



Provincial Auditor's 2022 Report–Volume 2: SHA Needs Targeted Plans to Fill and Retain Hard-to-Recruit Healthcare Positions

Staffing gap analysis does not identify which facilities or locations in the province will experience the largest shortages to help tailor recruitment and retention strategies

REGINA—December 6, 2022: In her 2022 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 12, Provincial Auditor Tara Clemett audited the Saskatchewan Health Authority's processes to fill hard-to-recruit healthcare positions. She made seven recommendations.

Prolonged staff shortages not only disrupt healthcare services, but also affect patient care. The Authority has broad recruitment and retention strategies for all healthcare positions, along with targeted plans for some of its hard-to-recruit positions. We found its targeted plans lack consideration of certain areas, such as varied sources of qualified staff, social supports needed in northern communities, and root causes of hard-to-recruit positions to help tailor its strategies to fill these positions.

The Authority anticipates over 2,000 staff shortages in hard-to-recruit positions across the province in the next five years. The Authority needs to determine ways to increase its supply of hard-to-recruit staff in order to fill significant staffing shortages, and ensure it fosters working conditions that encourage staff to stay, especially in roles where it needs them most.

Overall, we did find the Authority's *Health Human Resource Plan 2022–2026* relatively comprehensive, but it will need continual assessment to update significant resourcing gaps as healthcare services change, and to adjust strategies to address the gaps as the Authority continues to project a shortfall.

The Authority needs to:

- Continually implement and monitor the success of targeted plans to fill hard-to-recruit positions with significant gaps
- Determine the optimal supply of new graduates needed to help address staffing shortfalls
- Assess whether post-secondary training seats purchased out of province and student clinical placements are successful recruitment strategies
- Establish a First Nations and Métis recruitment and retention plan
- Centrally analyze results from staff exit interviews to influence retention strategies

For example, even with the recruitment of potential nurses from the Philippines, the Authority still expects to need over 200 registered nurses in 2022–23. While the expansion of nursing seats in the province will help to address the Authority's long-term staffing needs, it will not have an immediate impact on staffing shortfalls.

"To provide Saskatchewan residents with access to health services they need, the Authority must anticipate not only the number and type of healthcare professionals required to provide those services, but also where those positions are needed most," said Tara Clemett. "Knowing where in the province these gaps exist helps in implementing appropriate strategies to recruit and especially to retain staff as it can be difficult to staff facilities in rural and remote areas, particularly in the north."

Without sufficient, quality measures to determine which recruitment and retention activities are working, the Authority will face challenges to effectively address vacancies in hard-to-recruit positions in a timely way. Successful recruitment and retention of key staff is a significant factor toward providing quality healthcare services, and meeting staffing demand.

The full Provincial Auditor's 2022 Report – Volume 2 available online at auditor.sk.ca.

- 31 hard-to-recruit positions at March 2022. Eleven hard-to-recruit positions with chronic vacancies greater than 5% (vacant for more than 90 days)
- 2,200 staff shortages expected in hard-to-recruit positions over next five years, including 840 continuing care assistants, 520 registered nurses, and 180 medical laboratory technicians
- 66% of Authority staff survey respondents felt burned out from their work



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