Arizona Health Workforce Profile: Direct Care Workers (DCWs)

The purpose of this brief is to understand the distribution of the direct care workforce in Arizona.

BACKGROUND

- The U.S. Department of Labor defines direct care workers (DCWs) as “workers who provide home care services, such as certified nursing assistants, home health aides, personal care aides, caregivers, and companions.”
- Most DCWs are employed in “private homes, group homes, residential care facilities, assisted living facilities, continuing care retirement communities, nursing homes, and hospitals.”
- In the U.S. there are an estimated 3.4 million home health and personal care aides, 1.4 million nursing assistants, and 688,000 licensed practical or vocational nurses.

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NEED

- The U.S. has a growing aging population and there is an increased focus on supporting adults as they age.
- The direct care workforce also provides critical support to people with disabilities or chronic illness or those who need short-term home-based care to recover from acute conditions like stroke.
- 18.5% of Arizona’s population is older than age 65, 12th highest amongst all states.

OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK

- The occupation outlook for home health and personal care aides between 2020 and 2030 is estimated at 33% growth, compared to 8% average growth rate for all occupations.
- The occupation outlook for nursing assistants and orderlies between 2020 and 2030 is estimated at 8% growth, the same as the average for all occupations.
LICENSING IN ARIZONA

- Home health and personal care aides do not need to be licensed. Using population data from the U.S. Census DCWs working for Medicaid/Medicare certified agencies “must pass a competency test.” Arizona uses the federal requirement of 75 hours of training.⁷
- Nursing Assistants and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) must meet licensure requirements via the Arizona State Board of Nursing.⁸
- The Arizona Medicaid program (AHCCCS) has testing, training and certification requirements for DCWs who provide Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) to AHCCCS members enrolled in the Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS).⁹ AHCCCS received full approval from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to expand HCBS and training.⁹

FINDINGS

- Compared to the U.S. DCW per 10,000 population, Arizona is similar in the ratio of home health and personal care aides but has a lower ratio of nursing assistants and licensed practical nurses (Arizona does not have a license for vocational nurses).
- Using population data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey 2019 we find that the distribution of three types of DCWs mirrors the population distribution in Arizona, with the majority of the direct care workforce located in large counties, Maricopa and Pima.
- The ratio per 10,000 for each workforce group shows that the DCW ratio per 10,000 population is lower in medium and small counties compared to large counties.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>Arizona</th>
<th>Large Counties</th>
<th>Medium Counties</th>
<th>Small Counties</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population (%)</td>
<td>324,697,795</td>
<td>7,052,789</td>
<td>5,365,455 (76.1)</td>
<td>1,336,501 (18.9)</td>
<td>350,833 (5.0)</td>
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**Home Health and Personal Care Aides**

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number (%)</td>
<td>3,470,700</td>
<td>72,920</td>
<td>65,185 (89.4)</td>
<td>4,218 (5.8)</td>
<td>1,198 (1.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio per 10,000</td>
<td>106.9</td>
<td>103.4</td>
<td>121.5</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>51.1</td>
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**Nursing Assistants**

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<th>Small Counties</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number (%)</td>
<td>1,440,700</td>
<td>16,676</td>
<td>12,958 (77.7)</td>
<td>1,894 (11.4)</td>
<td>450 (2.7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ratio per 10,000</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>19.2</td>
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**Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurses**

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<th>Small Counties</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number (%)</td>
<td>688,100</td>
<td>7,480</td>
<td>6,342 (84.8)</td>
<td>591 (7.9)</td>
<td>186 (2.5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ratio per 10,000</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>7.9</td>
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METHODS & DATA

This brief uses data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Handbook and the state and county employment projections from the Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity. The county categorization is based on the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) urban-rural classification for counties. We make two changes and that is to group Pima County with large counties, and Pinal County with the medium size counties. Large indicates the large central metro and medium metro counties (NHSC = 1, 3); Medium indicates the small metro counties (NHSC=4) and small indicates the large and small rural counties (NHSC 5,6).

Large counties (Metropolitan): Maricopa, Pima

Medium counties (Small metropolitan): Cochise, Coconino, Mohave, Pinal, Yavapai, Yuma

Small Counties (Large and small rural): Apache, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, Navajo, Santa Cruz

NOTE: Occupation data for small counties only available for Apache, Gila and Navajo counties. No data is available at the county level for Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, and Santa Cruz. Population ratios are adjusted accordingly. The total population of just the small counties included in analysis is 234,561, 3.3% of state population.

References


