

# Health Workforce Issues and Challenges

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Presented by:

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# Center for Health Workforce Studies

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- An academic research center established in 1996 and based at the School of Public Health at State University of NY at Albany
- **Mission:** To provide timely, accurate information and conduct policy-relevant research about the health workforce
- **Goal:** To provide data and information that can assist in decision making on health workforce programs and policies
- **Funding** from a variety of sources including federal and state government, foundations, providers and their associations, labor unions

# Today's Presentation

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- Pre-pandemic workforce shortages
- Initial state responses to pandemic
- Pandemic impacts on the health workforce
- Contributing factors: recruitment and retention issues
- Pandemic impacts on the educational pipeline in nursing
- Recruitment and retention strategies
- State roles

# Workforce Shortages in NY

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- New York has an abundant supply of health workers, but they are not well distributed
- There are well documented and chronic shortages of primary care, oral health, and behavioral health providers
  - Areas of greatest need (inner city and rural) are designated as Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs)
- Provider incentive programs have successfully supported health care professionals working in these communities

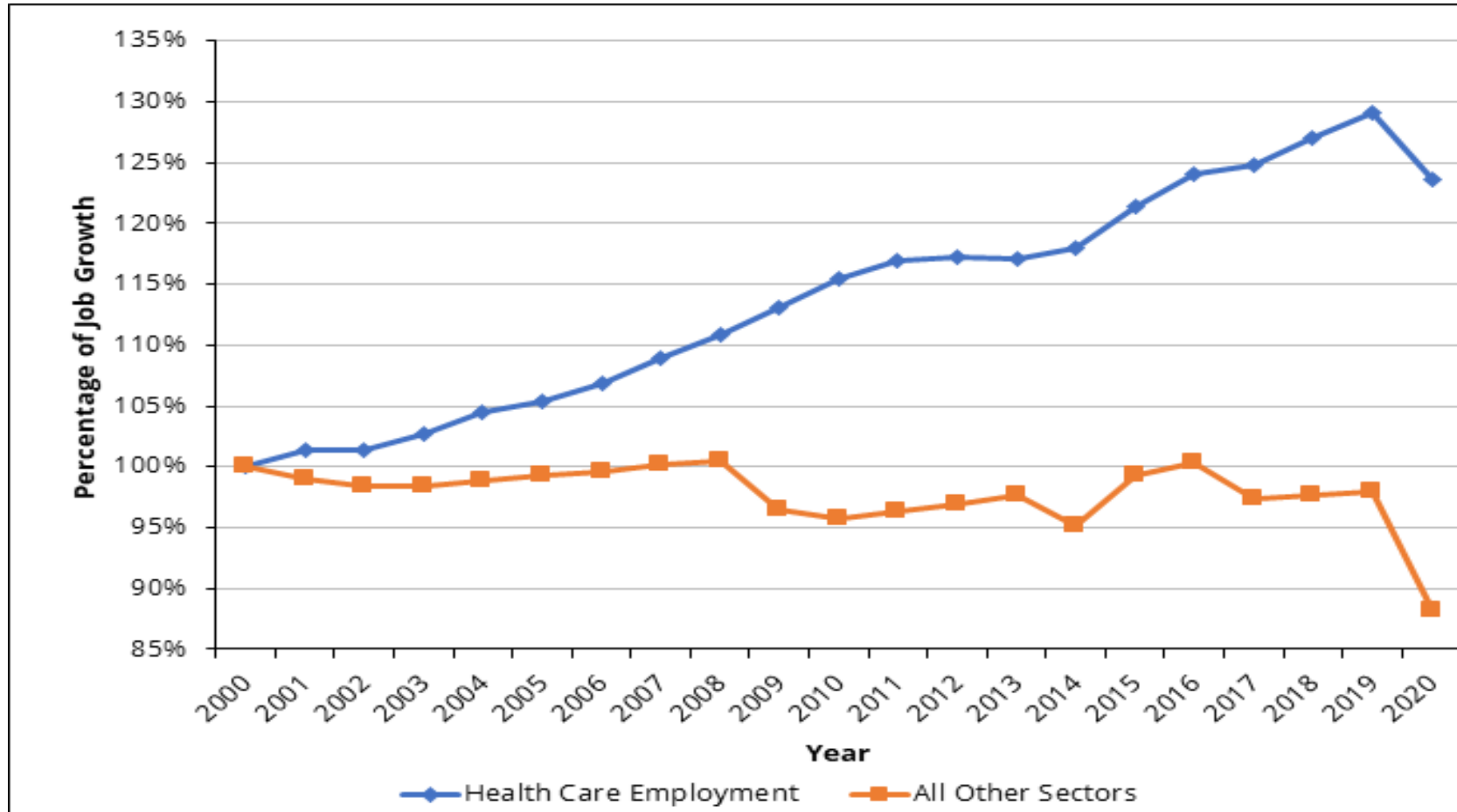
# Initial State Responses to Pandemic Concerns

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- In 2020, the pandemic resulted in a surge in demand for health services as those infected with COVID-19 sought care
- States recognized the need to build health workforce surge capacity in response to the pandemic
- Many states issued executive orders that
  - Increased regulatory flexibility on scope of practice
  - Facilitated licensing of health care professionals
  - Enabled use of telehealth services

# Pandemic Declines in Health Care Employment: Upstate New York

Employment Growth in Regions Outside of New York City, 2000-2020 (Standardized to 2000)



Source: New York State Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.

# The Pandemic Exacerbated Workforce Shortages

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- The pandemic dramatically increased the number of occupations in short supply as well as the magnitude of the shortages
- Labor shortages were also widespread in many other employment sectors
- Strong competition for workers
- Many major employers (Target, Amazon, Panera) with many vacancies offered sign-on bonuses and flexible hours to new recruits

# What Professions Are Hardest to Recruit and Retain?

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- Registered nurses
- Licensed practical nurses
- Social workers
- Behavioral health providers
- Lab techs, radiology techs, surgical techs, EMTs
- Respiratory therapists
- Aides (CNAs, home health aides)



# What Contributes to Recruitment Difficulties?

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- Demand for workers outweighs supply
- Greater competition for available workers, many opportunities with higher salaries
- Generational shift
  - Younger applicants – less mission driven
  - More concerned with work-life-balance, flexibility, hybrid work models
  - Less concerned with long-term job benefits

# What Contributes to Retention Difficulties?

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- Stressful working conditions, particularly in patient care positions, led to burn out
- Retirements
- Fear of exposure to COVID-19 and potential impacts on family
- Better paying jobs, in and outside of health care
- Family obligations (childcare/elder care)
- Transportation issues

# Educational Pipeline Impacts

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- Increased use of simulation during the pandemic to meet clinical nursing requirements
- New registered nurse (RN) grads much less prepared for transition to practice
  - Less direct patient contact during training
- National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) for RNs pass rates declined
- Program capacity limited by lack of clinical training sites and faculty shortages

# Projected Future Demand for Health Workers in the US 2019-2029

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- Home health aides
- RNs
- Nursing assistants
- LPNs

Stiegler K, Martiniano R, Forte G. *Health Care Employment Projections, 2019–2029: An Analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Projections by Setting and by Occupation*. Rensselaer, NY: Center for Health Workforce Studies, School of Public Health, SUNY Albany; August 2021. [Health Care Employment Projections, 2019–2029: An Analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Projections by Setting and by Occupation \(chwsny.org\)](https://www.chwsny.org/health-care-employment-projections-2019-2029)

# Recruitment Strategies

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- Scholarships and loan repayment, some with obligated service
- Sign-on bonuses
- Educational partnerships to support career advancement
  - Standardized career ladders (CNA-LPN-RN)
  - Internships/externships for health professions students
- Support for transition to practice
  - Nurse residencies
- Local recruitment
- Health careers programs for local middle and secondary school students

# Retention Strategies

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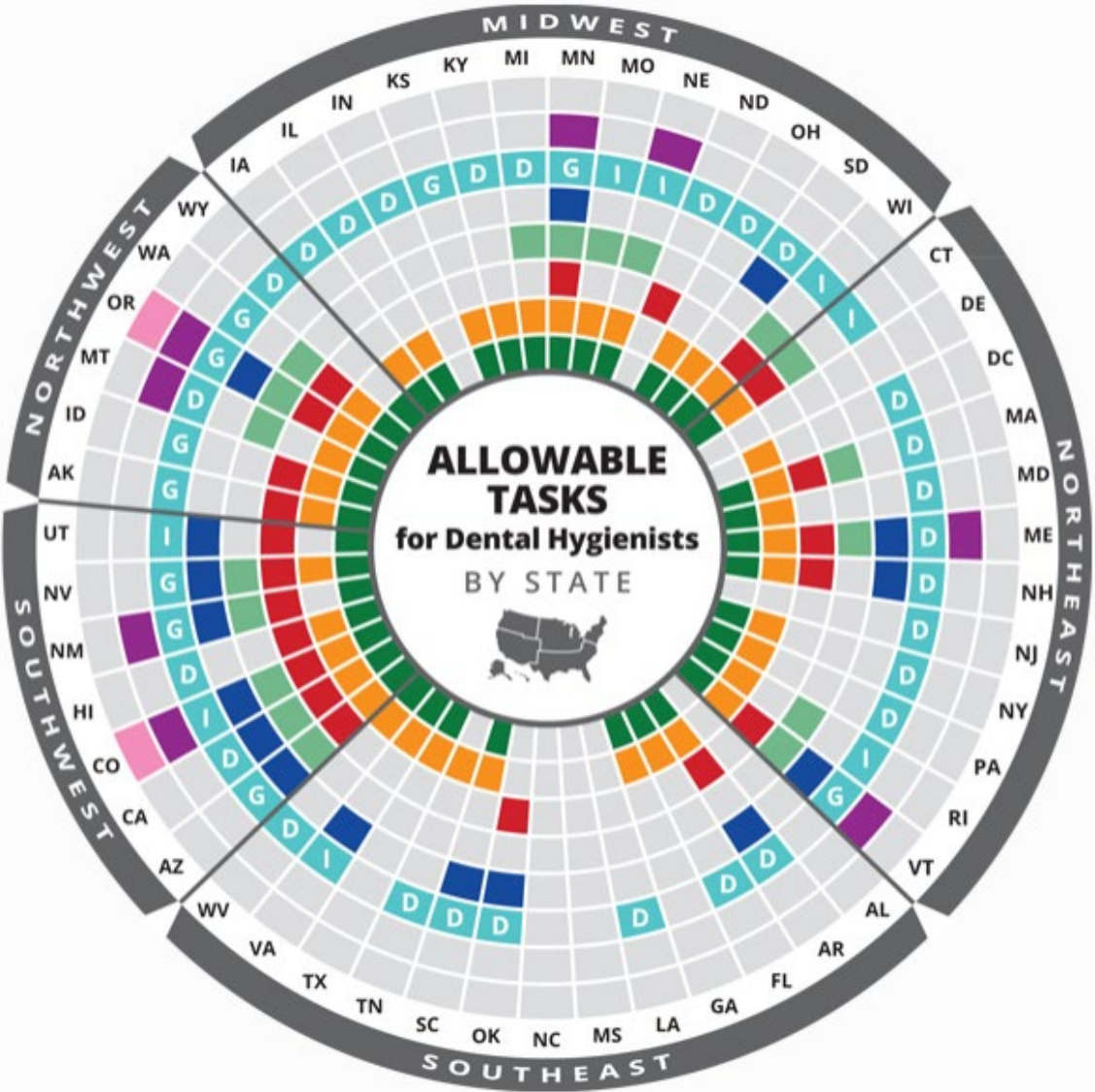
- Retention bonuses
- Worker resilience programs
- Flexible hours
- Hybrid model, where feasible
- More support staff (LPNs, Aides) for RNs
- Use of agency staff to reduce demand for RN overtime

# State Strategies

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- State sponsored scholarship and loan repayment
- Facilitate licensing of health professionals
- Make better use of existing workforce
  - Support for broad scopes of practice
- Consider new workforce strategies
  - Community paramedics
  - Dental therapists
- Collect, analyze, and disseminate health workforce data and information to inform decision-making

# Variation in Dental Hygiene Scope of Practice by State



The purpose of this graphic is to help planners, policymakers, and others understand differences in legal scope of practice across states, particularly in public health settings.

Research has shown that a broader scope of practice for dental hygienists is positively and significantly associated with improved oral health outcomes in a state's population.<sup>1,2</sup>

- Dental Hygiene Diagnosis
- Prescriptive Authority
- Local Anesthesia
  - D Direct
  - I Indirect
  - G General
- Supervision of Dental Assistants
- Direct Medicaid Reimbursement
- Dental Hygiene Treatment Planning
- Provision of Sealants
- Direct Access to Prophylaxis
- Not Allowed / No Law

Source: Oral Health Workforce Research Center (OHWRC)  
 Last updated January 2019  
[oralhealthworkforce.org](http://oralhealthworkforce.org)





# Questions?

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