

Aging Population, Growing Demand: How Upskilling in Healthcare Can Solve Wisconsin's Worker Shortage

Wisconsin already has a healthcare worker shortage. As the state's population ages, this problem will only get worse. St. Norbert College's online career training programs can help.

Read below



Summary

Wisconsin's Healthcare Workforce: A Looming Crisis

Hospitals across Wisconsin are grappling with a significant workforce shortage. Doctors and nurses often garner the media's attention, but skilled workers, such as medical technicians and medical record specialists, are equally crucial to the efficient operation of healthcare systems.

Wisconsin, already the 17th oldest state in America, is facing a growing demand for healthcare services due to its rapidly aging population. By 2030, 1 in 4 Wisconsin residents will be 65 or older, exacerbating the need for qualified healthcare professionals.

In this guide, we'll explore the sobering reality of the healthcare crisis in Wisconsin, and show **how employee upskilling can combat this issue** by **reducing turnover rates**, **increasing access**, and **filling talent pipelines**.



Problems & Industry Trends

Wisconsin Needs Qualified Healthcare Workers

Healthcare shortages have been a reality since the COVID-19 pandemic. **Across America, workforce challenges have been the number one concern among hospital CEOs for four years.** ¹

Wisconsin has one of the country's hospital vacancy rates. Since 2022, vacancy rates have held steady at 9.9%—higher than the national average. In rural counties, vacancy rates at smaller hospitals and clinics regularly exceed 40%. ²

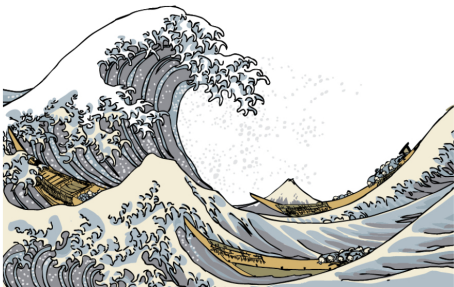


The Silver Tsunami

Wisconsin is the 17th oldest state in America, with approximately 18% of the population aged 65 or over. In 2030, when every member of the Baby Boomer generation will be 65 or older, Wisconsin's age demographic will shift as high as 25%. ³

This is 3.2% higher than Maine, the current oldest state in the U.S.

A recent report by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel dubbed this looming shift “The Silver Tsunami.”



Rank	State	Total Resident Population (thousands)	Population Ages 65+ (thousands)	Population Ages 65+ (percent of state population)
14	Rhode Island	1,057	192	18.1
14	Connecticut	3,557	646	18.1
14	Michigan	9,967	1,812	18.1
17	Wisconsin	5,833	1,048	18.0
18	Iowa	3,164	566	17.9
18	Ohio	11,693	2,098	17.9
20	Alabama	4,922	874	17.7
20	Wyoming	582	104	17.7
22	Arkansas	3,031	536	17.7

Chart Source

HERE'S WHY THIS MATTERS: 40% of healthcare services are rendered to patients aged 65 or older. Wisconsin's healthcare industry is facing a critical workforce shortage that threatens its ability to provide high-quality patient care to a growing number of patients.

Technical Knowledge, Customer Care

Doctors and nurses garner most of the media attention for healthcare worker shortages, but other critical roles are desperately needed. Hospitals across the state are struggling to fill essential roles, particularly ones that require a combination of technical knowledge and customer service and care.

From 2017 to 2021, the top five in-demand healthcare jobs in Wisconsin were:

1. Registered Nurses

2. Medical Records Specialists

3. Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses

4. Physicians

5. Clinical Laboratory Technologists

Failure to address this workforce shortage could have severe consequences, including:

1. **Reduced access to care:** Patients may experience longer wait times, delayed treatments, or even limited access to essential services.
2. **Compromised quality of care:** Staff shortages can lead to increased workload, burnout, and decreased patient satisfaction.
3. **Financial strain:** Hospitals may face increased operational costs due to reliance on temporary staff or outsourcing.
4. **Closure of healthcare facilities:** In extreme cases, hospitals may be forced to close due to the inability to maintain adequate staffing levels.

It is imperative for healthcare organizations in Wisconsin to adopt effective strategies to address the workforce shortage and ensure the long-term sustainability of the state's healthcare system.

Upskilling

Upskilling: A Solution that Scales with Demand

Healthcare shortages are not just an issue in Wisconsin. Hospitals and healthcare systems across the nation have been scrambling for the last several years to deploy new initiatives to recruit, train, and retain new talent.

70% of organizations have intensified their upskilling efforts since the pandemic, emphasizing the importance of workforce development. ⁴

The Benefits of Upskilling

What Is Upskilling?

Upskilling in healthcare refers to the process of enhancing the knowledge and skills of your existing healthcare professionals to meet the evolving demands of the industry. This includes offering advanced training and education to:

- ▶ Acquire new competencies.
- ▶ Align with technological advancements.
- ▶ Meet patient needs.
- ▶ Adjust to current healthcare trends.

Upskilling can encompass a wide range of areas, including clinical practice, technology integration, patient care management, and leadership development.

FOR INDIVIDUALS

1. Career Advancement
2. Increased Job Satisfaction
3. Enhanced Career Growth
4. Enhanced Career Mobility

FOR ORGANIZATIONS

1. Improved Productivity
2. Reduced Turnover
3. Cost Savings
4. Stronger Company Culture

1. Upskilling Can Combat Exceedingly High Turnover Rates

Replacing an employee costs anywhere from half to double their annual salary. ⁵ In Wisconsin, medical technicians and support staff currently experience some of the highest turnover rates of any healthcare profession.

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Medical Support Roles: Turnover Exceeding 20%

- Lab Technicians
- Pharmacy Technicians
- Certified Medical Assistants
- Surgical Technologists

Source: 2024 Wisconsin Hospital Association Workforce Report

Fortunately, upskilling has been shown to significantly improve employee retention rates. By investing in their professional development, you demonstrate a commitment to your employees, leading to greater job satisfaction and loyalty.

Key Benefits of Upskilling to Address Turnover Rates

Enhanced Job
Satisfaction

Increased
Career
Opportunities

Reduced
Burnout

Cost Savings

2. Upskilling Increases Access to Quality Education

In a 2024 report, the Wisconsin Hospital Association cited a need to increase access to career training as a method for attracting new entrants to the healthcare field.⁶

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Promoting interest in health professions, making sure classroom seats are available, expanding career pathway options and supporting student success are all actions that policymakers, health care leaders and their partners in education can take together to grow the health care workforce faster.

Upskilling increases access to quality education in healthcare, especially in the areas where workers are needed most. Earning a U.S. nationally recognized credential is a flexible, fast, and convenient way for individuals to acquire new skills and knowledge, regardless of their location or circumstances. This increased accessibility can have a profound impact in rural areas, where access to traditional education may otherwise be limited.

Key Benefits of Online Upskilling for Increasing Access

Flexibility and
Convenience

Increased
Engagement

Accessibility

Affordability

3. Upskilling Future-Proofs Your Workforce by Filling Your Talent Pipeline

Did you know **95% of employees** are more likely to stay with a company that invests in their continuous learning and development? ⁷ Upskilling existing employees is a strategic approach to future-proofing your healthcare workforce. By investing in the development of your current talent, you can create a sustainable pipeline of skilled professionals and enhance your organization's ability to adapt to changing industry demands.

Key Benefits of Upskilling Employees for Retention

Enhanced
Career Mobility

Filled Talent
Pipeline

Future
Leadership
Development

Improved
Patient Care



St. Norbert College's new division of career training certificate programs can help solve the healthcare worker shortage in Wisconsin. By providing online, fully customizable workforce development solutions, we can upskill your hospital or clinic's employees, with minimal management on your end.



Our Mission

St. Norbert College, a Catholic liberal arts college embracing the Norbertine ideal of *communio*, provides an educational environment that fosters intellectual, spiritual and personal development.

Our programs are designed to meet the specific needs of healthcare organizations, ensuring that they have the skilled workforce necessary to navigate the challenges of an aging population.



100% Online



2-6 Months



Nationally Accredited



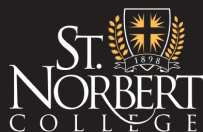
1:1 Student Mentoring

HEALTHCARE CERTIFICATES

- Medical Billing and Coding with Medical Administration
- Physician's Office Assistant with EHRM
- Medical Assistant
- Personal Trainer and Nutrition Coach
- Mental Health Support Professional
- Pharmacy Technician
- Physical Therapy Aide and Administration Specialist

PROJECT MANAGEMENT/LEADERSHIP CERTIFICATES

- Project Management
- 60 PDU Project Management Course Bundle
- CompTIA Project+ Certificate
- Developing New Managers
- Supervising Others
- Teamwork And Team Building



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