seven years of state service.⁸²

Turnover for direct support professionals is over twice the state average at 55 percent, which is one of the highest turnover rates of any job category in the System. During fiscal year 2021, the System lost about 3,131 direct support professionals. Within this job family, entry-level Direct Support Professional Is experienced the highest turnover at approximately 72 percent. Turnover rates by location ranged from 38 percent at Austin State Supported Living Center to 77 percent at the San Angelo State Supported Living Center.^{83 84}

The vacancy rate for these professionals is 35 percent, and it often takes up to five months to fill vacant positions.

The State Auditor's Office (SAO) 2020 market index analysis found the average state salary for Direct Support Professional Is and IIIs to range from four to seven percent behind the market rate, contributing to challenges in recruitment.⁸⁵

Psychiatric Nursing Assistants at State Hospitals

There are approximately 2,206 psychiatric nursing assistants employed in HHS state hospitals across Texas.⁸⁶

Some of their daily essential job functions include assisting licensed nurses with medication administration or treatment in addition to monitoring patients' vital signs to ensure their health and safety. At times, psychiatric nursing assistants are the first to intervene during crisis situations and act as the frontline staff most likely to de-escalate situations to avoid the need for behavioral interventions. These critical positions also have a higher potential for on-the-job injuries, both from lifting requirements and intervention during crisis situations. They also may be required to work throughout the day and night.

The SAO 2020 market index analysis found the average state salary for a Psychiatric Nursing Assistant Is and IIIs to be seven to 12 percent behind the market rate, increasing existing challenges to recruitment.^{87 88}

The average psychiatric nursing assistant is about 39 years of age and has an average of seven years of service.⁸⁹

Turnover for psychiatric nursing assistants is very high at about 50 percent, reflecting the loss of 1,378 workers during fiscal year 2021. Within this job family, Psychiatric Nursing Assistant Is experienced the highest turnover at 67 percent. Turnover rates vary by location, from 33 percent at Terrell State Hospital to 66 percent at the Big Spring State Hospital.⁹⁰

HHS is currently having trouble filling vacant psychiatric nursing assistant positions, as there are 873 vacancies in this job family. Vacant positions are going unfilled an average of four months.⁹¹

Food Service Workers

HHS employs approximately 748 food service workers.⁹²

The average hourly rate paid to food service workers is \$11.51.⁹³ The turnover rate for food service workers is very high, at about 44 percent.⁹⁴ The SAO 2020 market index analysis found the average state salary for Food Service Workers ranged eight to 11 percent behind the market rate; Food Service Managers ranged from six to 15 percent behind the market rate; and Cooks ranged from nine to 11 percent behind the market rate.⁹⁵

Retention and recruitment of these workers remains a major challenge for the System.

Food Service Workers at State Supported Living Centers

There are 449 food service workers employed in HHS state supported living centers throughout Texas.⁹⁶ The typical food service worker is about 46 years of age and has an average of approximately nine years of service.⁹⁷

Turnover in these food service worker positions is very high, at 49 percent. By location, turnover rates range from 35 percent at Richmond State Living Center to 87 percent at Lubbock State Living Center.⁹⁸

Food Service Workers at State Hospitals

There are 289 food service workers employed at HHS state hospitals and centers throughout Texas.⁹⁹

The typical food service worker is about 46 years of age and has an average of about eight years of service.¹⁰⁰

Of the state hospitals with over 20 food service workers, turnover rates range from 16 percent at Rio Grande State Hospital Center to 56 percent at Rusk State Hospital.¹⁰¹

Food Service Workers at Texas Center for Infectious Disease

There are 10 food service workers employed in the Texas Center for Infectious Disease (TCID).¹⁰²

The typical food service worker is about 46 years of age and has an average of approximately seven years of service.¹⁰³

At 26 percent, turnover for these food service worker positions is high and slightly above the state average of 21.5 percent.^{104 105}

Dietetic and Nutrition Specialists

There are 56 dietetic and nutrition specialists employed by HHS, with the majority (55 percent) classified as Dietetic and Nutrition Specialists IIIs.¹⁰⁶ These specialists facilitate/direct operations of nutrition care services, serve as a member of the patient's recovery team, and plan special therapeutic menus for patients.

Dietetic and nutrition specialists work in state hospitals, state supported living centers, and in Health, Developmental and Independence Services (HDIS). The typical system dietetic and nutrition specialist is 45 years of age and has nine years of service. Thirty-four percent of these specialists have 10 or more years of service.¹⁰⁷

The average salary for the dietetics and nutrition specialists is \$57,229, which is below both the national average wage of \$65,620 and Texas average wage of \$64,560.^{108 109}

Turnover is about the same as the state average at 21 percent, which represents a total loss of 13 employees.^{110 111} The vacancy rate is 15 percent, and it can take over five months to fill these vacancies.¹¹²

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of dietitians and nutritionists is projected to grow 11 percent from 2020 to 2030. This is faster than the average for all occupations.¹¹³

Dietetic and Nutrition Specialists at State Supported Living Centers

There are 22 Dietetic and Nutrition Specialist IIs and IIIs at state supported living centers across Texas.¹¹⁴

On average, these specialists are about 45 years of age and have 10 years of service.¹¹⁵

The turnover rate for these dietetic and nutrition specialists is high at 17 percent (representing four total losses), with a high vacancy rate of approximately 24 percent.^{116 117}

Dietetic and Nutrition Specialists at State Hospitals

There are 13 dietetic and nutrition specialists employed in the state hospital system, which the slight majority working as Dietetic and Nutrition Specialist IIIs (seven specialists).¹¹⁸

The typical specialist at these facilities is about 50 years of age and has an average of nine years of service.¹¹⁹

Only the San Antonio State Hospital experienced turnover in the group, as they lost only one employee. The vacancy rate is 24 percent and it often takes over six months to fill a position.^{120 121}

Dietetic and Nutrition Specialists in Health, Developmental and Independence Services

About 21 percent of dietetic and nutrition specialists (12 employees) work in HDIS.¹²²

The typical dietetic and nutrition specialist in HDIS is about 35 years of age and has an average of five years of service. Over eight percent of these specialists are currently eligible to retire.¹²³

The average turnover rate for dietetic and nutrition specialists is currently high 23 percent, which is higher than the state average rate of 21.5 percent.^{124 125}

Eligibility Services Staff

Across the state, there are about 4,978 eligibility advisors within the Access & Eligibility Services (AES) area accounting for about 13 percent of the HHS System workforce.¹²⁶

Most of these individuals (4,199 employees or 84 percent) are employed as Texas Works advisors with the remaining made up of Hospital-Based advisors and Medical Eligibility specialists.¹²⁷

Overall turnover for these workers is high at 21 percent, with Texas Works advisors and Medical Eligibility specialists experiencing the highest turnover at 21 percent, followed by hospital-based workers at 15 percent.¹²⁸

Texas Works Advisors

There are approximately 4,199 Texas Works advisors within AES that make eligibility determinations for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid for children, families, and pregnant women, and the Children's Health Insurance Plan (CHIP). The typical Texas Works advisor is 42 years of age and has an average of seven years of service.¹²⁹

Turnover for these employees is high at 21 percent, representing a loss of 963 workers in fiscal year 2021. Certain regions of Texas experienced higher turnover than others, including the Northeast area of the state at 28 percent, and the

Metroplex area at 27 percent. Entry-level Texas Works Advisor Is experienced the highest turnover at 52 percent.¹³⁰

In addition, AES has encountered difficulties finding qualified candidates for new eligibility advisor positions. Due to this shortage of qualified applicants, vacant positions go unfilled for an average of over four months, with vacant positions in the Houston area remaining unfilled for an average of a little more than six months.¹³¹

Medical Eligibility Specialists

Within AES, there are 526 Medical Eligibility specialists determining financial eligibility for Medicaid for Elderly and People with Disabilities (MEPD). Medical Eligibility specialists have, on average, eight years of service, with an average age of 43.¹³²

Turnover for these specialists is high at about 21 percent, representing the loss of 118 employees in fiscal year 2021. Entry-level Medical Eligibility Specialist Is experienced the highest turnover, at 58 percent, which is 15 percent higher than fiscal year 2019.¹³³

Hospital Based Workers

AES has about 253 Hospital-Based advisors stationed in nursing facilities, hospitals, and clinics. These advisors determine eligibility for the SNAP, TANF, Medicaid and CHIP programs.¹³⁴

These tenured advisors have an average of 13 years of service and over 56 percent of these employees have 10 or more years of service, with an average age of 46.¹³⁵

Turnover for these employees is currently below the state average at 15 percent.¹³⁶

¹³⁷

Community Care Workers

HHS employs about 412 Community Care workers within AES. These workers conduct home visits, determine needs for services, develop service plans, and refer individuals for appropriate services.¹³⁸

The typical Community Care worker is 47 years of age and has an average of 12 years of service.¹³⁹

Community Care workers make an average salary of \$33,679, which is below both the national average wage of \$40,460 and Texas average wage of \$39,630.^{140 141}

The turnover rate for AES Community Care workers is moderately high at 14 percent, representing the loss of about 61 employees.¹⁴² The vacancy rate for these positions is well-managed at six percent, with these positions often remaining unfilled for about five weeks.¹⁴³

Child Care Licensing and Residential Child Care Licensing Specialists

There are 406 Child Care Licensing (CCL) and Residential Child Care Licensing (RCCL) specialists employed within the System who monitor, investigate and inspect child day-care facilities and homes, residential child-care facilities, child-placing agencies and foster homes.^{144 145} In addition, they conduct child abuse/neglect investigations of children placed in 24-hour childcare facilities and child placing agencies licensed or certified by Residential Child Care Licensing.

The typical specialist is 41 years of age and has an average of nine years of service. About 34 percent of these employees have 10 or more years of service.¹⁴⁶

CCL and RCCL specialist turnover is high at 18 percent, though slightly below the state average rate of 21.5 percent. Within this group, the highest turnover was experienced by RCCL Inspector IIIs at 36 percent and RCCL Investigator and Compliance Specialist IIs at 21 percent.^{147 148}

Guardianship Staff

The HHS System employs 81 guardianship specialists and guardianship supervisors who are responsible for providing guardianship services to eligible clients.¹⁴⁹ Staff continuously assess and determine whether guardianship is the most appropriate and least restrictive alternative necessary to ensure the consumer's health and safety.

Retention continues to be a challenge, since these positions require specialized skills and salaries are not comparable with that paid by other agencies and the private sector.

Guardianship Specialists

There are 69 guardianship specialists employed at HHS.¹⁵⁰

HHS guardianship specialists are about 46 years of age and have an average of 10 years of service.¹⁵¹

The turnover rate for guardianship specialists is high at about 19 percent annually, which is slightly below the state average turnover rate of 21.5 percent.^{152 153}

About 16 percent of these tenured employees will be eligible to retire in the next five years.¹⁵⁴

Guardianship Supervisors

There are 12 guardianship supervisors working for HHS.¹⁵⁵

HHS guardianship supervisors has an average of about 18 years of service, with an average age of 52 years.¹⁵⁶

Though the turnover rate for these highly tenured guardianship supervisors is currently well-managed at about eight percent, HHS may face significant recruitment challenges in the next few years to replace these tenured employees who are eligible for retirement. With about 25 percent of these employees currently eligible to retire, this rate is expected to increase in the next five years to about 67 percent.^{157 158}

Architects

These are 16 Architect IIs employed within the Chief Policy and Regulatory Office (CPRO). These architects perform architectural plan reviews and conduct initial and annual surveys and complaint/incident investigations on state licensure, and (when applicable) federal certification requirements for nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, Day Activity and Health Services facilities, Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities, and in-patient Hospice facilities.¹⁵⁹

These HHS Architect IIs have, on average, 10 years of service, with an average age of 59 years of age. Over 85 percent of these employees have five or more years of service.¹⁶⁰

The SAO 2020 market index analysis found the average state salary for Architect IIs is \$75,786. The SAO 2020 market index analysis found that the average state salary for Architect IIs to be four percent behind the market rate.¹⁶¹

Though the turnover rate for these employees is only 11 percent, with a vacancy rate of 20 percent, vacant positions often go unfilled for over seven months due to a shortage of qualified applicants available for work.¹⁶²

Though only 13 percent of these employees are currently eligible to retire, over 56 percent will be eligible to retire in the next five years.¹⁶³

HHS needs to expand their recruitment strategies to replace these highly skilled workers.

Contract Specialists

There are 413 contract specialists employed within the HHS System. These specialists utilize various levels of technical expertise related to procurement, contract development, contract management, and program performance to meet agency needs for goods and services. Contract specialists may also consult and communicate with various community stakeholders and state and local authorities to evaluate the effectiveness of programs to meet the agency's needs. In addition, contract specialists may be responsible for monitoring contract performance, administering billing and tracking expenditures, and facilitate meetings between the System and vendors.¹⁶⁴

System contract specialists are, on average, 45 years of age and have about 12 years of service. Over 50 percent of these employees have 10 or more years of service.¹⁶⁵

The average salary for contract specialists is \$54,892 a year.¹⁶⁶ The SAO market index analysis found that state Contract Specialist IIIs and IVs make two to seven percent less than the market rate.¹⁶⁷

Turnover for these specialists is above the state average at 26 percent.¹⁶⁸ ¹⁶⁹ With a vacancy rate of about 13 percent, vacant positions often go unfilled for over four months due to a shortage of qualified applicants available for work.¹⁷⁰

Contract Specialists in DSHS Program Operations

The Program Operations (PO) area of DSHS employs 59 Contract Specialist IVs and Vs. These contract specialists have an average of 12 years of service and are about 46 years of age. Over 45 percent of this group have over 10 years of service.¹⁷¹

The turnover rate for these contract specialists is currently well-managed at four percent, though the vacancy rate is high at 19 percent.^{172 173} With over 30 percent of these Contract Specialist Vs eligible to retire in the five years, HHS will need to focus on competitive recruitment strategies.¹⁷⁴

Contract Specialists in Procurement and Contracting Services

In HHSC Procurement and Contracting Services (PCS), there are 46 Contract Specialist IVs and Vs. The average contract specialist in this group is, on average, 47 years of age, with 12 years of service.¹⁷⁵

The total turnover rate for these contract specialists is moderately high at 14 percent, though it often takes over five months to fill vacancies with qualified candidates.^{176 177}

Contract Specialists in Health, Developmental and Independence Services

There are 42 contract specialists in HDIS. On average, these contract specialists are about 46 years of age, with an average of 11 years of service. Forty-three percent of this group have over 10 years of service.¹⁷⁸

The turnover rate for these contract specialists is currently well below the state average at 12 percent, it can take up to six months to fill vacancies.^{179 180 181}

Contract Specialists in Intellectual & Developmental Disability & Behavioral Health Services

Intellectual & Developmental Disability & Behavioral Health Services (IDD-BH) employs 54 Contract Specialist IVs and Vs. These contract specialists have an average of 11 years of service and are about 47 years of age. Fifty-two percent of this group has at least 10 years of service.¹⁸²

The turnover rate for these specialists is below the state average at 16 percent, though the vacancy rate is high at 21 percent.^{183 184} Over 29 percent of these contract specialists are eligible to retire in the next five years.^{185 186}

Purchasers

There are 97 purchasers employed within HHSC PCS. With 32 employees, Purchaser IVs make up over half of the group.¹⁸⁷ Purchasers perform functions such as assisting with procurements, receiving and tracking vendor responses, as well as distributing responses to assigned buyers. They may also assist with identifying provider resources and evaluating information supplied by bidders. Advanced employees, such as Purchaser VIs, identify purchasing related issues and work with management, requesters, subject matter experts, and outside stakeholders.¹⁸⁸

The average salary for this group of PCS purchasers is \$50,554.¹⁸⁹ In the SAO market report index for fiscal year 2020, state Purchaser IVs make 13 percent below the state market index rate.¹⁹⁰

These tenured purchasers are, on average, 48 years of age and have an average of 12 years of service. Over 43 percent of these employees have more than 10 years of service.¹⁹¹

Though the turnover rate for this group is high at 15 percent, the vacancy rate is very low at five percent.^{192 193} On average, it can take over four months to fill these vacancies.¹⁹⁴

Financial Analysts

There are 117 financial analysts employed in the HHS System. These employees perform advanced financial analysis, examine and investigate accounting records,

as well as conduct regulatory work related to revenue collections and budget appropriations.¹⁹⁵

The average financial analyst is 46 years of age with about 12 years of service. Almost 30 percent of these employees will be eligible to retire in the next five years.^{196 197}

Turnover is well-managed for these positions, as the rate is well below the state average at nine percent.^{198 199}

The SAO's report on market index for fiscal year 2020 found the market index rate salary for financial analysts to be four to seven percent below the market index, which may account for the high vacancy rate at 18 percent. It can take up to three months to fill these vacancies.^{200 201}

Financial Analysts in the DSHS Program Operations

There are 17 Financial Analyst Is, IIs, and IIIs in the PO Division of DSHS. The average PO financial analyst is 37 years of age and has about six years of service.²⁰²

Turnover for this group is high with a turnover rate of 32 percent.²⁰³ The vacancy rate is also high at 15 percent.²⁰⁴

Financial Analysts in the HHSC Chief Program and Services Office

In the CPSO, there are 11 Financial Analyst Is, IIs, IIIs, and IVs. The average CPSO financial analyst has about 11 years of service and is 48 years of age.²⁰⁵

Turnover is low for this group, and the vacancy rate is only eight percent, but it can take up to a year to fill vacant positions.^{206 207}

Social Workers

There are 234 social workers employed in the HHS System, with the majority (58 percent) housed in state hospitals across the state.²⁰⁸

Turnover for these social workers is high at 27 percent.²⁰⁹

High turnover may be due to the large disparity between private sector and HHS salaries. The average annual salary for system Social Worker I through V is \$46,567, which falls significantly below the market rate. The SAO 2020 market index analysis found that the average state salary for Social Worker IIs and IIIs ranged from eight to nine percent behind the market rate. In addition, the average annual salary for social workers is below the national (\$62,310) and state (\$64,480) averages.^{210 211}

These problems are expected to worsen as tenured employees approach retirement. Though only nine percent of these employees are currently eligible to retire, this number is expected to increase to about 21 percent in the next five years.²¹²

Social Workers at State Supported Living Centers

Approximately 12 percent of HHS social workers (27 employees) work at state supported living centers across the state.²¹³ These employees serve as liaisons between the resident's legally authorized representative and others to assure ongoing care, treatment, and support using person-centered practices. They gather information to assess a resident's support systems and service needs, support the assessment of the resident's rights and capacity to make decisions, and assist with the coordination of admissions, transfers, transitions, and discharges.

The typical social worker at these facilities is about 51 years of age and has an average of 13 years of service.²¹⁴

The average turnover rate for these social workers is very high at 39 percent, much higher than the state average rate of 21.5 percent, with positions often remaining unfilled for an average of over five months before being filled.^{215 216 217}

Social Workers at State Hospitals

There are 135 social workers at HHS state hospitals.²¹⁸ These employees are critical to managing patient flow in state hospitals and taking the lead role in communicating with patient families and community resources. Social workers provide essential functions within state hospitals that include conducting psychosocial assessments, therapeutic treatment and case coordination for individuals receiving services from HHS in-patient psychiatric hospitals and the Waco Center for Youth.

State hospital social workers are about 42 years of age and have an average of nine years of service.²¹⁹

The overall turnover rate for these social workers is high at around 29 percent, with the Kerrville State Hospital experiencing turnover of more than 68 percent.²²⁰

Public Health Social Workers

There are 61 Public Health Region social workers across the state.²²¹ These employees provide case management consultation for families with children who have health risks, conditions, or special healthcare needs.

The typical public health social worker is about 44 years of age and has an average of nine years of service.²²²

The average turnover rate for these social workers is high at 20 percent, though slightly below the state average rate of 21.5 percent.^{223 224} Of the regions with two or more employees, the Arlington area experienced the highest rate at 36 percent and the South Texas area had the lowest at 12 percent.²²⁵

With a high vacancy rate of 24 percent, and with nearly 20 percent of these employees being eligible for retirement within the next five years, recruitment and retention of these workers remains a challenge.²²⁶

Social Workers in the Chief Program and Services Office

The CPSO employs 11 Social Worker IIIs.²²⁷ Some of their essential job functions include providing case management, collecting and analyzing information to determine care eligibility, and providing resource facilitation. They may also develop and maintain relations with community referral sources and stakeholders.

The typical social worker in this group is about 43 years of age and has an average of six years of service.²²⁸

The average turnover rate for these social workers is well-managed at 10 percent, although the vacancy rate is high at 27 percent. Positions often remain vacant for an average of over two months before being filled.^{229 230}

Case Managers

There are 58 case managers employed by HHS, with the majority (91 percent) housed in state hospitals across the state.²³¹ Case managers assume an advocate role for both acute and chronically disabled psychiatric patients, coordinating functions to ensure patients actively involve themselves in those activities which will promote acquisition of skills to enhance their ability to function more independently and successfully in the community.

The typical case manager is about 41 years of age and has an average of 11 years of service.²³²

Turnover for the case managers is high at 24 percent. Turnover rates by location ranged from 0 percent at Big Springs State Hospital to 50 percent at the Rio Grande State Center.²³³

This high turnover may be due to the large disparity between private sector and HHS salaries. The average annual salary for HHS Case Manager I through V is \$33,666, which falls below the market rate.²³⁴ The SAO 2020 market index analysis found that the average state salary for Case Manager Is and IIIs to be seven percent behind the market rate.²³⁵

These problems are expected to worsen as tenured employees approach retirement. About 16 percent of these employees will be eligible to retire in the next five years.²³⁶

Claims Examiners

HHS employs 373 claims examiners in AES. Over 99 percent of these examiners work in the Division for Disability Services (DDS), which is under AES. These employees research and verify DDS jurisdiction to process incoming disability cases for adjudication. The typical claims examiner is 43 years of age and has 11 years of service.²³⁷

The average turnover rate for Claims Examiner IIs, IIIs, and IVs is high at 18 percent, though slightly below the state average rate of 21.5 percent. With a turnover rate of 45 percent, Claims Examiners II positions are the most challenging to retain and therefore contribute the highest number of vacancies.^{238 239}

Claims Examiner IIs earn an average annual salary of \$38,880.²⁴⁰ This salary falls significantly below the market rate. The SAO 2020 market index analysis found Claims Examiner IIs to be 10 percent below the market index rate.²⁴¹

This disparity may contribute to HHS' ability to recruit qualified applicants, as Claims Examiners IIs experience the highest vacancy rate at 70 percent. With over 200 vacant Claims Examiners positions, it often takes over six months to fill the vacancies.²⁴²

Registered Therapists

There are 295 registered therapists employed at HHS state hospitals and state supported living centers.^{243 244} They specialize in various areas, such as audiology, speech-language pathology, physical therapy, and certified occupational therapy. This group also includes licensed physical therapy assistants (LPTA). Registered therapists provide essential care to the citizens of Texas and are critical workers for direct-care services.

The average salary for all registered therapists is \$75,609, which is above the national average wage of \$65,030 and Texas average wage of \$67,520.^{245 246}

Occupational therapists earn, on average, \$89,715 a year. This is comparable to the national average wage of \$89,740, but below the Texas average wage of \$96,100.^{247 248}

The national average salary for physical therapists of \$92,920 is also comparable to the system average of \$92,076. The average salary for physical therapists in Texas is higher at \$98,340.^{249 250}

System speech language pathologists' average salary of \$84,306 is commensurate with national average wage of \$85,820 and the Texas average wage of \$82,940.²⁵¹
²⁵²

The turnover rate for all registered therapists is low at 12 percent. Registered Therapist IIs experienced the highest turnover at 18 percent. They also have the highest vacancy rate at 23 percent, with it often taking almost six months to fill vacant Therapist II positions.^{253 254}

HHS will need to strengthen their recruitment efforts for these critical workers, as 23 percent of these employees will be eligible to retire in the next five years.²⁵⁵

Registered Therapists at State Supported Living Centers

HHS employs 231 registered therapists in state supported living centers across Texas.²⁵⁶ These employees have, on average, nine years of service, with an average age of 48.²⁵⁷

The turnover for all registered therapists in state supported living centers is below the state average at 11 percent. El Paso State Supported Living Center has the highest turnover rate at 54 percent, followed by Mexia State Supported Living Center at 32 percent.^{258 259}

HHS may face significant recruitment challenges in the next few years to replace these employees who will be eligible for retirement. Though only about eight percent of these employees are currently eligible to retire, approximately 21 percent will be eligible in the next five years.²⁶⁰

Registered Therapists at State Hospitals

There are 54 registered therapists working in state hospitals across Texas. These employees have, on average, 12 years of service, with an average age of 45. Fifty percent of the therapists have 10 or more years of service.²⁶¹

The turnover for all registered therapists in the state hospitals is high at 17 percent, though slightly below the state average rate of 21.5 percent. North Texas State Hospital experienced the highest turnover rate at 30 percent. Of state hospitals with at least 10 registered therapists, San Antonio State Hospital experienced the lowest at eight percent.^{262 263}

Like the state supported living centers, HHS may face recruitment challenges in the next few years to replace these tenured employees who will be eligible for retirement. Thirteen percent of these employees are currently eligible to retire, and approximately 33 percent of them will be eligible in the next five years.²⁶⁴

Full staffing of these positions is critical to direct-care services.

Registered Therapy Assistants

There are 12 registered therapy assistants employed in HHS state hospitals.²⁶⁵ These assistants write therapy summary reports, assure therapeutic interventions

are consistent with optimal client function, and maintain therapy space, materials, and equipment. Under the supervision of a registered therapist, they may also plan and facilitate therapeutic groups and activities.

The average registered therapy assistant is 47 years of age and has an average of seven years of service. Seventy-five percent of these employees work at the Austin State Hospital, with the remaining 25 percent at San Antonio State Hospital.²⁶⁶

Registered therapy assistants earn an average salary of \$51,585, which is below the national average wage of \$60,740 and Texas average wage of \$69,470.^{267 268}

Turnover for registered therapy assistants is high at 18 percent, though vacancies are currently well-managed, as all positions for their group are filled.

Registered Nurses

Registered nurses (RNs) constitute one of the largest healthcare occupations. With over three million jobs in the U.S., job opportunities for RNs are expected to grow nine percent from 2020 to 2030, about as fast as the average for all occupations. About 194,500 openings for registered nurses are projected each year, on average, over the decade.^{269 270}

HHS employs approximately 1,581 RNs across the state.^{271 272} As the demand for nursing services increases, the recruitment and retention of nurses will continue to be a challenge, and the need for competitive salaries will be critical.

Currently, the average annual salary for HHS System RNs is \$63,856.²⁷³ This salary falls below both national and state averages for these occupations. Nationally, the average annual earnings for RNs in 2020 was \$82,750.²⁷⁴ In Texas, the average annual earnings for RNs in 2020 was \$ 79,120.²⁷⁵ In addition, the SAO 2020 market index analysis found the average state salary for Nurse II-IVs ranged from five to 10 percent behind the market rate and 10 percent behind the market rate for Public Health Nurse IIs.²⁷⁶ Posted vacant positions are currently taking about six months to fill.²⁷⁷

To address these difficulties, HHS may consider requesting additional funding to increase salary levels for these positions.

Registered Nurses at State Supported Living Centers

About 42 percent of System RNs (664 RNs) work at HHS state supported living centers across Texas.²⁷⁸

The typical state supported living center RN is about 48 years of age and has an average of approximately nine years of service.²⁷⁹

The turnover rate for these RNs is considered high at about 21 percent. Turnover is especially high at the El Paso State Supported Living Center at approximately 41 percent and the San Antonio State Supported Living Center at about 34 percent.²⁸⁰

In addition, HHS finds it difficult to fill these vacant nurse positions. With a vacancy rate of approximately 18 percent, RN positions often remain open for more than six months before being filled. Some facilities are experiencing even longer vacancy durations. At the Brenham and Denton state supported living centers, it takes about nine months to fill a vacancy.²⁸¹

Registered Nurses at State Hospitals

About 41 percent of System RNs (649 RNs) work at state hospitals across the Texas, providing frontline medical care of patients. They provide medications, primary health care and oversee psychiatric treatment.²⁸²

System nurses at state hospitals are generally required to work varied shifts and weekends. The work requires special skills and staff often work long hours with minimal staffing. The work is also physically demanding, making it increasingly more difficult for the workforce to keep up with these work demands. All of these job factors contribute to higher-than-average turnover rates. Turnover for these RNs is considered very high at about 32 percent. Turnover is over 40 percent at the El Paso Psychiatric Center, the Rusk State Hospital, the Terrell State Hospital, and the Waco Center for Youth.²⁸³

The typical RN at a System state hospital is about 48 years of age and has an average of approximately 10 years of service.²⁸⁴

At these state hospitals, there are always vacant nursing positions that need to be filled. These RN positions often remain open for about six months before being filled. Some hospitals are experiencing longer vacancy durations. At the Big Spring

State Hospital, the Rusk State Hospital, and the Waco Center for Youth, it takes about eight months to fill a position.²⁸⁵

Public Health Registered Nurses

Approximately 57 System RNs provide direct care and population-based services in the many counties in Texas that have no local health department, or where state support is needed.^{286 287} These RNs are often the individuals who are on the frontline in the delivery of public health services to rural communities throughout the state. These nurses serve as consultants and advisors to county, local, and stakeholder groups, and educate community partners. These RNs assist in communicable disease investigation, control and prevention, and are critical to successful public health preparedness and response throughout the state.

Public Health RNs have, on average, seven years of service, with an average age of 48 years.²⁸⁸

Overall turnover for these RNs is about 19 percent. Certain areas of Texas experienced higher turnover than others, including those in the Lubbock area at 44 percent and the El Paso area at 67 percent.²⁸⁹

Licensed Vocational Nurses

There are 870 licensed vocational nurses (LVNs) employed by HHS. The majority of these employees (about 97 percent) work at state hospitals and state supported living centers across Texas.^{290 291}

About three percent work in Public Health Regions and central office program support, assisting in communicable disease prevention and control and the delivery of population-based services to individuals, families, and communities.²⁹²

On average, HHS LVNs are 47 years of age and have nine years of service.²⁹³

As with RNs, the nursing shortage is also impacting the HHS' ability to attract and retain LVNs. Turnover for LVNs is currently high at about 29 percent.²⁹⁴

Currently, the average annual salary for System LVNs during fiscal year 2021 was \$42,444.²⁹⁵ This salary falls below both national and state averages for this occupation. Nationally, the average annual earnings for licensed practical nurses and LVNs is \$ 51,850, and \$ 50,220 in Texas.²⁹⁶ The SAO 2020 market index

analysis found the average state salary for LVN Is was 14 percent behind the market rate, and the salary for LVN IIs were 13 percent behind the market rate.²⁹⁷

Recruitment and retention of these highly skilled employees remains a significant challenge.

Licensed Vocational Nurses at State Supported Living Centers

There are 469 LVNs employed at HHS state supported living centers across Texas. These LVNs are, on average, 47 years of age and have an average of approximately nine years of service.²⁹⁸

Turnover for LVNs at state supported living centers is very high at about 30 percent. The state supported living centers experienced the loss of 166 LVNs in fiscal year 2021. Turnover is extremely high at the El Paso State Supported Living Center at 72 percent and the Corpus Christi Bond Homes at 57 percent.²⁹⁹

With a very high vacancy rate of about 35 percent, vacant positions often go unfilled for over seven months. Some centers are experiencing even longer vacancy durations. At the Brenham, Denton, and San Angelo state supported living centers it takes about 10 months to fill a position.³⁰⁰

Licensed Vocational Nurses at State Hospitals

There are approximately 372 LVNs employed at HHS state hospitals and centers across Texas.³⁰¹

On average, a state hospital LVN is about 47 years of age and has nine years of service.³⁰²

Turnover for these LVNs is high at about 27 percent. Turnover is especially high at Rusk State Hospital (at 43 percent) and the San Antonio State Hospital at 35 percent.³⁰³

State hospitals continue to experience difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified staff which can be attributed to a shortage in the qualified labor pool. Market competition and budget limitations significantly constrain the ability of state hospitals to compete for available talent.

Licensed Vocational Nurses in Public Health Roles

About three percent of System LVNs (29 LVNs) work in the Public Health Regions across Texas.³⁰⁴

They have, on average, 11 years of service, with an average age of about 50 years.³⁰⁵ The overall turnover for these LVNs is high, at about 17 percent, though slightly below the state average rate of 21.5 percent.^{306 307}

Retention is expected to remain an issue as employment of LVNs is projected to grow nine percent from 2020 to 2030, about as fast as the average for all occupations. Budgetary limitations will continue to make it difficult for the System to offer competitive salaries.³⁰⁸

Nurse Practitioners

HHS employs 90 nurse practitioners throughout the System.^{309 310} Under the supervision of a physician, 51 of these nurse practitioners are responsible for providing advanced medical services and clinical care to individuals at state hospitals and those who reside in state supported living centers across Texas.³¹¹

These highly skilled employees have, on average, 10 years of service, with an average age of 49. Approximately 40 percent of these employees have 10 years or more of service.³¹²

System nurse practitioners earn an average annual salary of \$118,202.³¹³ This salary falls slightly below the market rate. The SAO 2020 market index analysis found the average state salary for nurse practitioners was about 10 percent behind the market rate for the Advanced Practice Registered Nurse I and about four percent behind the market rate for the Advanced Practice Registered Nurse II.³¹⁴ Recruitment and retention of nurse practitioners continue to be challenging for state supported living centers, which are also competing with private sector salaries.

The turnover rate for nurse practitioners is well-managed at about 11 percent.³¹⁵ About 11 percent of nurse practitioners are currently eligible to retire, with this number increasing to 22 percent in the next five years.³¹⁶

Nurse Practitioners at State Supported Living Centers

HHS employs 38 nurse practitioners at state supported living centers across Texas.³¹⁷ These highly skilled employees have, on average, eight years of service, with an average age of 47.³¹⁸

The overall turnover rate for these nurse practitioners is high at about 19 percent.³¹⁹

Nurse Practitioners at State Hospitals

HHS employs 51 nurse practitioners at state hospitals across Texas.³²⁰

These employees have, on average, 11 years of service, with an average age of 50.³²¹

About 10 percent of these highly skilled employees are currently eligible to retire. This number will increase to approximately 26 percent retirement eligibility in the next five years.³²²

Expansion projects at certain state hospitals will require additional clinical and non-clinical professional staff in Kerrville, San Antonio and at the North Texas State Hospital - Vernon Campus. These projects are expected to increase the demand for employees in positions that are already at critical shortage levels.

Pharmacists

HHS employs 105 pharmacists, with an average annual salary of \$106,766.³²³ This salary falls significantly below the market rate. The average annual salary for pharmacists nationally is \$125,690 and \$127,320 in Texas.³²⁴ In addition, the SAO 2020 market index analysis found the average state salary for Pharmacist Is 15 percent behind the market rate, and Pharmacist IIs at five percent behind the market rate.³²⁵ This disparity is affecting the System's ability to recruit qualified applicants for open positions. Pharmacist positions often remain unfilled for over three months.³²⁶

Though pharmacist turnover is only moderately high at 14 percent, a significant number of pharmacists are nearing retirement age (or have already retired and returned to work), and over 20 percent will be eligible to retire in the next five

years.^{327 328} Recruitment and retention of these highly skilled employees will continue to be a problem for the System.

Pharmacists at State Supported Living Centers

About 45 percent of System pharmacists (47 employees) work at HHS state supported living centers. The typical pharmacist at these facilities is about 47 years of age and has an average of seven years of service.³²⁹

Turnover for these pharmacists is currently moderately high at about 12 percent, though some Centers are experiencing much higher turnover, including the Lufkin State Supported Living Center at 75 percent and the Abilene State Supported Living Center at 25 percent.³³⁰

HHS may face significant recruitment challenges in the next few years to retain these highly skilled employees who will be eligible for retirement. Though only six percent of these employees are currently eligible to retire, 17 percent them will be eligible in the next five years.³³¹

Pharmacists at State Hospitals

There are 33 System pharmacists working in state hospitals across Texas. These highly skilled employees are essential to the timely filling of prescribed medications for patients in state hospitals. The majority of these employees are in Pharmacist II positions (23 employees or 70 percent).³³²

These pharmacists play a key role in the monitoring of costs and inventory of medications, and in the ongoing monitoring of in-patients' medication histories, needs and potential adverse drug issues. They provide important clinical consultation to psychiatrists and physicians regarding complex medical and psychiatric conditions that may be intractable to traditional medication treatment interventions.

The typical pharmacist at a state hospital is about 48 years of age and has an average of 10 years of service. About 39 percent of these employees have 10 or more years of service.³³³

Turnover for these pharmacists is currently high at about 22 percent, with positions often remaining unfilled for nearly four months before being filled.^{334 335} Some state hospitals are experiencing much higher turnover.

With 22 percent of these pharmacists currently eligible to retire, and 38 percent eligible to retire in the next five years, HHS will need to develop creative recruitment strategies to replace these skilled and highly tenured employees.³³⁶

Pharmacy Technicians

There are 73 pharmacy technicians in HHS, with the majority (99 percent) employed in state hospitals and state supported living centers across the state.³³⁷ These employees assist pharmacists in various technical aspects of preparation of non-routine medication orders for passes, furloughs and discharges. They fill medication carts, maintain required medication stock for after-hours pre-packaging and labeling unit-dose and multiple dose medication orders, perform courier and drug delivery duties, and inspect medication rooms for out-of-date merchandise and appropriateness of stock.

System pharmacy technicians earn an average annual salary of \$29,057, which is below the average national wage of \$37,970, and lower than the Texas average wage of \$38,330.^{338 339} This salary also falls below the market rate. The SAO 2020 market index analysis found the average state salary for Pharmacy Technician Is to be 14 percent behind the market rate and Pharmacy Technician IIs to be seven percent behind the market rate.³⁴⁰

Turnover for these pharmacy technicians is very high at 37 percent.³⁴¹ With a high vacancy rate of 41 percent, pharmacy technician positions often remain unfilled for over five months before being filled.³⁴²

Pharmacy Technicians at State Supported Living Centers

About 48 percent of HHS pharmacy technicians (35 employees) work at state supported living centers across Texas.³⁴³

The typical pharmacy technician at these facilities is about 45 years of age and has an average of nine years of service.³⁴⁴

Turnover for these pharmacy technicians is high at about 26 percent, reflecting the loss of about 10 workers during fiscal year 2021. Turnover rates by location ranged from 0 percent at the San Antonio State Supported Living Center to 100 percent at the Lufkin State Supported Living Center.³⁴⁵

Pharmacy technician positions often remain open for months before being filled. At the Denton State Supported Living Center, positions have remained vacant for an average of six months.³⁴⁶

Pharmacy Technicians at State Hospitals

There are 37 pharmacy technicians working at HHS state hospitals, with about 68 percent employed in Pharmacy Technician II positions.³⁴⁷

These employees have, on average, nine years of service, with an average age of 43.³⁴⁸

Turnover for these pharmacy technicians is very high at about 32 percent. Big Springs State Hospital experienced one of the highest turnover rates at 73 percent.³⁴⁹

The vacancy rate for these positions is high, at about 18 percent, with positions often remaining unfilled for over five months.³⁵⁰

HHS may face significant recruitment challenges in the next few years, as 16 percent of these employees will be eligible for retirement in the next five years.³⁵¹

Dentists at State Supported Living Centers

The demand for dentists nationwide is expected to increase as the overall population ages. Employment of dentists is projected to grow by eight percent through 2030.³⁵²

The System employs a total of 30 dentists across the state.³⁵³ Of the 30 dentists employed by the System, a little over half (53 percent) provide advanced dental care and treatment for residents living at the HHS supported living centers across Texas. The typical dentist at these facilities is about 55 years of age and has an average of 12 years of service.³⁵⁴

Facility dentists earn an average salary of \$143,074, which is below the national average wage of \$167,160, and lower than the Texas average wage of \$150,060.³⁵⁵
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Turnover for these dentists is high at about 27 percent.³⁵⁷ State supported living centers face challenges competing with private sector salaries to fill current vacancies.

It is anticipated that HHS will face significant recruitment challenges in the next few years to replace these highly skilled employees who will be eligible for retirement. About 19 percent of these employees are currently eligible to retire, and this number will increase to about 38 percent in the next five years.³⁵⁸

Dental Assistants

There are 21 Dental Assistant Is and IIs working in the state hospitals and state supported living centers, with IIs make up 86 percent of the total.³⁵⁹ These assistants prepare treatment areas, assist dentists with instrumentation, and instruct staff, guardians, or patients regarding treatment and hygiene.

Dental assistants have, on average, 11 years of service, with an average age of 47 years of age. Over 76 percent have five or more years of service.³⁶⁰

Dental assistants make an average salary of \$30,727, which is below the national wage of \$42,510 and state wage of \$38,370 average salaries.³⁶¹

Turnover for dental assistants is much lower than the state average, at only nine percent.³⁶² ³⁶³ There were no vacancies for dental assistants in fiscal year 2021.³⁶⁴

Nineteen percent of dental assistants are eligible to retire this year, and over 29 percent will be eligible to retire in five years.³⁶⁵

Physicians

There are currently about 256,670 active physicians across the country.³⁶⁶

HHS employs 95 physicians, with 71 percent employed in HHS state supported living centers, state hospitals.³⁶⁷

These highly skilled employees have, on average, nine years of service, with an average age of 57. About 37 percent of these employees have 10 years or more of service.³⁶⁸

System physicians are currently earning an average annual salary of \$194,982.³⁶⁹ This salary is below the average nationally wage of \$231,500 and lower than the Texas average wage of \$237,890.³⁷⁰ The SAO 2020 market index analysis found the average state salary for Physicians to be six to 10 percent behind the market rate.³⁷¹

Turnover for these physicians is currently moderately high at 13 percent, though positions are remaining vacant for an average of more than six months.^{372 373}

About 17 percent of these highly skilled and tenured employees are currently eligible to retire, with this number increasing to 37 percent in the next five years.³⁷⁴

Physicians at State Supported Living Centers

There are 41 physicians working at state supported living centers across Texas.³⁷⁵ Full staffing of these positions is critical to direct-care services.

These physicians have, on average, eight years of service, with an average age of 58.³⁷⁶ Local physicians who have established long term private practices often apply as a staff physician at state supported living centers late in their career to secure retirement and insurance benefits, thus explaining the reason for the high average age.

Turnover for these physicians is moderately high at 14 percent.³⁷⁷

To meet the health needs of individuals residing in state supported living centers, it is critical that HHS recruit and retain qualified physicians. However, due to the short supply and large demand, state supported living centers are experiencing difficulty hiring physicians, with positions remaining unfilled for an average of almost seven months.³⁷⁸

Physicians at State Hospitals

There are currently 26 physicians at HHS who are providing essential medical care in state hospitals.³⁷⁹ They take the lead role in diagnosing, determining a course of treatment, making referrals to outside medical hospitals, prescribing medications and monitoring the patients' progress toward discharge. Physician services in state

hospitals are essential to the ongoing monitoring and management of an increasing number of complex chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes, seizure disorders, hypertension and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). These employees are critical to the System's preparedness and response to medical services provided by the state and to major public health initiatives, such as obesity prevention, diabetes, disease outbreak control and others.

These physicians have, on average, 13 years of service, with an average age of about 57. Local physicians who have established long term private practices often apply as physicians at state hospitals late in their working career to secure retirement and insurance benefits, contributing to the high overall age. More than 40 percent of the full-time physicians are 50 years of age or older.³⁸⁰

Turnover for these physicians is currently low at eight percent, though it takes about nine months to fill a state hospital physician position with someone who has appropriate skills and expertise.^{381 382}

In addition, HHS may face significant challenges in the next few years to replace those employees who are eligible for retirement. About 31 percent of these highly skilled and tenured employees are currently eligible to retire. Within five years, about 46 percent will be eligible to retire.³⁸³ If these employees choose to retire, HHS will lose some of the most experienced medical personnel – those with institutional knowledge and skills that will be difficult to match and even harder to recruit.

Psychiatrists

There are currently about 25,520 psychiatrists nationwide.³⁸⁴ A 4.5 percent decrease is projected in the state government sector by 2030.³⁸⁵

HHS employs 121 psychiatrists throughout the System, with about 84 percent employed in state hospitals across Texas.³⁸⁶

These highly skilled and tenured employees have, on average, 12 years of service, with an average age of 53.³⁸⁷

System psychiatrists currently earn an average annual salary of \$247,565.³⁸⁸ The SAO 2020 market index analysis found the average state salary for Psychiatrist IIs and IVs ranged from 14 to 10 percent behind the market rate.³⁸⁹

Turnover for System psychiatrists is currently at about 11 percent.³⁹⁰ The vacancy rate is high at about 20 percent, with positions remaining vacant for an average of seven months.³⁹¹

About 23 percent of these highly skilled and tenured employees are currently eligible to retire, with this number increasing to 34 percent in the next five years.³⁹²

Psychiatrists at State Supported Living Centers

There are 16 psychiatrists assigned to state supported living centers.³⁹³ Full staffing of these positions is critical to providing psychiatric services needed by residents.

These psychiatrists have, on average, nine years of service, with an average age of 55.³⁹⁴

With a high vacancy rate of 16 percent, vacant positions in state supported living centers go unfilled for about seven months.³⁹⁵

Psychiatrists at State Hospitals

There are currently 102 System psychiatrists providing essential medical and psychiatric care in state hospitals.³⁹⁶ These highly skilled employees take the lead role in diagnosing, determining a course of treatment, prescribing medications and monitoring patient progress. Recruiting and retaining psychiatrists at the state hospitals has been especially difficult for HHS.

These psychiatrists have, on average, 13 years of service, with an average age of 53. About 53 percent of these employees have 10 or more years of service.³⁹⁷

Annual turnover for these psychiatrists is currently well-managed at about 10 percent, although much higher rates were reported for Big Springs State Hospital at 42 percent and 19 percent for North Texas State Hospital.³⁹⁸

With an overall high vacancy rate of about 20 percent, most vacant psychiatrist positions go unfilled for over seven months.³⁹⁹ These challenges are expected to continue, as about 26 percent of these highly skilled and tenured employees are currently eligible to retire and may leave at any time. Within five years, this number will increase to 35 percent.⁴⁰⁰

State hospitals continue to face increasing difficulty in recruiting qualified psychiatrists as salaries are not competitive with the private sector, and there is a general shortage of a qualified labor pool.

Due to the complex medical and mental challenges that individuals residing in state hospitals exhibit, it is critical that HHS is able to effectively recruit and retain qualified psychiatrists.

Psychologists

There are 43 psychologists in HHS, with 72 percent employed in state hospitals across the state.⁴⁰¹

System psychologists earn an average annual salary of \$84,883.⁴⁰² This salary falls below the market rate. The SAO 2020 market index analysis found the average state salary for Psychologist Is to be 11 percent behind the market rate and Psychologist IIIs to be eight percent behind the market rate.⁴⁰³

Turnover for these psychologists is very high at 37 percent. With a high vacancy rate of 41 percent, psychologist positions often remaining unfilled for over five months.^{404 405}

Psychologists at State Hospitals

There are 31 psychologists working at HHS state hospitals, with about 65 percent employed in Psychologist II positions.⁴⁰⁶ Full staffing of these positions is critical to providing needed psychological services to patients.

State hospital psychologists play a key role in the development of treatment programs for both individual patients and groups of patients. Their evaluations are critical to the ongoing management and discharge of patients receiving competency restoration services, an ever-growing patient population in the state hospitals. They also provide testing and evaluation services important to ongoing treatment, such as the administration of IQ, mood, and neurological testing instruments.

These highly skilled and tenured employees have, on average, 11 years of service, with an average age of 51.⁴⁰⁷

Turnover for these psychologists is very high at about 36 percent. Rio Grande State Center experienced the highest turnover at 80 percent.⁴⁰⁸

The vacancy rate for these positions is very high, at about 34 percent, with positions often remaining unfilled for over six months.⁴⁰⁹

HHS may face significant recruitment challenges in the next few years, as 13 percent of these highly skilled and tenured employees are currently eligible for retirement and may leave HHS at any time.⁴¹⁰

Behavioral Health Specialists

There are 130 behavioral health specialists within HHS.⁴¹¹ These specialists are employed at state supported living centers across the state, providing behavior support services, including behavior observations, data analysis, training of behavioral interventions, and the modeling of behavior support. Behavior health specialists participate as a member of individuals' interdisciplinary teams, and are responsible for assisting in the development, implementation, and evaluation of behavior support plans (including comprehensive functional behavioral assessments), staff training, data collection and reporting, and program evaluation.

On average, HHS behavioral health specialists are 40 years of age and have about eight years of service. About 28 percent of these employees have 10 or more years of service.⁴¹²

The turnover rate for these employees is currently high at about 26 percent. Both the Lufkin State Supported Living Center and the Austin State Supported Living Center are experiencing the highest turnover rate, at 44 percent.⁴¹³

HHS experienced difficulty filling vacant positions. With a high vacancy rate of 17 percent, vacant positions often go unfilled for over four months.⁴¹⁴

With 15 percent of these employees eligible to retire in the next five years, HHS will need to develop creative recruitment strategies to replace these skilled employees.⁴¹⁵

Mental Health Specialists

There are 33 mental health specialists within HHS.⁴¹⁶ These specialists are employed at state hospitals across the state, performing psychological testing, assessments, group therapies, counseling, reporting and data collection. They participate in Program Recovery Teams, with duties of coordinating recovery planning.

On average, HHS mental health specialists are 41 years of age and have about eight years of service. About 21 percent of these employees have 10 or more years of service.⁴¹⁷

The turnover rate for HHS mental health specialists is high at about 21 percent, reflecting the loss of about eight specialists during fiscal year 2021. Turnover rates by location ranged from 0 percent at the Austin State Hospital to 45 percent at the North Texas State Hospital.⁴¹⁸

With a very high vacancy rate of 31 percent, vacant positions often go unfilled for more than six months.⁴¹⁹

With 18 percent of these employees eligible to retire in the next five years, HHS will need to develop creative recruitment strategies to replace these skilled employees.⁴²⁰

Epidemiologists

HHS employs 127 epidemiologists who provide services in the areas of infectious disease and injury control, chronic disease control, emergency and disaster preparedness, disease surveillance and other public health areas.⁴²¹ They provide critical functions during disasters and pandemics and other preparedness and response planning.

As of May 2021, there were approximately 8,180 epidemiologist jobs in the U.S., with a projected job growth rate of 10 percent by 2030.⁴²²

On average, System epidemiologists have about six years of service, with an average age of approximately 35 years.⁴²³

Turnover for System epidemiologists is currently high at about 19 percent. This rate is much higher for experienced Epidemiologist IIIs, at about 22 percent.⁴²⁴

Low pay is a contributing factor in the inability to attract qualified epidemiologist applicants. System epidemiologists are currently earning an average annual salary of \$60,312.⁴²⁵ This salary is significantly below the average national wage of \$86,740, and also lower than the Texas average wage of \$82,810.⁴²⁶ In addition, the SAO 2020 market index analysis found that the average state salary for epidemiologists range from 11 percent (for Epidemiologist Is) to 12 percent (for Epidemiologist IIIs) behind the market rate.⁴²⁷

Currently, only about seven percent of these employees are eligible to retire and this rate will increase in the next five years to 16 percent.⁴²⁸

Surveillance functions involving preparedness, response and monitoring will need more qualified public health professionals i.e., Epidemiologists. Emerging threats will require continuous and agile learning for Epidemiologists in areas such as disease prevention and population health. HHS will need to closely monitor this occupation due to the nationally non-competitive salaries and a general shortage of professionals performing this work.

Sanitarians

There are 126 sanitarians employed with HHS, with 73 percent employed within the DSHS Division for Consumer Protection.⁴²⁹ HHS registered sanitarians inspect all food manufacturers, wholesale food distributors, food salvagers in Texas, as well as all retail establishments in the 188 counties not covered by local health jurisdictions and conduct a multitude of environmental inspections such as children's camps, asbestos abatement, hazardous chemicals/products and many others. Sanitarians are instrumental in protecting the citizens of Texas from food-borne illness and many dangerous environmental situations and consumer products, including imported foods, drugs and consumer products. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) have little manpower and therefore depend on the state programs to protect citizens. System sanitarians also respond to a variety of emergencies, including truck wrecks, fires, tornados, floods, and hurricanes. They are the first line of defense against a bioterrorist attack on the food supply.

On average, HHS sanitarians are 44 years of age and have about 11 years of service. About 44 percent of these employees have 10 or more years of service.⁴³⁰

Though the turnover rate for HHS sanitarians is currently low at about nine percent, HHS has experienced difficulty filling vacant positions, with vacant positions often going unfilled for over seven months due to a shortage of qualified applicants available for work.^{431 432}

Historically, HHS has faced special challenges filling vacancies in both rural and urban areas of the state. In addition, the state requirement for sanitarians to be registered and have at least 30 semester hours of science (in addition to 18 hours of continuing education units annually) has made it increasingly difficult to find qualified individuals.

With 14 percent of sanitarians currently eligible to retire, and 21 percent eligible to retire in the next five years, HHS will need to develop creative recruitment strategies to replace these skilled and highly tenured employees.⁴³³

Health Physicists

Within DSHS, there are 51 health physicists, all employed within the Consumer Protection Division.⁴³⁴ These employees plan and conduct complex and highly advanced technical inspections and license application review of radioactive material, nuclear medicine, industrial x-ray units, general medical diagnostic x-ray units, fluoroscopic units, mammographic units, C-Arm units, radiation therapy equipment, laser equipment, and industrial and medical radioactive materials to assure user's compliance with applicable State and Federal regulations. Health physicists are instrumental in emergency planning for the offsite response of nuclear power plants and are the the first line of defense for radiological disaster response.

Health physicists have, on average, 13 years of service, with an average age of 50 years. Over 60 percent of these employees have 10 or more years of service.⁴³⁵

HHS health physicists earn an average annual salary of \$60,435 which is higher than both the average national wage of \$57,560 and the Texas average wage of \$48,200.^{436 437}

Turnover for HHS health physicists is high at 18 percent, though slightly below the state average rate of 21.5 percent.^{438 439} Vacant positions often go unfilled for over four months due to a small number of qualified applicants.⁴⁴⁰

Medical Technicians

Within HHS, there are 20 medical technicians.⁴⁴¹ These workers assist nursing staff with age-appropriate patient care, which includes providing for patient's personal hygiene; making beds and assisting with preparation of unit's and patient's rooms for receiving new patients; taking vital signs; obtaining specimens; cleaning patient care equipment; and transporting patients to and from various departments.

Half of these medical technicians are employed at TCID, with the remaining technicians employed at HHS state hospitals and state supported living centers across Texas.

System medical technicians have, on average, 13 years of service, with an average age of 49 years. About 40 percent of these employees have 10 or more years of service.⁴⁴²

The turnover rate for all System medical technicians is high at 22 percent. This rate is 38 percent for entry-level Medical Technician Is at TCID.⁴⁴³

The vacancy rate for System medical technicians is currently high at about 17 percent, though slightly below the state average rate of 21.5 percent.^{444 445} Vacant positions often remain unfilled for three months.⁴⁴⁶

HHS medical technicians earn an average annual salary of \$28,549.⁴⁴⁷ The SAO 2020 market index analysis found the average state salary for medical technicians ranged from nine to 10 percent behind the market rate.⁴⁴⁸ This disparity may be affecting HHS' ability to recruit qualified applicants for open positions.

Currently, 20 percent of these employees are eligible to retire, with 35 percent of these employees eligible in the next five years.⁴⁴⁹

Public Health and Prevention Specialists

Within HHS, there are 23 public health and prevention specialists employed within the DSHS' Division for Laboratory and Infectious Disease.⁴⁵⁰ These employees provide technical consultation to local health departments, human and animal health care professionals, government officials, community action groups, and others on a number of public health areas, including disease epidemiology and surveillance to treat, prevent and control infectious diseases, sexually-transmitted diseases, and zoonotic diseases; provision of vaccines and life-saving HIV medications; and newborn screening testing.

These public health and prevention specialists have, on average, 10 years of service, with an average age of 44 years. Forty-four percent of these employees have 10 or more years of service.⁴⁵¹

The overall turnover for these public health and prevention specialists is 17 percent, which is high, though slightly below the state average rate of 21.5 percent.^{452 453}

In addition, this division finds it difficult to fill these vacant public health and prevention specialist positions, which often remain open for over a year before being filled.⁴⁵⁴

Retention is expected to remain an issue as these employees approach retirement. Twenty-two percent of these public health and prevention specialists are currently eligible to retire, and about 30 percent will be eligible to retire in the next five years.⁴⁵⁵

Veterinarians

There are 18 veterinarians working for DSHS in the Consumer Protection Division, the Division for Laboratory and Infectious Disease Services, and in Public Health Regions across the state.⁴⁵⁶ System veterinarians perform advanced veterinary work and are responsible for the day-to-day management of the Zoonosis Control Program.

These highly skilled and tenured employees have, on average, 15 years of service, with an average age of 53.⁴⁵⁷

System veterinarians make \$91,544, which is below the average national wage of \$109,920 and state wage of \$113,720.^{458 459} In addition, the SAO 2020 market index analysis found that the average state salary for Veterinarian IIs to be nine percent behind the market rate.⁴⁶⁰

Turnover for veterinarians is high at 17 percent, though slightly below the state average rate of 21.5 percent.^{461 462}

The agency may face significant recruitment challenges in the next few years to replace these highly skilled and tenured employees who are eligible for retirement. Currently, 17 percent of veterinarians are eligible to retire, and over 50 percent of Veterinarian II's will be eligible to retire in the next five years.⁴⁶³

Laboratory Staff

DSHS operates a state laboratory in Austin and two regional laboratories, one in San Antonio and the other in Harlingen. In addition, the Austin State Hospital provides laboratory services for the other HHS state hospitals and state supported living centers.

While laboratory staff is made up of several highly skilled employees, there are four job groups that are essential to laboratory operations: chemists, microbiologists, laboratory technicians, and medical technologists.

Chemists

There are 58 chemists employed in the HHS Division for Laboratory and Infectious Disease Services, all located in Austin.⁴⁶⁴

HHS chemists are about 44 years of age and have an average of about 11 years of service. Most of the employees have 10 years or more of service.⁴⁶⁵

The turnover rate for HHS chemists is well maintained at about nine percent annually, which is significantly below the state average turnover rate of 21.5 percent.^{466 467}

Vacant HHS chemist positions often go unfilled for over seven months due to a shortage of qualified applicants available for work.⁴⁶⁸ These vacancy problems are expected to worsen as employees approach retirement. About 17 percent of these tenured and highly skilled employees are currently eligible to retire, with that number increasing to 26 percent within the next five years.⁴⁶⁹

Low pay is a factor in the inability to attract qualified chemist applicants. System chemists earn an average annual salary of about \$53,722.80.⁴⁷⁰ The SAO 2020 market index analysis found the average state salary for chemists ranged from eight to 10 percent behind the market rate.⁴⁷¹ The average annual national wage is \$89,130, and the Texas wage is \$88,070.⁴⁷²

Microbiologists

There are 148 microbiologists working for HHS, with the majority at the Austin laboratory.^{473 474}

System microbiologists have, on average, 10 years of service, with an average age of about 40 years.⁴⁷⁵

The turnover rate for all System microbiologists is moderately high at about 13 percent, which is below the state average rate of 21.5 percent. The rate is much higher for mid-level Microbiologist IIIs at 21 percent.^{476 477}

System microbiologists earn an average annual salary of \$51,865.⁴⁷⁸ The SAO 2020 market index analysis found the average state salary for Microbiologist IIs was 13 percent behind the market rate and seven percent behind the market rate for Microbiologists IV.⁴⁷⁹ This average annual salary also falls below the national and statewide market rates for this occupation. The average annual national wage is

\$87,820, and the Texas wage is \$62,350.⁴⁸⁰ This disparity in earnings is affecting the System's ability to recruit qualified applicants for open positions. Microbiologist positions often remain unfilled for over seven months.⁴⁸¹

In addition, HHS may face significant recruitment challenges in the next few years to replace these highly skilled and tenured employees who are eligible for retirement. Approximately 10 percent of these employees are currently eligible to retire, this rate will increase in the next five years to about 16 percent.⁴⁸²

Laboratory Technicians

There are 50 laboratory technicians employed at HHS.⁴⁸³

The typical laboratory technician is about 41 years of age and has an average of nine years of service.⁴⁸⁴

The turnover rate for System laboratory technicians is high at about 22 percent.⁴⁸⁵

While the vacancy rate for System laboratory technicians is low, at about six percent, vacant positions often go unfilled for about five months due to a shortage of qualified applicants available for work.⁴⁸⁶

Low pay is a factor in the inability to attract qualified laboratory technician applicants. HHS laboratory technicians earn an average annual salary of about \$34,221.⁴⁸⁷ The average national wage is \$56,910, and the Texas wage is \$53,240.⁴⁸⁸ The SAO 2020 market index analysis found the average state salary for Laboratory Technician Is to IIs ranged from three to 11 percent behind the market rate.⁴⁸⁹

These problems are expected to worsen as employees approach retirement. About 24 percent of these tenured employees will be eligible to retire in the next five years.⁴⁹⁰

Medical Technologists

Within HHS, there are 62 medical technologists.⁴⁹¹ These workers perform complex clinical laboratory work and are critical to providing efficient and quality healthcare.

System medical technologists have, on average, eight years of service, with an average age of 43 years. About 29 percent of these employees have 10 or more years of service.⁴⁹²

The turnover rate for all System medical technologists is currently high at about 20 percent, though slightly below the state average rate of 21.5 percent.^{493 494}

The vacancy rate for System medical technologists is at about 10 percent, with vacant positions often going unfilled for over five months due to a shortage of qualified applicants available for work.⁴⁹⁵

HHS medical technologists earn an average annual salary of \$49,960.⁴⁹⁶ The SAO 2020 market index analysis found the average state salary for medical technologists ranged from nine to 15 percent behind the market rate.⁴⁹⁷ This disparity is affecting HHS' ability to recruit qualified applicants for open positions.

Though only about seven percent of these employees are currently eligible to retire, almost 20 percent of these employees will be eligible in the next five years.⁴⁹⁸

Day Care Inspectors

There are 73 day care inspectors within HHS.⁴⁹⁹ These specialists are responsible for conducting investigations and inspections of unregulated child care facilities and conducting parent and provider trainings related to the benefits of regulation.

The typical day care inspector is about 40 years of age and has an average of seven years of service. Nearly 20 percent of these employees have 10 or more years of service.⁵⁰⁰

These day care inspectors earn an average annual salary of \$41,048.⁵⁰¹ This salary is below the average national wage of \$78,740, and lower than the Texas wage of \$76,510.⁵⁰² In addition, the SAO 2020 market index analysis found the average state salary for Inspector IIIs to be six percent behind the market rate and Inspector Vs to be two percent behind the market rate.⁵⁰³ This disparity may be affecting HHS' ability to recruit qualified applicants for open positions.

Turnover for these inspectors is high at 19 percent, though slightly below the state average rate of 21.5 percent.^{504 505} With a vacancy rate of about 11 percent, vacant positions often go unfilled for about four months due to a shortage of qualified applicants available for work.⁵⁰⁶

Health Facility Social Services Surveyors

The HHS System employs 23 health facility social services surveyors.⁵⁰⁷ These employees are responsible for planning, organizing, and conducting investigations

in Long Term Care facilities to determine compliance with state and federal laws, regulations, and rules.

The typical health facility social services surveyor is about 54 years of age and has an average of 11 years of service. Nearly 44 percent of these employees have 10 years or more of service.⁵⁰⁸

The overall turnover rate for these surveyors is high at about 25 percent annually, which is slightly above the state average turnover rate of 21.5 percent.^{509 510}

With a high vacancy rate of 23 percent, health facility social services surveyor positions often go unfilled for six months due to a shortage of qualified applicants available for work.⁵¹¹ These vacancy concerns are expected to worsen as employees approach retirement. About 35 percent of these employees are currently eligible to retire, and about 39 percent of these tenured employees will be eligible to retire in the next five years.⁵¹²

Qualified Intellectual Disability Professionals

There are 250 qualified intellectual disabilities professionals employed by HHS, with the 99 percent housed in state supported living centers across the state.⁵¹³ These qualified intellectual disabilities professionals are responsible for the development, implementation, monitoring, and revision of highly individualized Personal Support Plans for residents which promote dignity, respect, choice, and the exercising of personal rights for each person who is on their assigned caseload.

The typical qualified intellectual disabilities professional at these facilities is about 41 years of age and has an average of nine years of service. About 36 percent of these professionals have 10 or more years of service.⁵¹⁴

Turnover for the qualified intellectual disabilities professional job family is high at 19 percent, reflecting the loss of 51 professional during fiscal year 2021. Turnover was highest at the Lufkin State Support Living Center at 37 percent and the Corpus Christi State Supported Living Center at 29 percent.⁵¹⁵

Blind Children Specialists

HHS employs 14 Blind Children Specialist Is.⁵¹⁶ These specialists all work within the Rehabilitative and Independence Services section of HDIS. These specialists are responsible for assisting blind children and their families with counseling, information, support, training, and guidance that foster vocational discovery and

development using the agency's employment lifestyle philosophy while promoting the blind or visually impaired child's self-sufficiency.

The typical Blind Children Specialist I is about 40 years of age and has an average of only three years of service. Seventy-nine percent of these specialists have less than two years of service.⁵¹⁷

Turnover for these specialists is high at 19 percent, though slightly below the state average of 21.5 percent.^{518 519} With a high vacancy rate of 22 percent, vacant positions often go unfilled for about four months due to a shortage of qualified applicants available for work.⁵²⁰

Since these employees require a nine-month probationary training period, all resignations are costly to the program. Their knowledge and skill level are critical to the delivery of quality services to children and families.

Rehabilitation Therapy Technicians

There are approximately 571 rehabilitation therapy technicians employed across Texas in the state hospitals and state supported living centers. Technician Vs make up most of this job family at 33 percent. Many of the technicians perform entry-level habilitative and rehabilitative therapy work. Some of their essential job functions include studying clients' behavior to determine the need for therapeutic activities and writing progress notes and assisting clients with instructions for their selected therapeutic activities such as arts, crafts, drama, music, printing, sewing and recreation. Higher level technicians at state hospitals may be responsible for developing a comprehensive, structured, hospital-wide recreational activity program.⁵²¹

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that about 11,200 openings for these types of positions are projected each year until 2030 as many of the vacancies are expected to come from workers who transfer to different occupations or retire.⁵²²

The average rehabilitation therapy technician is 43 years of age with, on average, 11 years of service. Forty-five percent of technicians have 10 or more years of service.⁵²³

The average salary for Rehabilitation Therapy Technician Is is \$22,171.⁵²⁴ Technician IIIs earn \$27,429 per year and Technician Vs make the most at \$32,306 annually.⁵²⁵ Rehabilitation counselors, which is the most similar profession in U.S.

Bureau of Labor Statistics' categories, make an average national wage of \$44,740, and Texas wage of \$43,610.⁵²⁶

The turnover rate for these technicians is 28 percent, higher than the state average rate of 21.5 percent.^{527 528} Rehabilitation Therapy Technician Is have the highest turnover rate at 55 percent.⁵²⁹ The Technician Is had the highest vacancy rate at 47 percent.⁵³⁰ Over 25 percent of rehabilitation therapy technicians are eligible to retire in five years.⁵³¹

Rehabilitation Therapy Technicians at State Hospitals

There are 293 rehabilitations therapy technicians working in state hospitals, with 34 percent classified as Technician IIs. There are 126 who work at the North Texas State Hospital; the Waco Center for Youth has the smallest group with six technicians on staff. The average technician working at the state hospitals is 42 years of age with 11 years of service.⁵³²

The turnover rate for state hospital rehabilitation technicians is high at 21 percent, with Kerrville State Hospital experiencing the highest turnover at 39 percent.⁵³³ Austin State Hospital has the lowest turnover rate at 13 percent.⁵³⁴ The vacancy rate is 16 percent, and it can take almost six months to fill these vacancies.⁵³⁵

Rehabilitation Therapy Technicians at State Supported Living Centers

The state supported living centers employs 571 rehabilitation therapy technicians. The Denton Sate Supported Living Center has the largest group, with 80 technicians, while the Rio Grande State Center has the smallest, with 17 technicians.⁵³⁶

On average, these rehabilitation therapy technicians are about 44 years of age and have 11 years of service.⁵³⁷

The overall turnover rate for these technicians is very high at 31 percent.⁵³⁸ The vacancy rate for these positions is also high at 24 percent.⁵³⁹

Health Assistants

There are 103 health assistants employed in the HHS system, with 98 percent working in state supported living centers. The remaining two percent work at the North Texas State hospital. Some of the health assistants' essential job functions include assisting with performing diagnostic and treatment functions, assisting with research projects and program evaluations, and gathering information and data from direct care and clinical staff. They may also administer or assist with various behavioral and psychiatric assessments as deemed necessary by a specialist or analyst. The average health assistant is about 38 years of age and has an average of 10 years of service.⁵⁴⁰

System health assistants earn an average salary of \$31,592 per year.⁵⁴¹ This is lower than the national average wage of \$35,850 and Texas average wage of \$34,660.⁵⁴²

Turnover for health assistants is 22 percent, slightly higher than the state average rate of 21.5 percent, reflecting a loss of 24 workers during fiscal year 2021. Richmond State Supported Living Center had the highest turnover rate at 61 percent, followed by San Angelo State Supported Living Center at 56 percent.^{543 544}

The vacancy rate for health assistants is well-managed at 11 percent. Denton State Supported Living Center had the highest vacancy rate at 25 percent. It often takes over four months to fill vacant positions in that area.⁵⁴⁵

Human Services Specialists

There are 83 human services specialists employed within the system. Over 42 percent work in HDIS. The specialists have various responsibilities, including determining eligibility and need for Personal Care Services and Community First Choice. They may provide case management consultation, assessment and services for children and families who have health risks, conditions, or special health care needs.⁵⁴⁶

The typical human services specialist is about 48 years of age and has an average of 11 years of service. Over 70 percent of these specialists have five or more years of service.⁵⁴⁷

Human services specialists earn an average salary of \$43,926, with Human Services Specialist VIIIs, who make up 63 percent of this group, earning \$45,848.⁵⁴⁸

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average national wage for health education specialists and community health workers is \$48,140.⁵⁴⁹

The average turnover rate for this group is moderately high at 12 percent, though lower than the state average rate of 21.5 percent, with Human Services Specialist IVs experiencing the highest turnover at 27 percent.^{550 551} With a high vacancy rate of 15 percent, vacant positions have remained unfilled for over six months.⁵⁵²

HHS will need to prepare recruitment strategies for these specialists, as 16 percent of them are currently eligible to retire, and 28 percent will be eligible in the next five years.⁵⁵³

Human Services Technicians

There are 24 human services technicians employed within the Health and Specialty Care System (HSCS), with the 75 percent housed in Corpus Christi Bond Homes.⁵⁵⁴ These technicians are responsible for the daily supervision and care of assigned individuals, and focus on training, implementing, and monitoring assigned Person Support Plan activities. These technicians also support and encourage families during the treatment process, performing work as a family partner, engaging families during the admission process, answering questions about the process, encouraging participation in treatment and helping families make informed decisions about recovery.

The typical HSCS human services technician is about 49 years of age and has an average of 10 years of service. Fifty percent of these technicians have 10 or more years of service.⁵⁵⁵

Turnover for these technicians is very high at 30 percent, with all these losses occurring at Corpus Christi Bond Homes.⁵⁵⁶

This high turnover may be due to the large disparity between private sector and HHS salaries. The average annual salary for HSCS Human Services Technician I through III is \$26,328, which falls below the market rate.⁵⁵⁷ The SAO 2020 market index analysis found that the average state salary for Human Services Technician IIs to be 10 percent behind the market rate.⁵⁵⁸

These problems are expected to worsen as tenured employees approach retirement. About 17 percent of these employees are currently eligible to retire, with that number increasing to 38 percent in the next five years.⁵⁵⁹

Research Specialists

HHS employs 125 research specialists throughout the System.⁵⁶⁰ These research specialists are responsible for providing statistical and programming work critical to supporting the services the agencies provide.

These employees have, on average, 11 years of service, with an average age of 42. Approximately 47 percent of these employees have 10 years or more of service.⁵⁶¹

HHS research specialists earn an average annual salary of \$59,588.⁵⁶² The SAO 2020 market index analysis found the average state salary for research specialists ranged from about eight to 13 percent behind the market rate for Research Specialists I - III.⁵⁶³ Recruitment and retention of research specialists continue to be challenging for HHS, who is also competing with other public and private sector salaries.

The turnover rate for research specialists is about 18 percent, with turnover slightly higher in the DSHS Division for Laboratory and Infectious Disease at 22 percent.⁵⁶⁴ The vacancy rate for research specialists is high at approximately 17 percent, with positions remaining unfilled for over three months.⁵⁶⁵

About 12 percent of research specialists are currently eligible to retire, with this number increasing to 22 percent in the next five years.⁵⁶⁶

Training Specialists

There are 17 Training Specialist IIIs, IVs, and Vs employed within HDIS. They develop, implement, and evaluate training programs, as well as develop methods for assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of training. About 53 percent of these employees are Training Specialist Vs.⁵⁶⁷

Training specialists in this area have, on average, nine years of service, with an average age of 48. Over 64 percent of these employees have five or more years of service.⁵⁶⁸

These training specialists earn an average annual salary of \$57,399, which is, according to the SAO's most recent classification report, up to 14 percent behind the market rate.^{569 570}

Human Resources Specialists

HHS employs 37 human resources specialists who provide support services to over 36,000 HHS employees.⁵⁷¹ Human Resources (HR) is a core business area of HHS and has quickly established itself as an HHS strategic business partner.

HR has evolved and now plays an important role in strategic planning, employee engagement, recruitment and onboarding, legal and regulatory compliance, a change agent, training partner, and data steward.

Although the role of human resources has evolved, the average annual salary paid to HHS human resources staff falls below the average annual salary of many of the same classified positions in other state agencies of similar size and organizational structure. HHS human resources specialists are currently earning an average annual salary of \$55,941.⁵⁷² The SAO 2020 market index analysis found that the average state salary for human resources specialists range from seven percent for Human Resources Specialist IIIs to fifteen percent for Human Resources Specialist IIs behind the market rate.⁵⁷³ In addition, the salary paid to HHS human resources specialists is significantly below the average national wage of \$70,720, and also lower than the Texas average wage of \$69,360.⁵⁷⁴

As of May 2021, there were approximately 674,800 human resources specialist jobs in the U.S., with a projected job growth rate of 10 percent from 2020 to 2030, about as fast as the average for all occupations.⁵⁷⁵

On average, HHS human resources specialists have about eleven years of service, with an average age of approximately 47 years.⁵⁷⁶

Turnover for HHS human resources specialists is currently high at about 25 percent, with System Support Services Division experiencing the highest turnover rate at 23 percent.⁵⁷⁷

Currently, about 11 percent of these employees are eligible to retire. This rate is expected to increase in the next five years to about 22 percent.⁵⁷⁸

Administrative Assistants

HHS employs 1,213 administrative assistants who provide office support services to the various HHS program areas.⁵⁷⁹

The turnover rate for HHS administrative assistants is moderately high at about 16 percent.⁵⁸⁰ Although the overall vacancy rate is high at 14 percent, AES experienced the highest vacancy rate at 31 percent, with positions remaining unfilled for over five months.^{581 582}

The average annual salary paid to HHS administrative assistants falls below the average annual salary of many of the same classified positions in other state agencies of similar size and organizational structure. HHS administrative assistants are currently earning an average annual salary of \$33,944.⁵⁸³ The SAO 2020 market index analysis found that the average state salary for administrative assistants range from six percent for Administrative Assistant IVs to 12 percent for Administrative Assistant Is behind the market rate.⁵⁸⁴ In addition, the salary paid to HHS administrative assistants is significantly below the average national wage of \$42,250, and also lower than the Texas average wage of \$38,110.⁵⁸⁵

On average, HHS administrative assistants have about 13 years of service, with an average age of approximately 48 years.⁵⁸⁶

About 17 percent of these employees are currently eligible to retire. This rate is expected to double to about 34 percent within the next five years.⁵⁸⁷

Managers

Managers perform a variety of high-level task throughout the system. There are 1,204 managers employed by the system, with a moderately high turnover rate of 13 percent.^{588 589}

Though turnover is consistent for managers throughout the system, there are certain areas that vary, both higher and lower.

In DSHS's Community Health Improvement Division, the turnover rate was high at 23 percent (nine separations), higher than the state average rate of 21.5 percent. Other areas of note include the DSHS Laboratory and Infectious Disease Services Division at 19 percent (seven separations); Information Technology (IT) at 16 percent (nine separations), and System Support Services at only seven percent (two separations).^{590 591}

The vacancy rate for System managers is 10 percent, which is also consistent among most areas, but with a few notable exceptions. In the Regulatory Division, the vacancy rate is much lower, at five percent, with only seven losses. On the other hand, IT had a higher than average vacancy rate at 19 percent.⁵⁹²

IT Business Analysts

Within the IT Division, there are 20 Business Analyst IIs and IIIs.⁵⁹³ This group of business analysts provide critical support to the agency and some of their responsibilities include the gathering, assessment and validation of business requirements, while providing assistance to development team members and support to application users.

These business analysts have, on average, six years of service, with an average age of 46 years. About 50 percent of these employees have five or more years of service.⁵⁹⁴

IT Business Analyst IIs and IIIs earn an average annual salary of \$79,327.⁵⁹⁵ This is below the national average wage of \$102,210 and Texas average wage of \$105,130.⁵⁹⁶ This disparity may be affecting HHS' ability to recruit qualified applicants for open positions.

The turnover rate for these business analysts is moderately high at 16 percent.⁵⁹⁷

The vacancy rate for these positions is 13 percent, with positions remaining unfilled for over three months.⁵⁹⁸

IT System Analysts

The IT Division employs 465 system analysts.⁵⁹⁹ This group of system analysts provide technical support, analyze business requirements and procedures, and collaborate with vendors, business providers, and application teams. These positions provide critical support to the IT division and HHS system.

This group of analysts are, on average, 50 years of age and have an average of 12 years of service. Over 45 percent of these employees have 10 or more years of service.⁶⁰⁰

Turnover for these analysts is currently well-managed at 10 percent, though with a vacancy rate of 16 percent, it often takes up to four months to fill vacant positions.^{601 602}

These system analysts earn an average annual salary of \$77,960.⁶⁰³ This is below the national average wage of \$102,210 and Texas average wage of \$105,130.⁶⁰⁴

HHS will need to focus on creative recruiting and retention strategies, since 30 percent of employees will be eligible to retire in the next five years.⁶⁰⁵

System Support Specialists

Within the IT Division, there are 57 System Support Specialist IVs.⁶⁰⁶ These workers perform various functions, such as software installations, troubleshooting/diagnosing complex hardware, software, and network performance problems, in addition to interpreting technical documents for users. This group of employees provide essential technical support to the agency.

These System Support Specialist IVs have, on average, 17 years of service, with an average age of 46 years. Over 63 percent of these employees have 10 or more years of service.⁶⁰⁷

The turnover rate for System Support Specialist IVs is below the state average at 12 percent.^{608 609} The vacancy rate is currently low at eight percent, though vacant positions often remain unfilled for four months.⁶¹⁰

IT System Support Specialist IVs earn an average annual salary of \$47,328.⁶¹¹ The SAO 2020 market index analysis found the average state salary for System Support Specialist IVs to be \$58,800.⁶¹² This disparity may be affecting HHS' ability to recruit qualified applicants for open positions in a timely manner.

Currently, 16 percent of these employees are eligible to retire, and over 42 percent will be eligible within the next five years.⁶¹³

Cybersecurity Analysts

There are 10 cybersecurity analysts employed within the IT Division.⁶¹⁴ These employees provide direction and guidance in strategic and tactical cybersecurity operations. They protect cybersecurity assets, deliver cybersecurity incident detection, and monitor cybersecurity alerts using advanced information systems. Cybersecurity analysts play a critical role in protecting the agency's data.

Cybersecurity analysts have, on average, eight years of service, with an average age of 48 years of age. Over 30 percent of these employees have 10 or more years of service.⁶¹⁵

HHS cybersecurity analysts earn an average annual salary of \$110,978 which is below the average national wage of \$113,270, but higher than the Texas average wage of \$101,800.^{616 617}

The turnover for cybersecurity analysts is high at 19 percent, though slightly below the state average of 21.5 percent.^{618 619}

HHS will need to develop creative retention strategies to keep these highly skilled employees in a competitive field.

Database Administrators

There are 29 database administrators working in the IT Division.⁶²⁰ Some of their job responsibilities include designing, developing, maintaining, and improving database solutions for the agency. They also are responsible for performing advanced logical database administration and development. These workers provide critical support to various areas of the agency.

These highly skilled employees have, on average, nine years of service, with an average age of 52.⁶²¹

HHS database administrators earn an average annual salary of \$93,487, which is below the national average wage of \$96,550 and Texas average wage of \$98,910.^{622 623}

Turnover for database administrators is high at 17 percent, though slightly below the state average rate of 21.5 percent.^{624 625} In addition, the vacancy rate for these positions is also high at 22 percent, with position often going unfilled for almost three months.⁶²⁶

Due to the high vacancy rate, the agency will need to make special efforts to recruit adept workers in Texas' growingly competitive IT field.

Information Technology Security Analysts

There are 20 IT security analysts within the IT Division.⁶²⁷ These are key positions that strategically plan and execute HHS's Information Security Risk roadmap. Many of them are subject matter experts on IT Security Risk and Assurance related topics and lead internal security and compliance assessments for assurance purposes. Information technology security analysts help facilitate and promote security awareness within the agency.

HHS IT security analysts earn an average annual salary of \$96,034, which is well below the national average wage of \$113,270 and Texas average wage of \$101,800.^{628 629}

The typical IT security analyst is 48 years of age and has an average of 11 years of service. Nearly half of these of these employees have 10 or more years of service.⁶³⁰

Turnover for these analysts is high at 17 percent, though slightly below the state average rate of 21.5 percent.^{631 632} With a vacancy rate of about 17 percent, vacant positions often go unfilled for over two months due to a shortage of qualified applicants available for work.⁶³³

Programmers

There are 51 Programmer IVs, Vs, and VIs employed within the IT Division.⁶³⁴ These skilled programmers perform functions such as computer programming, analysis, and development of complex business processes and system solutions. These employees code, test, and debug programs that are in development, as well as provide technical direction and guidance to technical staff in related programming activities.

These programmers are, on average, 47 years of age and have an average of five years of service. Over 27 percent of these employees have less than two years of service.⁶³⁵

The turnover rate for this group is well below the state average at six percent, although the vacancy rate is high at 27 percent.^{636 637 638} On average, it can take up to four months to fill these vacancies.⁶³⁹

9. Development Strategies to Meet Workforce Needs

Recruitment Strategies

General Strategies

- Continue to advertise job postings in relevant schools, colleges and professional listings and organizations.
- Continue to advertise job postings on agency approved social media outlets, using LinkedIn and occupation-specific association job boards.
- Mention staffing needs when networking with professionals in the field.
- Hold in-person and virtual job fairs in various regions across Texas and provide conditional job offers on-site.
- Utilize hiring “sprints” to expedite the recruitment process by filling multiple positions at a time.
- Create college campus flyers for distribution to local colleges and universities.
- Notify existing staff of job postings to encourage recruitment of qualified candidates.
- Host internships to recruit from local colleges and universities.
- Continue to promote a positive workforce culture, which leads to word-of-mouth advertising from current employees to their friends and acquaintances.
- Establish “promote from within” as a first principle when looking for, and filling, internal leadership roles. For example, post senior positions internally for a period of time before posting externally.
- Continue to inform applicants of state benefits, including job stability, medical/dental/vision insurance options for the employee and family members, career advancement, and defined benefit retirement plans.
- Continue to inform applicants of job incentives, including flexible schedules, compressed workweek schedule options, telework options, and other site-specific benefits (e.g., cafeteria, gym, etc.).

- Advertise the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program to potential applicants and that HHS agencies are qualifying employers and provide information regarding PSLF program requirements to new employees.
- Explore expanding opportunities for flexible work schedules, telework, mobile work, and alternative offices.
- Place work-from-home policies in job postings and job descriptions.
- Use functional titles in job postings instead of more general position titles.
- Broaden experience requirements to attract a larger pool of applicants.
- Explore increasing entry level salaries to be competitive in a market where qualified applicants are in short supply.
- Post and hire at mid-range or higher salary for key positions in order to compete with other public and private employers.
- Continue to submit salary exception requests for approval of salary offers greater than the HHS allowable amount when appropriate.
- Review and update position classifications as necessary.
- Identify positions that could benefit from the Texas Workforce Commission's Veteran's Direct Hire Process.

State Supported Living Centers and State Hospitals

- Continue to provide sign-on bonuses for select critical shortage positions, including direct support professionals, psychiatric nursing assistants, and registered nurses.
- Pilot flexible schedules, part-time positions within facilities, particularly for direct support professionals and psychiatric nursing assistants.
- Procure a Practice Match recruiting tool subscription to help recruit physicians, psychologists, dentists, psychiatrists, registered nurses, and other specialties who have a provider identification number.
- Coordinate with the Office of Communications to explore:
 - Developing individual facility landing pages to help aid in recruiting but also communication with current staff.

- ▶ Purchasing targeted Facebook Ads for recruiting select critical shortage and hard to fill positions.
- ▶ Obtaining social media access for all recruitment specialists.
- ▶ Creating social media pages for facilities.
- Renew CareerArc recruiting tool to increase visibility for open positions.
- Continue to use salary increase plans for all facility staff.
- Develop compensation plans by discipline to further support a unified strategy to compensate employees.
- Explore the potential use of locality pay based on geographical location.
- Pilot different shift patterns to provide better work-life balance.
- Evaluate expanded use of the tuition reimbursement program.
- Explore hiring a recruitment specialist at each facility, primarily focusing on talent acquisition.
- Implement the first-step application to assist with making more immediate contact with potential candidates and assist them with completing the state of Texas application.
- Enhance internship program options.
- Develop or procure leadership training to promote an improved workplace culture.
- Through the Health and Specialty Care System (HSCS) Recruitment and Retention Workgroup, develop HSCS workforce initiatives, strategic planning for workforce-related challenges, and establish priorities for workforce-related policy development or changes, statutory initiatives, or implementation.
- Use the Recruitment Specialist Workgroup to share recruitment best practices, discuss facility recruitment needs, learn from facility successes in recruiting efforts, and strategize to promote and evolve recruitment efforts.
- Implement a Compensation Workgroup to explore the possibility of designing a competitive, automated, and equitable compensation plan for new and tenured staff.

Access and Eligibility Operations

- Updated initial screening criteria for eligibility advisors to increase pool of candidates by reducing customer service requirement to one year and removing screening disqualifications for travel and work hours.
- Explore hiring part-time employees who have previous Texas Works (TW) and Medicaid for the Elderly and People with Disabilities (MEPD) experience (i.e., retirees), and work with The Office of Veteran Affairs Services Coordinators.
- Inform applicants of the opportunity for career advancement and promotion of internal hiring preferences to program specialist and management positions.
- Speak at local colleges and universities in rehabilitation, social work and medical schools.
- Interview applicants at local high-traffic eligibility offices.

Intellectual & Developmental Disability & Behavioral Health Services

- Explore the development of a career ladder for program specialists and contract specialists.
- Establish partnerships with universities such as the University of Texas-Steve Hicks School of Social Work to provide interns during fall and spring semesters.
- Distribute notifications of job openings through state and national outlets such as the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and state professional organizations such as the Texas Counseling Association.

Health, Developmental, and Independence Services

- Continue to use a hybrid virtual and in-person work model to attract applicants for contract specialist, financial analyst, and training specialist positions.

- Explore reclassifying lower-level positions for contract specialists, reimbursement officers, financial analysts, training specialists.
- Explore the development of career ladders for social workers, blind children specialists and human services specialists.
- Continue to encourage internal staff to apply for higher level positions within the program.
- Continue to increase visibility to skilled workers by speaking at the Executive Leadership Academy (ELA), as well as state and industry conferences.

Policy and Regulatory

- Explore increasing salaries for architects, engineers, and investigators.
- Explore establishing market rates for Regulatory positions.

Medicaid and CHIP Services

- Evaluate which positions are appropriate to shift to regional full-time equivalents to overcome salary versus cost-of-living barriers.
- Continue implementation of the MCS Professional Internship Program.
- Develop and improve onboarding tools for staff, including interview questions aligned to MCS mission and values, a sample onboarding calendar and checklist, a one-page document on hiring processes, and other guides to help managers with virtual onboarding process.

Chief Operating Officer

- Offer full-time telecommuting for more Information Technology (IT) positions.
- Continue to utilize the IT Workforce Support Team for assistance with job postings, and recruitment and hiring activities.
- Continue to use the HHSC Procurement and Contracting Services (PCS) promotion-from-within model to recruit and retain staff.
- Continue to advertise vacant Human Resources (HR) positions on association web sites, such as Texas State Human Resources Association, as well as on external job boards.

- Use data analytics to assist agency leadership in making data-driven informed decisions.
- Expand the use of agency-wide market salary data analysis to help support the funding of increased salaries in certain positions that are hard-to-fill and retain.
- Upgrade the telecom system to enable Operations and Support Services operators to telework.

Office of Inspector General

- Explore the development of a career ladder for Audit division staff.
- Present the Officer of Inspector General (OIG) mission and work at universities to help proactively recruit students.

Consumer Protection Division

- Increase the number of interns performing programmatic work to help introduce public health work as a career choice to college students.
- Explore strategies to improve the starting salary structures to align more closely with those provided by state, federal and private entities.

Center for Public Health Policy and Practice

- Continue advertising job postings in public health schools and professional listings, as well as non-public health schools (to target students with more intense policy and administration expertise).
- Host virtual outreach events to faculty and students to highlight and market careers in public health.

Community Health Improvement

- Send job postings for certain positions (epidemiologists, registered and public health nurses, research specialists, and manager positions) to different state and national organizations, such as Public Health departments in universities, the U.S. Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA), the Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP), and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG).

- Explore bringing up the starting salary for registered and public health nurses to 75 percent of the maximum of the salary range.
- Explore bringing up the starting salary for public health and prevention specialists to the mid-range or greater of the salary range.

Laboratory and Infectious Disease Services

- Re-evaluate Pharmacy Unit positions to identify those under market rate for equity adjustments and ensure that pay is comparable to other salaries within the same geographic area.
- Explore increasing the starting salary for research specialist positions to be competitive with those with statistical or programming experience in the private sector.
- Explore the development of a career ladder for veterinarian and social worker positions.
- Upgrade specific entry level positions to be commensurate with other programs in the agency.

Regional and Local Health Operations

- Explore the development of a career ladder for social worker positions.
- Explore aggressive marketing and direct recruiting through the implementation of an agency-level staffing services contract.

DSHS Program Operations

- Accept more diversity in education for financial analyst positions (e.g., public health or social services degree in addition to accounting and finance), while not requiring a specified amount of college level accounting coursework.
- Increase entry-level salaries for contract specialist and financial analyst positions to be competitive in a market where qualified applicants are in short supply.
- Continue to use the COVID Grants Hiring Team, made up of three Hiring Specialists who support DSHS managers with all aspects of the hiring activities.

- Establish a team to support DSHS by developing recruitment strategies and programs, conduct studies, and increase/strengthen partnership with HHSC and other state agencies on best practices.
- Explore setting up a contract with a staffing agency to provide open-position marketing and candidate sourcing for all vacant COVID grant-funded positions.

Retention Strategies

General Strategies

- Focus more resources on succession planning activities.
- Explore opportunities to mentor professional staff.
- Ensure workloads are evenly and effectively distributed.
- Establish “promote from within” principles to retain top talent by showing them a clear and attainable career path within the organization.
- Award merits when funding is available.
- Explore expanding opportunities for flexible work schedules, telework, mobile work, and alternative offices.
- Pay certification/licensure fees and training opportunities when funds are available.
- Encourage staff to apply for internal promotion opportunities.
- Continue to provide advanced and ongoing training opportunities.
- Continue to provide staff with leadership training opportunities, including the HHS Executive Leadership Academy (ELA) and the Aspiring Leaders Academy (ALA), and other state and national leadership academies.
- Continue to cross-train staff.
- Establish focus groups to hear retention ideas directly from staff.
- Survey staff about their needs and design engagement opportunities based on their feedback.
- Continue to engage staff through activities such as all staff meetings, newsletters and management meetings.

- Develop a management forum and other tools to assist individuals with the technical skills transition and be successful in positions that require both technical and management skills.
- Identify ways for staff to feel more connected through team building activities.
- Explore engaging staff in the full spectrum of cross-program activities and collaborations.
- Continue to provide regular performance and career discussions to start proactively identifying, evaluating, and fostering emerging leaders.
- Continue to foster a culture that is meaningful and rewarding by increasing team member job satisfaction by providing ownership of building and planning programs out using their own creativity, and providing meaningful guidance and feedback, and one-on-one assistance as needed.
- Continue to recognize and reward employees who make significant contributions.
- Hold staff appreciation events on a regular basis.
- Continue to use administrative leave to reward staff when expectations are exceeded.
- Create shared resources for teams to improve their performance and experience (e.g., memo writing guides, etc.).
- Continue to use technology such as Microsoft Teams in lieu of travel for onsite meetings/monitoring, where possible.
- Consider requesting additional funding to increase salary levels for high turnover and hard-to-fill positions and large salary discrepancies compared to the Texas labor market and other Texas state agencies.

State Supported Living Centers and State Hospitals

- Pilot flexible schedules, part-time positions within facilities, particularly for direct support professionals and psychiatric nursing assistants.
- Hire a retention specialist at each facility.
- Enhance internship program options.
- Continue to use salary increase plans for HSCS staff.

- Develop compensation plans by discipline to further support a unified strategy to compensate employees.
- Explore the potential use of locality pay based on geographical location.
- Pilot different shift patterns to provide better work-life balance.
- Evaluate expanded use of the tuition reimbursement program.
- Explore a program in which childcare assistance is provided to staff.
- Explore ride-share options for facility staff.
- Expand texting service to facility level support staff.
- Host quarterly Town Hall meetings.
- Establish routine meetings with division and facility leadership for routine information sharing.
- Provide training targeted for non-standard shift staff, and to complement existing work schedules.
- Develop or procure leadership training to promote an improved workplace culture.
- Develop on-the-job training programs to support ongoing coaching and mentoring of new hires.
- Use the HSCS Recruitment and Retention Workgroup to develop workforce initiatives, strategic planning for workforce-related challenges, and establish priorities for workforce-related policy development or changes, statutory initiatives, or implementation.
- Use the Retention Specialist Workgroup to share retention best practices and current data, discuss facility needs and collaborations with other local teams and learn from facility successes in retention efforts.
- Use the Workplace Violence Workgroup to develop strategies that can be implemented to reduce, address, and respond to workplace violence.
- Use the Reducing Staff Injuries Workgroup to develop strategies to reduce staff injuries in restraint or other related incidents.
- Use the Compensation Workgroup to explore the possibility of designing a competitive, automated, and equitable compensation plan for new and tenured staff.

- Use the Health and Wellness Workgroup to develop and expand strategies to foster overall employee wellness and ensure employee's needs (emotional, physical, mental) are being met through trauma informed care approaches.

Access and Eligibility Operations

- Explore providing equity adjustments for Eligibility Advisor Is and claims examiners.
- Explore expanded use of retention bonuses for claims examiners.

Intellectual & Developmental Disability & Behavioral Health Services

- Explore the development of career ladders for program specialists and contract specialists.
- Explore feasibility of increased funding for positions and opportunities for advancement and/or regular increases in salary.
- Utilize job audits to keep experienced staff.
- Examine pay equity and formulate strategies to address disparities in wages amongst peers in like roles across the division.
- Explore covering the costs for professional licensing and renewals.
- Support a pro-team environment by using a "buddy system."
- Encourage one-on-one meetings with all staff, not just direct reports.
- Implement findings identified from IDD-BH responses to the Survey of Employee Engagement.
- Leverage interns as a retention as well as recruitment strategy.

Health, Developmental, and Independence Services

- Explore the development of career ladders for social workers, blind children specialists and human services specialists.
- Explore feasibility of increased funding for positions and opportunities for advancement and/or regular increases in salary.

- Create an internal structure for awarding merits.
- Explore salary equity assessments.
- Explore increasing the percent of new staff participating in HDIS New Employee Orientation.
- Explore increasing the percent of directors, managers, and supervisors completing Crucial Conversations training.
- Continue ongoing recognition for extraordinary work, award administrative leave, encourage team building activities, developed “A’ Team” recognition for staff that exhibit positive teamwork and support to peers.
- Continue to use the ECI Office Employee Engagement Committee at the state office level, which plans activities to help promote connection and community, frequently shares available training and professional development opportunities, and encourages participation in those opportunities for ECI staff.

Policy and Regulatory

- Work with the HHSC budget team to identify funds to increase salaries for existing staff.
- Develop “stay surveys” to determine what employee needs are before staff begin looking for new positions.

Medicaid and CHIP Services

- Continue hosting bi-monthly MCS Immersion sessions, which provide new staff with information about the work MCS does, its structure and culture. This allows new staff to immediately learn more about the division and encourages staff to make connections with other new hires.
- Continue to host quarterly all-staff meetings to gather (virtually) as a group to share good news and current agency priorities from MCS leadership.
- Continue to communicate consistently with staff through the weekly MCS newsletter, which includes updates on projects, staff members, engagement opportunities, and helpful resources.
- Launch an academy for staff to participate in a cohort-model program to improve on both hard and soft skills necessary to succeed in the division.

Chief Operating Officer

- Explore the development of career ladders for HR staff.
- Expand the use of agency-wide market salary data analysis to help support the funding of increased salaries in certain positions that are hard-to-fill and retain.
- Continue to review budget reports on a regular basis to determine if funds are available to award regular or one-time merit awards, administrative leave, development opportunities, and tuition reimbursement to staff meeting eligibility requirements in an effort to enhance retention.
- Continue to review HR positions and reclassify to a more appropriate classification and salary group.
- Use data analytics to assist agency leadership in making data-driven informed decisions.
- Offer full-time telecommuting for IT positions where possible.
- Explore expanding telework opportunities for HR positions that are not traditionally eligible to telework due to location or nature of the job.
- Utilize LinkedIn Learning licenses that have been purchased to create learning paths for positions that are at risk of turnover or high vacancies. This will give employees a roadmap to learn the skills necessary to advance to the next level in their classification.
- Expand training and development opportunities for HR team members and create leads within teams to assist with training new team members and providing support to managers with large teams.
- Reassign administrative work away from key IT staff.
- Create an internship program within IT for paid and unpaid interns to assist in generating a pipeline of candidates and market HHSC IT job opportunities.

Office of Inspector General

- Explore the development of a career ladder for Audit division staff.

Consumer Protection Division

- As part of the regular audit process for health physicist and sanitarian positions, assess the federal and private sector compensation packages for comparison, and make recommendations on pay scales as appropriate.
- Establish a salary entry point for health physicist and sanitarian positions that encourages qualified applicants to apply, along with a protocol to increase compensation that is tied to ongoing training and subject matter expertise.
- Continue to internally promote the DSHS Shine Awards, an agency-wide awards and recognition program.
- Ensure, to the extent possible, that the workplace reflects continuous upgrades and improvements, especially in the areas of IT and communication technologies.

Laboratory and Infectious Disease Services

- Explore the development of a career ladder for veterinarian and social worker positions.
- Continue to assess salaries as compared with market levels for chemists, microbiologists, laboratory technicians, public health prevention specialists, and managers.
- Explore increasing the pay for epidemiologists to coincide with the increase in the Austin metropolitan area cost of living, and to remain competitive with national salaries.
- Explore offering shift differential pay for chemists, medical technologists, and molecular biologists who work weekends.
- Review supervisory-level veterinarian jobs for appropriateness and for reclassification to the Veterinarian IV and/or director series.
- Increase funding for positions and opportunities for advancement (position) and/or regular increases in salary.
- Explore allowing managers to telework or manage from regional offices.

Regional and Local Health Operations

- Explore the development of a career ladder for social worker positions.

- Work with Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) programs to develop and promote CNA (Medical Technicians) tracks with rotations at the Texas Center for Infectious Disease (TCID).
- Explore equity adjustments for staff serving in the Specialized Health and Social Services (SHSS) Program.

DSHS Program Operations

- Establish a team that will support DSHS by developing retention strategies and programs, conducting studies, and increasing/strengthening partnerships with HHSC and other state agencies on best practices.
- Work internally to cross-train team members and document processes for each area of oversight.
- Decrease travel for staff with increased remote work.

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- ²³ Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.
- ²⁴ HHS System workforce data is from CAPPs-HCM Database as of 8/31/2021.
- ²⁵ CLF data for underutilization percentages comes from the "Equal Employment Opportunity and Minority Hiring Practices Report Fiscal Years 2017-2018" published by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). Note: CLF data from TWC did not include Para-Professionals as a job category and did not indicate if members of that category were counted as part of any other categories - as a result, it is not included in the above table.
- ²⁶ "N/A" for Protective Service is due to that workforce being integrated into HHSC as part of Transformation. "N/A" for Skilled Craft indicates the number of employees in that job category was too small (less than 30) to test any differences for statistical significance.
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- ³⁷ HHS turnover calculations do not consider interagency transfers due to legislatively mandated transfers as separations. All other interagency transfers were counted as separations since these separations significantly impact HHS agencies.
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- 4/11/22. Note: The State Auditor's Office does not consider transfers between state agencies as a loss to the state and therefore does not include this turnover in their calculations.
- ³⁹ HHSAS Database for FY 2019-2021. Note: Legislative transfers are not considered separations.
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- ⁴¹ Ibid.
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- ⁴³ Death accounted for .83% of separations.
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- ⁴⁶ Death accounted for .83% of separations (88 separations).
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- ⁵⁹ Registered therapists include registered audio, speech, occupational, licensed, certified, and physical therapists at state supported living centers and state hospitals.
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