



# **State Hospital and State Supported Living Center Workforce Report**

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**As Required by  
the 2024-25 General Appropriations  
Act, House Bill 1, 88th Legislature,  
Regular Session, 2023 (Article II,  
Health and Human Services  
Commission, Rider 95)**

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# 1. Introduction

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) presents a biennial report to the legislature about the state of the workforce at state supported living centers (SSLCs) and state hospitals, which are overseen by the Health and Specialty Care System (HSCS) division within HHSC. This report evaluates HSCS compensation levels; turnover, vacancy rates, and patterns; use of contractors and position type; and recruiting efforts; and provides recommendations to reduce turnover and vacancy rates as required by the 2024-25 General Appropriations Act (GAA), House Bill (H.B.) 1, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023 (Article II, HHSC, Rider 95).

HSCS strives to hire and retain qualified staff to serve people who need inpatient mental health care and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities or related conditions. HSCS employs more than 18,500 people to support 23 facilities across Texas and is sustaining record low turnover rates, approximately 10 percent improvement from pre-pandemic turnover. During fiscal year 2023, HSCS emphasized recruitment and retention of staff across all facilities with the goal of returning to the level of filled positions seen pre-pandemic.

## 2. Recruitment Efforts

HSCS effectively recruits staff on local and statewide levels by offering competitive salaries, training, advertising, engaging applicants, and through additional administrative efforts.

### Competitive Salaries

Various efforts were taken to offer more competitive salaries. New market rates were set effective February 1, 2023, for state hospitals and March 1, 2023, for SSLCs. The new market rates were significantly increased to address the low fill rates and high turnover rates at the facilities.

Facilities may request deputy executive commissioner or chief program and services officer approval for salary offers that exceed the allowable seven percent above minimum (or greater than market salary) standard when necessary to recruit qualified applicants for difficult-to-fill positions.

### Training

Some facilities serve as clinical training sites for healthcare professionals. There has been some success recruiting students from clinical training programs after graduation.

Facility Recruitment and Retention staff trainings are offered monthly and feature topics such as maximizing recruitment strategies, recognizing and rewarding staff, utilization of available employment data, and how to effectively utilize recruitment subscriptions. HSCS Recruitment and Retention maintains a SharePoint page with resources for facility staff which includes links to helpful sites and articles on recruitment and retention topics.

### Advertising

HSCS facilities advertise employment opportunities using a variety of media methods including print advertising in local and regional newspapers, billboards, banners, local radio and television commercials, and web-based advertising.

In addition, HSCS has targeted nine communities to advertise jobs via social media, web display, and search engine results. These advertisements are directed toward

critical shortage positions such as nurses, direct service professionals (DSPs), psychiatric nursing assistants (PNAs), psychologists, psychiatrists, food service staff, and maintenance staff. HSCS is seeing higher than industry average click through rates (CTRs), including 9.35 percent CTR on search, 0.47 percent CTR on display, and 2 percent CTR on social media.

HSCS advertises professional positions in national professional journals and on association websites to find applicants for hard-to-fill positions via PracticeMatch. HSCS procured a subscription to the PracticeMatch platform which allows access to the National Provider Index, the American Medical Association, the PinPoint database of pre-interviewed physicians, and other licensing board databases. The PracticeMatch subscription includes the job board, marketing tools such as email campaigns, text campaigns, call lists, and a built-in customizable applicant tracking system.

HSCS renewed its subscription to CareerArc, a social recruiting platform that automates the job distribution process. When jobs are posted in the Health and Human Service (HHS) Job Center and to the Texas Workforce Commission's website, CareerArc automatically disseminates the job openings to multiple social media platforms. It is used to streamline the distribution and marketing of job openings, engage with candidates, nurture interest, build relationships, increase the volume of our applicants, and facilitate employee referrals.

HSCS also procured subscriptions to Indeed and ZipRecruiter. These recruitment companies can find candidates, sponsor jobs, and review market data by location. Indeed's One Click apply feature speeds up the process of connecting interested candidates with HSCS recruitment teams.

## **Applicant Engagement**

HSCS developed a short, simple form that captures applicants' basic contact information and connects them with recruiters at the facilities, prior to completing the state application. It helps develop a recruitment pipeline by automatically notifying recruitment points of contact at the facilities when someone completes the form and initiates a timely response to potential applicants. A QR code is displayed on informational flyers, brochures, and other marketing materials.

Facility recruiters attend job fairs and partner with local high schools and colleges to promote career opportunities. Facilities also work to be a viable competitor for graduating medical professionals as they seek job opportunities by building

relationships with local colleges and universities. Some facilities host on-campus job fairs and “express hire” events for positions such as nurses, DSPs, PNAs, and for support service positions such as maintenance workers, custodians, and food service personnel. These events are heavily advertised, and conditional job offers are made on site.

HSCS developed an employee referral program which rewards eligible employees, whose referred candidate is successfully hired, with up to eight hours administrative leave per new hire but not to exceed 32 hours of administrative leave per fiscal year.

## **Additional Administrative Efforts**

Facility hiring specialists collaborate with the Texas Workforce Commission for job referrals and application assistance for DSPs and PNAs. HSCS Staff Support Services meet with HHSC visa attorneys weekly to assist facilities in the recruitment and hiring of out-of-country candidates for hard-to-fill positions.

HSCS continually conducts strategic reviews of the workforce. Hard-to-fill positions are updated and audited, with some being re-classified to increase the number of qualified applicants. These re-classifications have already helped fill several chronically vacant positions.

## 3. Retention Efforts

HSCS has reached record low turnover rates by increasing compensation, improving workplace culture, providing career and leadership development, and educating staff on additional available benefits.

### Compensation

HSCS implemented significant salary increases for all eligible employees including upgraded positions effective February 1, 2023, for state hospitals excluding Rio Grande State Center (RGSC), and effective March 1, 2023, for SSLCs and RGSC. Upgraded positions included taking critical shortage positions such as DSPs, PNAs, licensed vocational nurses (LVNs), registered nurses (RNs), vehicle drivers, laundry staff etc. from classification I's to IIs and as applicable, IIs to IIIs and IIIs to IVs.

The Supplemental Appropriations Act, Senate Bill (S.B.) 30, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023 (Section 9.01), funded a five percent or \$250 per month increase, whichever was more, for all state employees effective July 1, 2023. The 2024-25 GAA, H.B. 1, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023 (Article IX, Section 17.16), also funded a five percent or \$3,000 annual increase, whichever was more, for all state employees, which will be effective September 1, 2024. HSCS is advertising the increases to current staff as a retention tool.

### Workplace Culture

HSCS continues to build a positive workplace culture through the Together We Shine initiative, encouraging communication and transparency, staff recognition, and focusing on staff wellness.

### Together We Shine

HSCS rolled out a targeted initiative called Together We Shine to create a division-wide culture of quality that focuses on continuous process improvement and promotes the generation and submission of ideas to improve processes from all staff. The initiative includes forty-four training modules for staff at all levels that include concepts, strategies, and practical techniques. Content around positive communication, psychological safety, and practicing "bold transparency" are infused throughout the modules. These include:

- Approaching listening with an intention to understand, not to judge,
- Encouraging a culture of open and transparent communication throughout the facility, where both front-line employees and upper management feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, ideas, and concerns,
- Rewarding finding problems and fixing them, and
- Effectively managing conflict within teams.

Together We Shine also includes a podcast hosted by the deputy executive commissioner who interviews staff from the field, as well as discusses local initiatives that emphasize a culture of quality at each individual facility.

## **Communication and Transparency**

HSCS expanded the use of text messaging services to facilitate direct communication with the associate commissioners for SSLCs and state hospitals, center directors, and hospital superintendents. Staff can sign up for and receive facility-specific messages with timely responses from leadership, receive major announcements and requests for input directly from executive leadership, and allows staff to communicate input, issues, or concerns to executive leadership which are delegated to the most appropriate person for resolution.

Stay interviews are conducted by the Staff Development and Retention Specialists, outside of a person's chain of command, to identify the top reasons staff choose to remain employed with HSCS. Also collected is qualitative information on what motivates and empowers staff, positive and negative aspects of their job, resources needed to make their job easier, and to get ideas for more meaningful types of staff recognition. Stay surveys are distributed electronically to facility staff at specific intervals of employment to supplement the qualitative data from interviews with quantitative data to identify themes and patterns. Information from the stay interviews and surveys are routinely shared with leadership.

The deputy executive commissioner of HSCS also hosts semiannual town halls to provide information and updates as well as answer staff questions. Recordings and frequently asked questions from the townhalls are posted on the agency's intranet "HSCS SharePoint page" for staff to access.

Lastly, HSCS established the Creative Ideas Portal where staff can contribute suggestions related to processes, recognition, programs, or anything that could improve the system in any way. When an idea is implemented or inspires



implementation of a similar program, the submission and staff who submitted the idea is recognized on the portal. The portal includes a feature allowing staff to give “Kudos” to one another, typically a one to two sentence shout out, and the staff receiving the “Kudos” is emailed upon posting to inform them of their recognition.

## **Staff Recognition**

HSCS has also created a multi-media communications strategy to reach all employees, including those without computer access at work, to recognize good work and inform employees of relevant news or information. This includes morale boosting publications such as monthly newsletters; videos showing a day in the life of key positions or reporting on SSLC progress toward exiting the Department of Justice Settlement Agreement; photos of exceptional staff, successful events, and heartwarming stories shared with all facility staff via email on a weekly basis; and an in-house magazine titled Hope & Healing featuring stories, information and photos that highlight inspiring employees and initiatives from the 23 facilities.

HSCS conducts a state-wide celebration of staff achievements and awards to include Nurse, DSP, PNA and Unsung Hero of the Year, SSLC and State Hospital Spirit Award, SSLC and State Hospital Individual Spirit Award, Most Innovative Client Care Program of the Year, and Most Creative Client Care Environmental Improvement of the Year, which are based on nominations from the facilities. The award winners attend the annual HSCS Awards Banquet and facilities have local celebrations to honor their nominees.

Several facilities have an employee council that organizes staff activities and recognition such as the Hospital Hero Award, Commendation Award, Employee of the Quarter Award, kickball tournaments, cookouts, and holiday potlucks. These activities help build a sense of community among staff and increase retention by showing staff they are valued in the workplace.

## **Wellness**

In conjunction with HHS Wellness, HSCS is establishing a system of Wellness Coordinators at each facility, led by an appointed HSCS Wellness Coordinator and HSCS Advisory Committee. Wellness Coordinators will promote wellness to local employees and create and execute wellness activities such as nutrition campaigns, activity challenges, movement breaks, and sports competitions.

## **Pursuit of Hope**

The state hospital leadership has initiated the Pursuit of Hope initiative to focus on staff wellness, which includes Wellness Wednesdays, Trauma Informed Care taskforces, Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team expansion, and additional training on interventions.

Wellness Wednesdays aim to help state hospital staff prioritize their own mental health by providing online tools and resources via weekly text and email messages. Subjects range from anger management to the positive effect pets can have on personal well-being.

State hospitals have also formed a Trauma-Informed Care taskforce at each state hospital as a strategy to enhance staff and patient well-being. Trauma-Informed Care, an evidence-based best practice, recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges that trauma may contribute to distress in individuals' lives including staff and potentially have lifelong impacts on emotions and relationships. For staff, Trauma-Informed Care can help reduce burnout and turnover by acknowledging trauma's widespread impact and understanding paths to recovery. The taskforces develop campus-wide trainings, such as Dialectical Behavior Therapy training, which are incorporated into patient treatment to enhance well-being.

The CISM teams have a goal to respond immediately and apply "psychological first aid" when a staff member encounters a potentially traumatic event such as an assault or death on campus. Expansion of CISM teams increase the likelihood that staff will have a peer on the team which will help ensure staff feel safe and able to communicate their needs.

## **Career and Leadership Development**

HSCS is exploring ways to expand career and leadership opportunities for staff across all positions at all facilities. Current opportunities include continuing education initiatives, leadership and mentoring programs, and training.

### **Continuing Education**

Agency leadership supports multiple efforts for continued education for staff. HSCS hosts conferences and virtual webinars for professional staff to obtain continuing education units (CEUs) and regularly disseminates external opportunities. If funds are available, facilities may pay licensure fees and required training and continuing

education costs for employees whose positions require them to maintain professional licensure.

The HSCS Lunch and Learn continuing education initiative offers participant feedback driven learning opportunities, as well as CEUs for specific disciplines. Lunch and Learn sessions range from general self-care topics to overviews on specific therapies. The Grow, Learn, Achieve, Master initiative provides a setting for professionals within HSCS to provide detailed information, education, or training to a targeted group, typically on an industry specific topic.

Facility nurses and rehabilitation therapists have access to an online platform where they can receive CEUs at no cost. Facilities also host conferences, such as the annual habilitation therapies conference and the state hospital forensic conferences.

HSCS provides education and support related to accessing other education related benefits staff may be eligible for as employees of state hospitals and SSLCs such as the federal Public Student Loan Forgiveness program, loan repayment programs through the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and tuition reimbursement upon successful completion of pre-approved courses if funds are available.

## **Leadership and Mentoring**

HSCS developed an internal leadership program, Leadership yoU, designed to maintain a culture of respect beginning with proficient and caring staff in leadership, supervisory, and management roles by providing students with practical information that promotes successful work practices for themselves and those they work with. The program offers core classes in addition to ongoing classes and resources that prepare and support employees. Additionally, the program has been designed to be ongoing and sustainable.

HSCS facilities have varying informal mentorship programs that typically include competency training and development, supervisors and/or peers meeting with employees to provide encouragement and to address issues or concerns. Some facilities offer formal mentoring programs which provide leadership training to interested employees. The facilities created workforce committees to explore leadership development goals and are responsible for nominating staff to participate in the various HHS leadership programs such as the Aspiring, Rising, and Executive Leadership Academies.

## Employee Training

HSCS has begun a comprehensive review and update of the new employee orientation experience. This project aims to improve the new hire experience, update curriculum, and create a program to enhance on the job training. These changes will positively impact retention rates by ensuring new staff feel competent and confident in their jobs while providing them with quick access to resources when they have questions or need assistance.

New admissions to SSLCs are trending towards younger and more behaviorally challenging residents. To address the needs and improve outcomes for this population, the SSLCs have implemented a statewide curriculum, Supporting Residents with Complex Histories. The curriculum includes staff training on strategies for successfully supporting residents with complex histories in a safe and effective manner, with a focus on teaching residents skills designed for behavioral self-management.

## 4. Compensation Levels

On March 1, 2022, HSCS implemented a conservative salary increase targeting critical shortage positions and saw stabilization in filled positions following two years of decline.

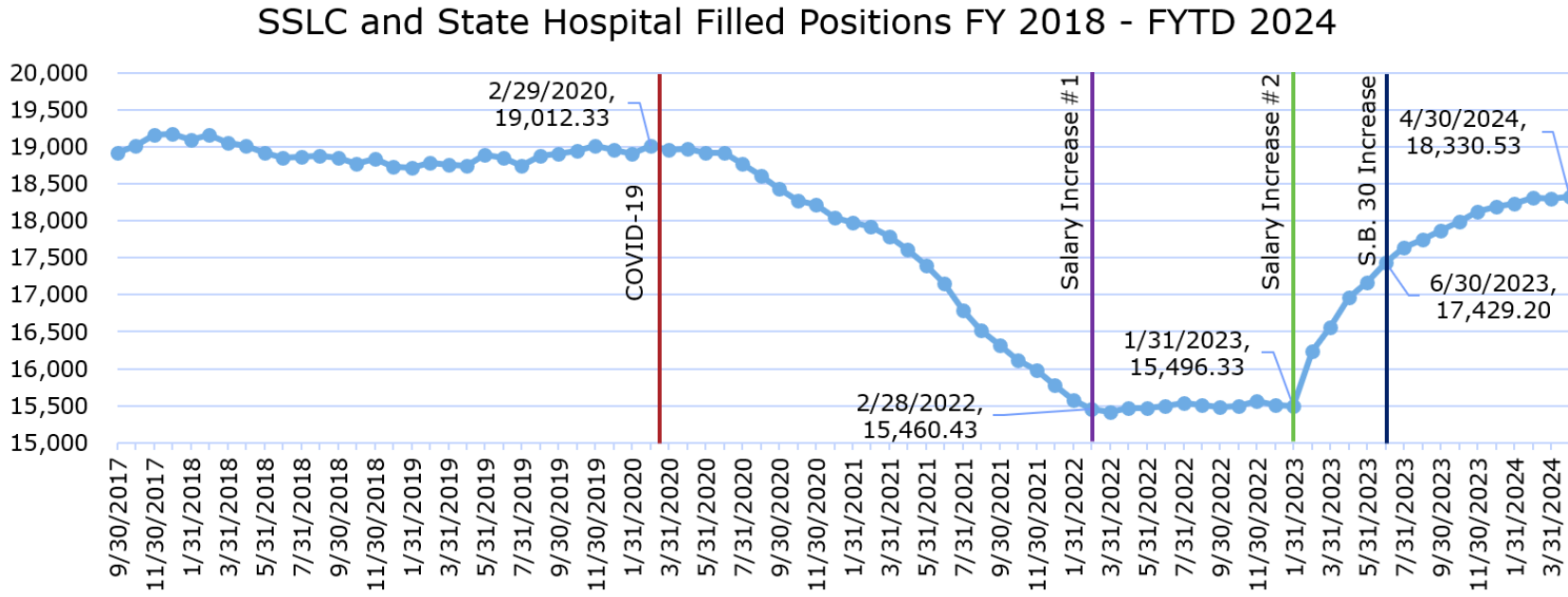
Following the announcement to existing staff late December 2022 and the public through a press release in January 2023 of the subsequent salary and market rate increase effective spring 2023, HSCS began to see a rapid increase in the number of filled positions. The rise in filled positions has continued in the wake of the S.B. 30 salary increases effective July 1, 2023 (Figure 1). Most notably, since the beginning of fiscal year 2023, the number of filled DSP and PNA positions both increased by approximately 26 percent, and the number of filled nursing positions<sup>a</sup> increased by 25 percent (Appendix A).

Employee attrition was also noticeably impacted by the salary increases as turnover rates are at the lowest HSCS has seen in recent history, stabilizing at approximately 25 percent. This improvement is roughly 10 percent lower than pre-pandemic rates and 20 percent lower than the peak in October 2021 (Figure 2). Low turnover rates indicate that not only are positions being filled, but positions are staying filled with staff who can provide a sense of stability and individualized care to the people we serve.

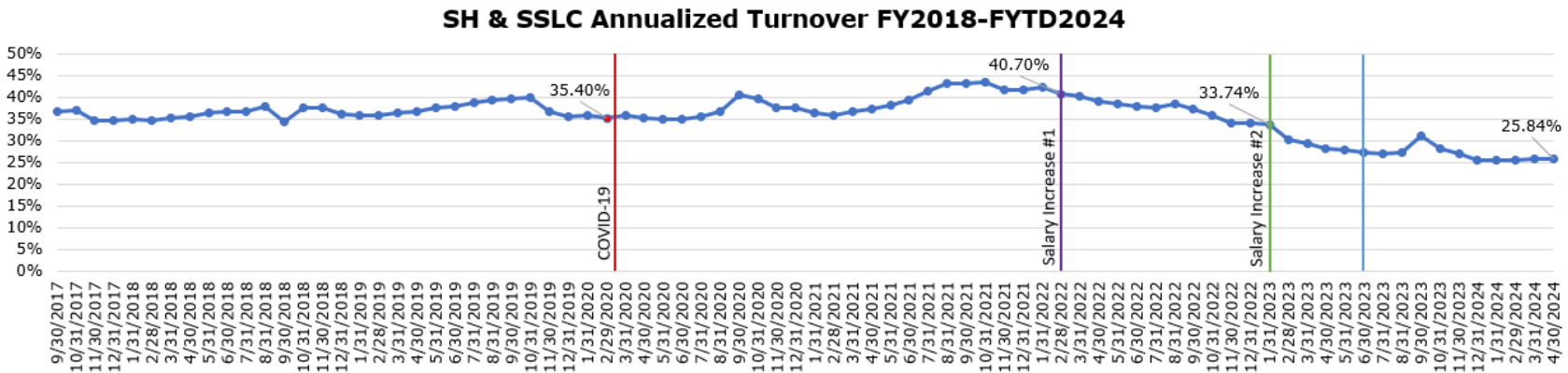
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<sup>a</sup> Includes Nurse/Registered Nurse and Licensed Vocational Nurse job families and does not include Advanced Practice Register Nurse job family.

**Figure 1. SSLC and State Hospital Filled Positions, Fiscal Years 2018-2024.**



**Figure 2. SSLC and State Hospital Turnover, Fiscal Years 2018-2024.**



## 5. Turnover and Vacancy Rates

General fill and vacancy rates provided in this report are based on allocated Full Time Equivalent (FTE) authority for a clearer picture of the state of the workforce; however, the fill and vacancy rates specific to position types are based on total active positions. HSCS holds more active positions than FTE authority to allow for operational flexibility in high turnover positions.

Evaluation of turnover and vacancy rates specific to critical shortage positions showed a correlation between the positions in the lowest paygrades, specifically salary groups A08-A15, and higher turnover and vacancy rates for both state hospitals and SSLCs. Considering 61 percent of state hospital staff and 70 percent of SSLC staff are employed in positions in salary groups A08-A15, it is critical to maintain stability with a trained and knowledgeable workforce to continue recruitment and retention efforts targeted toward these positions (Appendix B).

One exception to the correlation between lower pay and higher turnover and vacancies is nurses at both state hospitals and SSLCs. The Nurse job family, consisting of RNs, has comparable turnover and vacancy rates to positions assigned to salary groups A08-A15 despite being paid at a higher level in salary groups B20-B28. The LVN job family also has comparable turnover rates to positions assigned to salary groups A08-A15 yet higher vacancy rates, despite being paid at a higher level in salary groups A15-A19.

The challenge with the nurse workforce is likely due in part to the nursing shortage that Texas is facing, impacting both RNs and LVNs. In 2022, Texas had the fourth-lowest ratio of nurses to population in the United States.<sup>b</sup> According to projections developed by the Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies, this shortage is predicted to grow worse between now and 2036.<sup>c</sup>

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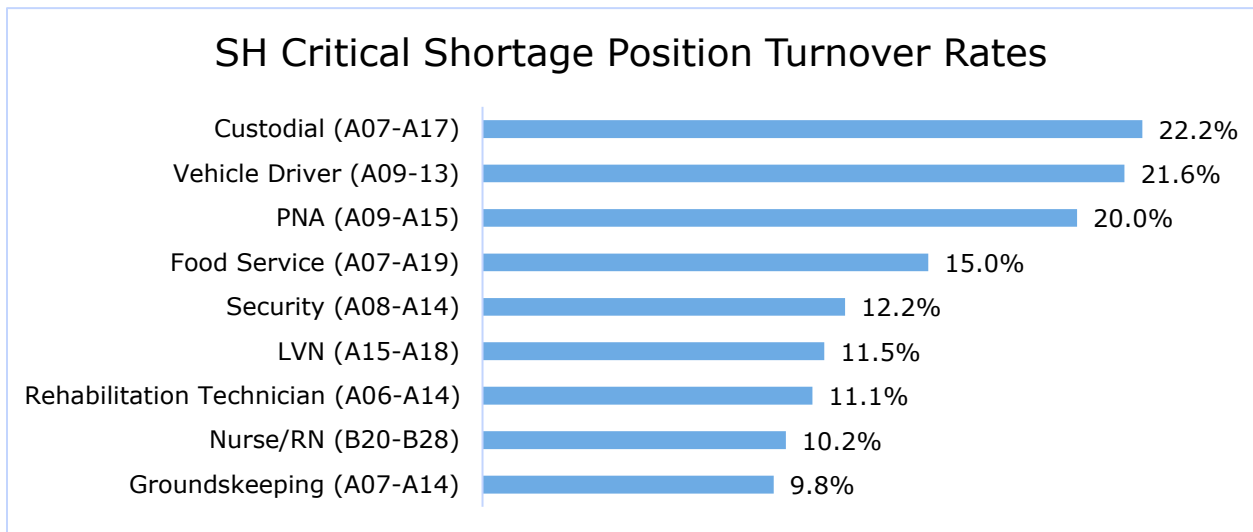
<sup>b</sup> A. Feeney. (2022). The U.S. Nursing Shortage: A State-by-State Breakdown. In *NurseJournal*. <https://nursejournal.org/articles/the-us-nursing-shortage-state-by-state-breakdown/>

<sup>c</sup> Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies. (March 2024). Nurse Supply and Demand Projections, 2022-2036: Executive Summary. [https://www.dshs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/chs/cnws/2023\\_SupplyDemandReport\\_ExecutiveSummary.pdf](https://www.dshs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/chs/cnws/2023_SupplyDemandReport_ExecutiveSummary.pdf)

## State Hospitals

The state hospital position types with turnover rates exceeding 20 percent in fiscal year to date 2024 are custodial with 22.2 percent turnover, vehicle drivers with 21.6 percent turnover, and PNAs with 20 percent turnover (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. State Hospital Critical Shortage Positions Turnover Rates, Fiscal Year to Date 2024.**

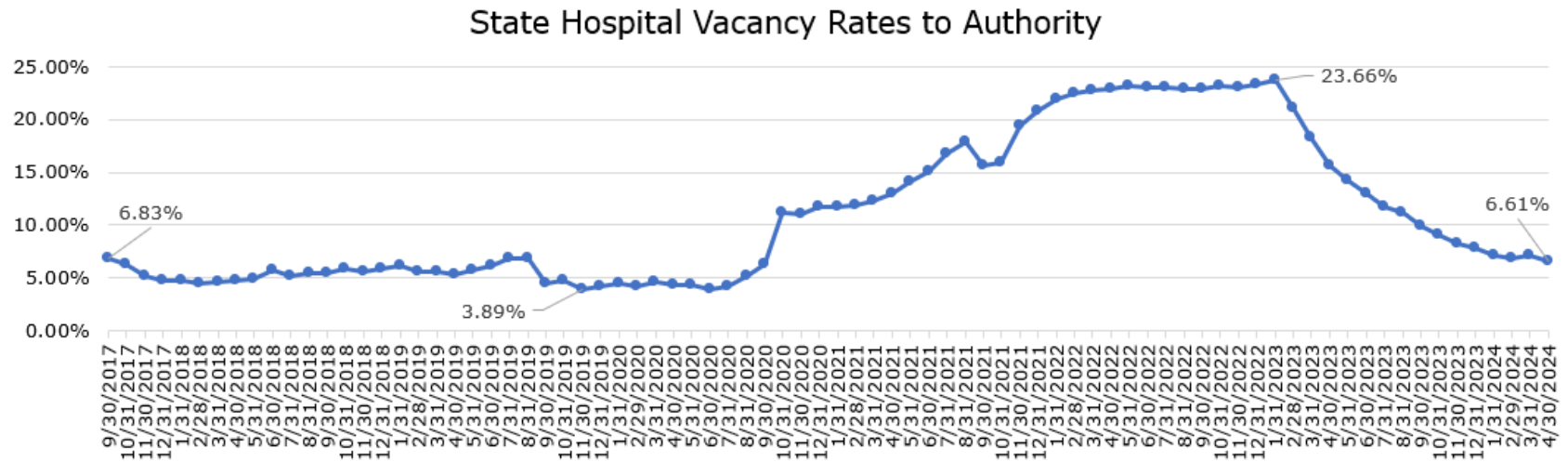


State hospitals have a vacancy rate<sup>d</sup> of approximately 6.6 percent as of April 30, 2024 (Figure 4). Like the SSLCs, the only position type with a vacancy rate exceeding 20 percent is LVNs at a rate of 23.3 percent (Figure 5).

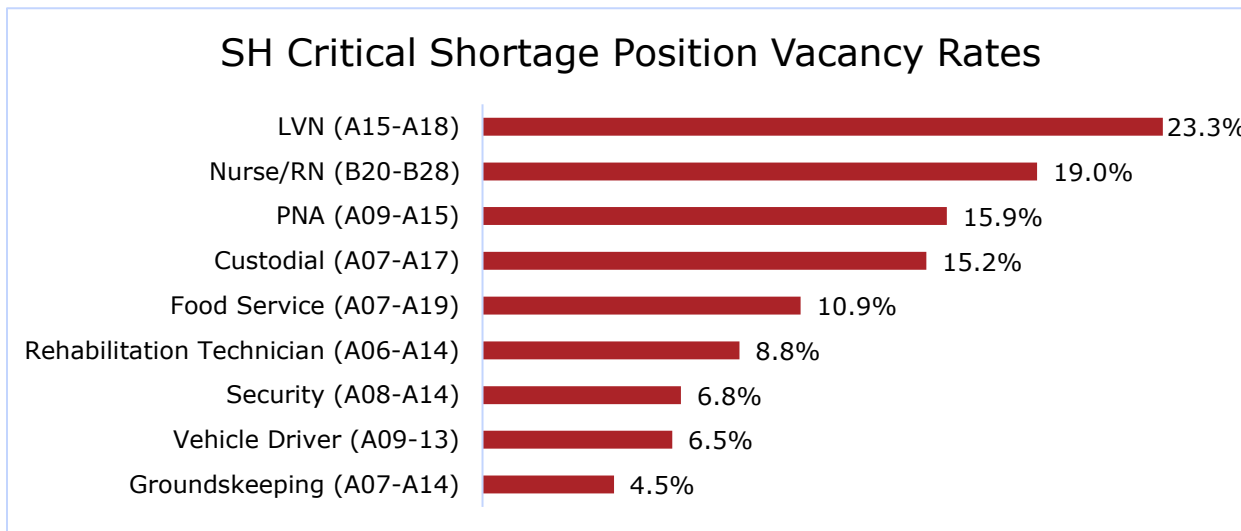
<sup>d</sup> This vacancy rate does not include staff augmentation contractors, non-HSCS organizational FTES, such as HR and IT, or turnover variances within the month.



**Figure 4. State Hospital Vacancy Rates, Fiscal Years 2018-2024.**



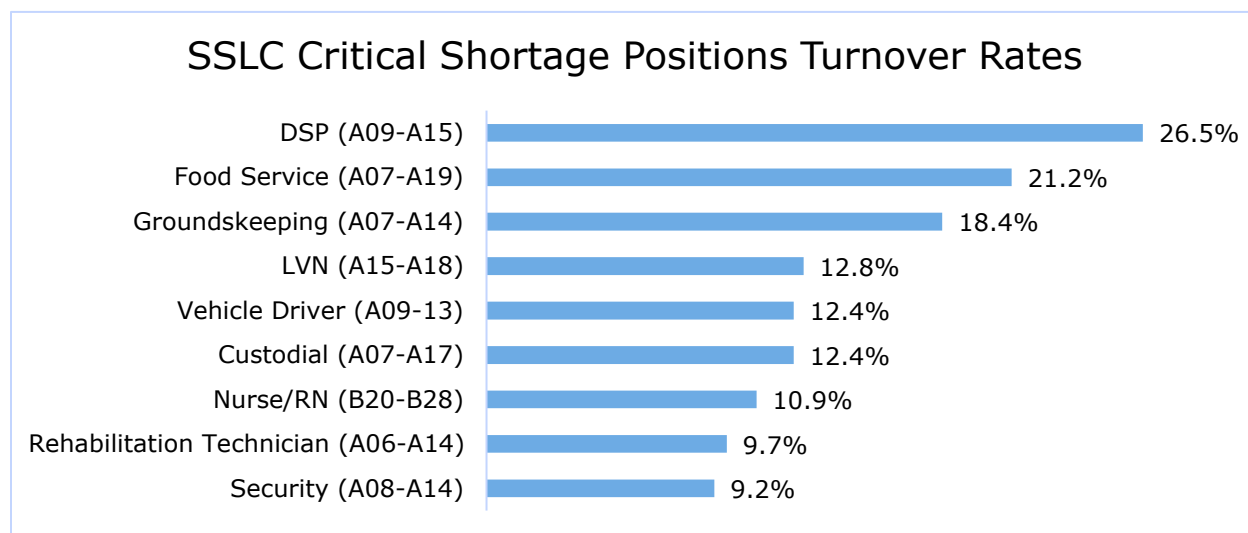
**Figure 5. State Hospital Critical Shortage Positions Vacancy Rates, Fiscal Year to Date 2024.**



## State Supported Living Centers

The two position types with turnover rates exceeding 20 percent in fiscal year to date 2024 are DSPs at a rate of 26.5 percent and Food Service at a rate of 21.2 percent turnover, assigned to salary groups A09-A15 and A07-A19 respectively (Figure 6).

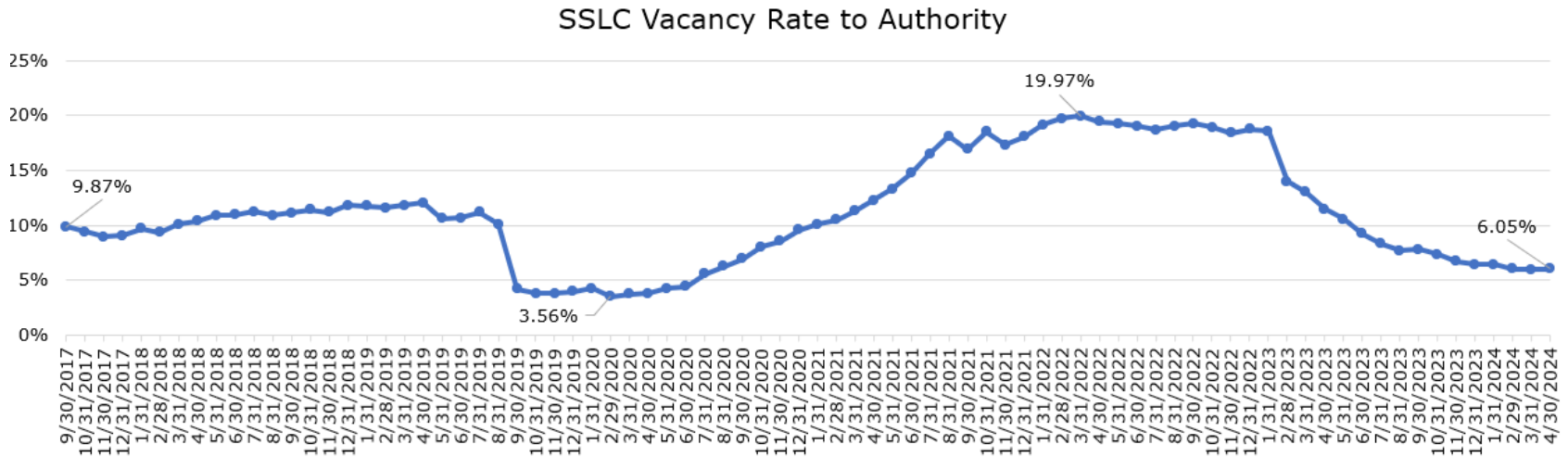
**Figure 6. SSLC Critical Shortage Positions Turnover Rates, Fiscal Year to Date 2024.**



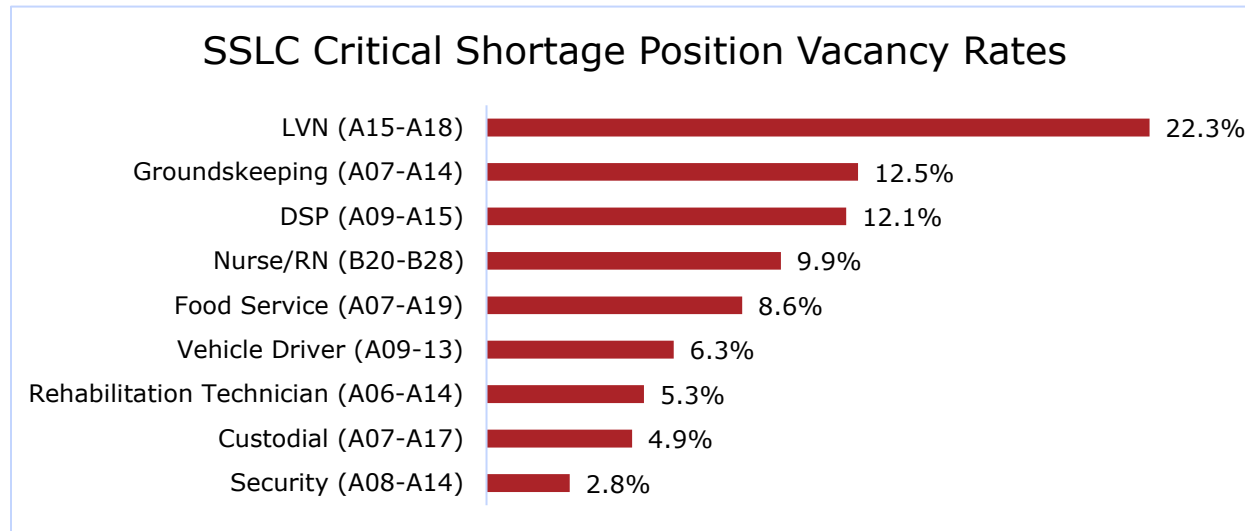
SSLCs have a vacancy rate<sup>e</sup> of approximately six percent as of April 30, 2024 (Figure 7). It is also of note that SSLCs have over 1,100 fewer allocated FTEs in fiscal year 2024 than in fiscal year 2018, so although the vacancy rate is lower now in comparison, there are over 500 fewer filled positions (Appendix C). The only position type with a vacancy rate exceeding 20 percent is LVNs at a rate of 22.3 percent (Figure 8).

<sup>e</sup> This vacancy rate does not include staff augmentation contractors, non-HSCS organizational FTES, such as HR and IT, or turnover variances within the month.

**Figure 7. SSLC Critical Shortage Positions Vacancy Rates, Fiscal Year to Date 2024.**



**Figure 8. SSLC Critical Shortage Positions Vacancy Rates, Fiscal Year to Date 2024.**



## 6. Use of Contractors

The use of contractors allows SSLCs and state hospitals to maintain, and in some cases increase the number of people served by meeting the need for critical shortage positions. Contract labor also helps SSLCs and state hospitals provide specialty services, maintain or lower the number of compensatory and overtime hours earned, and provide a level of operational flexibility. HSCS works to use contract labor as efficiently as possible when state employees are unavailable.

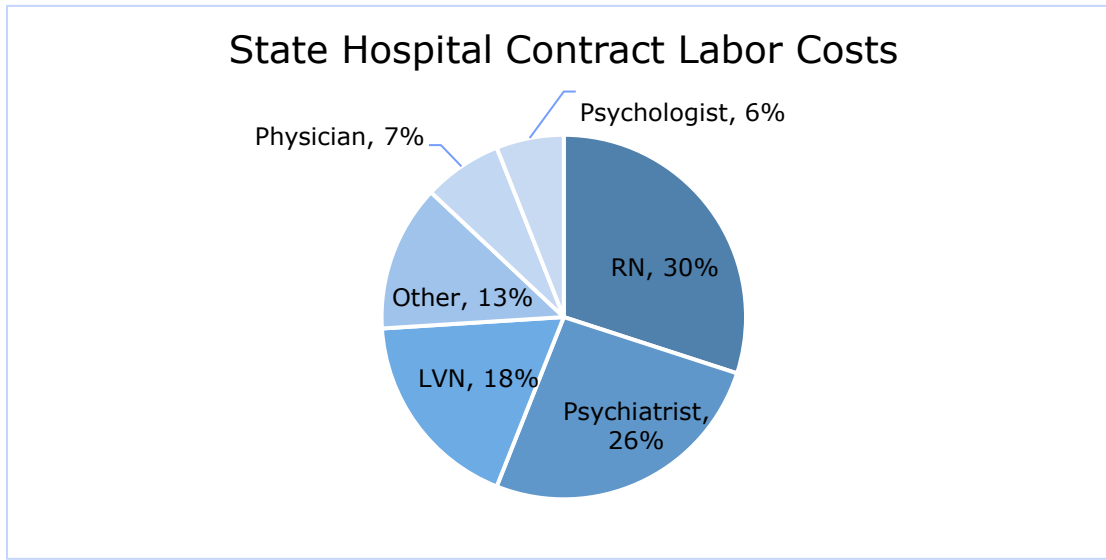
### State Hospitals

In fiscal year 2024, state hospitals predominantly contracted for nursing with 30 percent of contract costs attributed to RNs and 18 percent attributed to LVNs; however, psychiatrists closely followed accounting for 26 percent of contract costs (Figure 9).

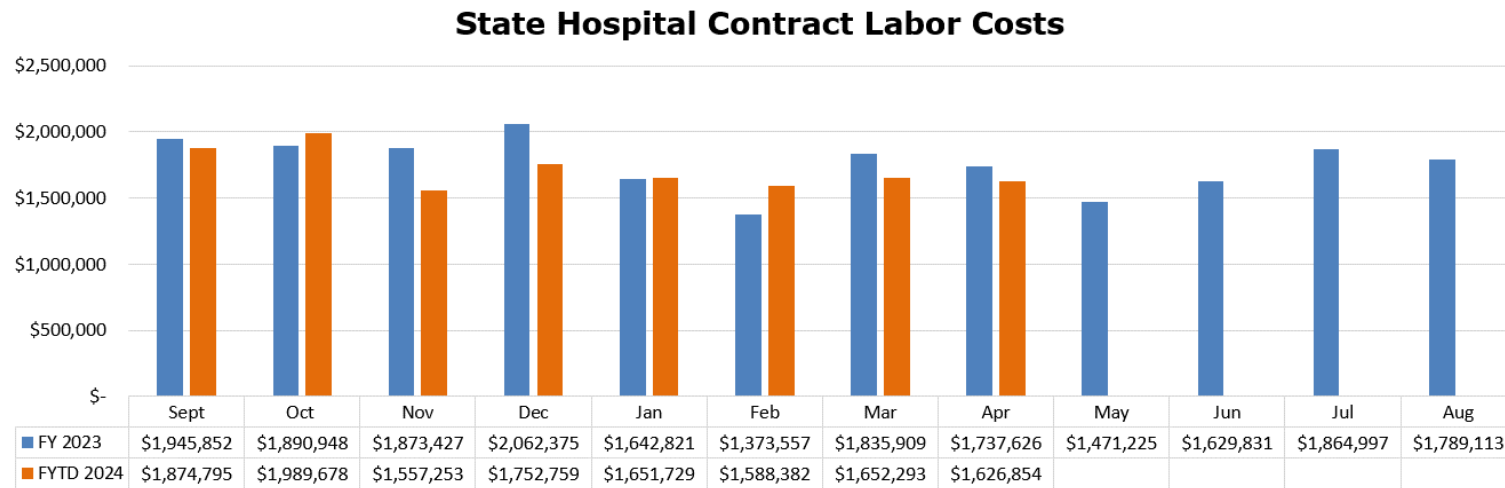
Contract labor has been relatively consistent from fiscal year 2023 to now, but state hospitals have been able to create some savings. As of April 30, 2024, state hospitals have spent approximately \$13.7 million on contract labor, a savings of approximately \$668,000 when compared to fiscal year to date expenditures at the end of April 2023 (Figure 10).

Kerrville State Hospital has unique needs that require higher expenditures on contract labor. As of April 30, 2024, Kerrville expended approximately \$3.4 million, accounting for a quarter of all state hospital contract labor spending. HSCS received feedback that there is a lack of affordable housing options for staff in Kerrville and the surrounding area, which may contribute to the lower fill and increased need for contract staff at this location.

**Figure 9. State Hospital Contract Labor Cost Distribution, Fiscal Year to Date 2024.**



**Figure 10. State Hospital Contract Labor Expenditures, Fiscal Years 2023-24.**



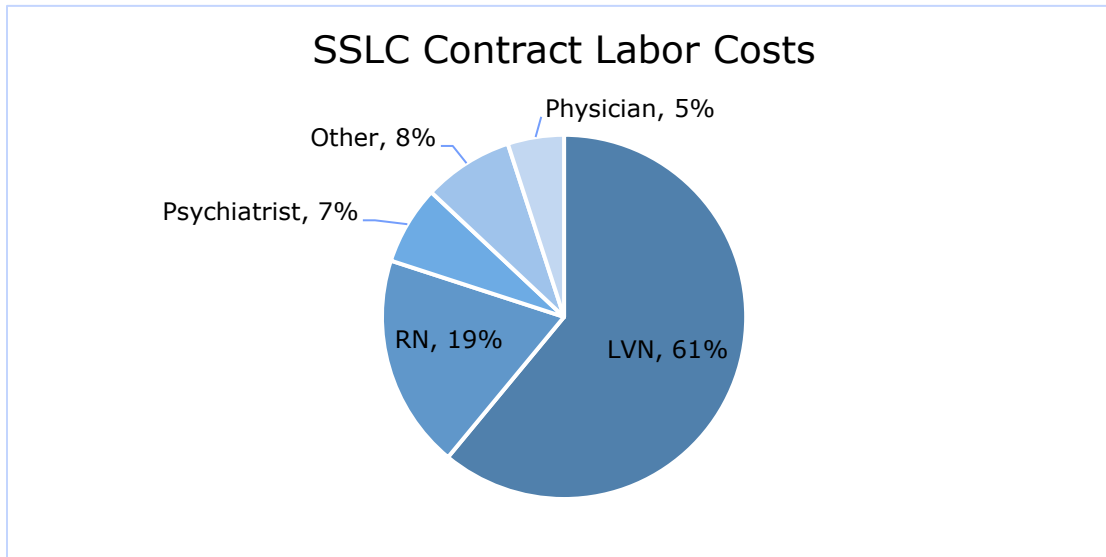
## State Supported Living Centers

In fiscal year 2024, SSLCs used contractors to address shortages for a variety of positions but most notably nursing with 61 percent of contract labor costs spent on LVNs and an additional 19 percent on RNs as of April 30, 2024 (Figure 11).

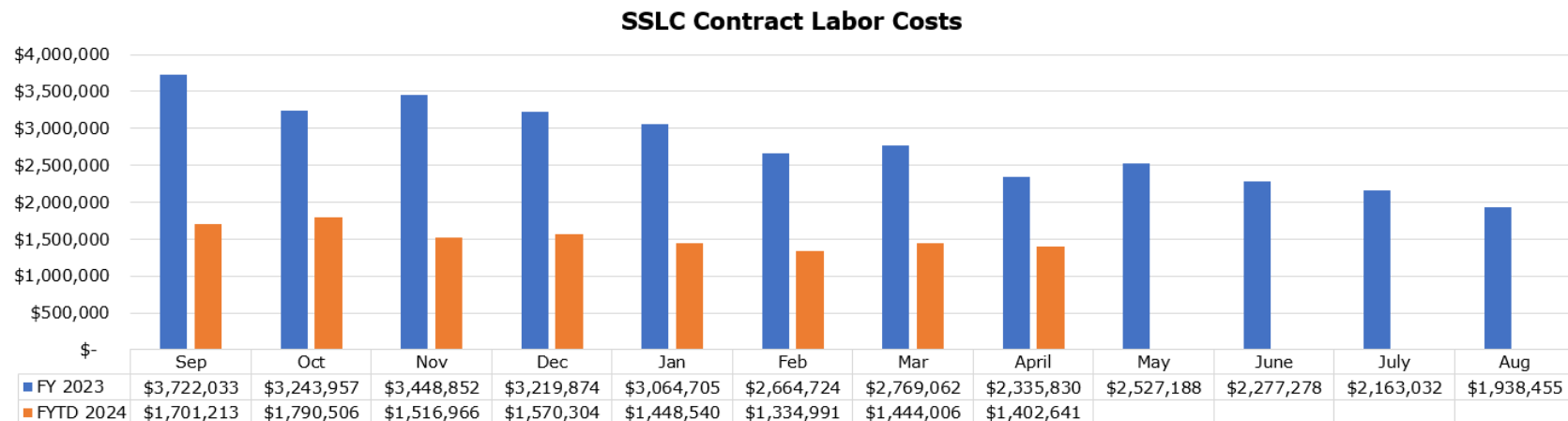
When comparing SSLCs, Denton SSLC has spent the most on contract labor in fiscal year 2024, approximately \$3.1 million, which represents 26 percent of the total cost for all SSLCs, likely because Denton has more beds than any other SSLC and therefore needs more staff to care for a larger group of residents. In contrast, Austin has expended the most on contract labor per resident, at over \$12,000 per resident, over double the average of all SSLCs, likely due to the high cost of living and competitive market in Austin.

In total, SSLCs have spent approximately \$12.2 million on contractors in fiscal year 2024, half of what was spent by this time in fiscal year 2023. SSLCs have made strides to decrease contract labor expenses, resulting in an average decrease of \$1.5 million each month when compared to fiscal year 2023 expenditures for the same month (Figure 12).

**Figure 11. SSLC Contract Labor Cost Distribution, Fiscal Year to Date 2024.**



**Figure 12. SSLC Contract Labor Expenditures, Fiscal Years 2023-24.**



## 7. Continuous Improvement

Based on the analysis of current and historical turnover and vacancy rates data, HSCS will maintain whole system collaboration to find practical solutions to address retention and recruitment. HSCS plans to continue position-specific efforts and workplace culture improvements to further reduce turnover and vacancy rates.

### Position-Specific Efforts

To maintain and increase fill rates, especially in mental health professional shortage areas, HSCS plans to focus retention and recruitment efforts on direct care positions including DSPs, LVNs, PNAs, RNs, psychiatrists, and physicians. Market rates for nurses, both LVNs and RNs, will be examined and adjusted as necessary and as funding allows. Additionally, HSCS will study and provide recommendations to the State Auditor's Office to establish, delete, and/or reallocate job classifications.

SSLCs are piloting a program at Abilene, Corpus Christi, and Lubbock SSLCs by reclassifying three LVN positions to RN positions at each location. The goal is to hire RNs into these vacant positions, and reduce overtime worked by LVNs or use of contract labor to cover the vacancies, resulting in cost savings for the SSLCs. Additional intangible benefits include increased morale due to less overtime, increased quality of care for individuals by making a higher level of nursing service accessible to them, and increased engagement with the SSLC mission through state employee service delivery. SSLCs will evaluate the impact of this initiative as it progresses and take steps to evolve and/or expand it depending upon results.

### Workplace Culture Improvements

HSCS plans to continue the following workplace culture improvement efforts:

- Hosting town hall meetings that focus on leadership visibility, promoting collaboration, improving the work culture, and facility-specific topics of interest including policies, procedures, or regulations.
- Engaging text messaging services to facilitate direct communication with the associate commissioners and facility leadership.



- Using data from stay surveys, stay interviews, and the Survey of Employee Engagement to identify trends and target additional efforts to improve workplace culture and share progress on these efforts with all staff.
- Monitoring the outcomes of the new employee orientation revisions and Mexia SSLC's pilot program to revamp the DSP on-the-job training to study the progress and impact on retention.
- Implementing creative measures to reduce staff exposure to workplace violence and personal property destruction. In rare instances, staff members may be victims of criminal acts by residents, particularly related to personal vehicle damage. Currently, staff who are victims of personal property destruction by a resident are not covered under the Texas Tort Claims Act and are often left to pay out of pocket for any expenses incurred.

## 8. Conclusion

HSCS has implemented a variety of creative recruitment and retention efforts to combat the nationwide staffing challenges resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. These efforts have been highly successful in increasing the number of staff employed by the SSLCs and state hospitals resulting in a decrease in vacancy rate by over 14.5 percent and turnover rate by approximately 20 percent from their peaks.

Targeted events such as express hires and on-site job fairs show great potential in conjunction with standard recruiting practices. New recruiting resources such as Zip Recruiter, Indeed, and continued use of PracticeMatch and CareerArc, will expand the visibility of job postings and create a larger pool of applicants. HSCS will continue to expand these efforts and will work to make it easier for potential employees to find and apply for jobs through media outreach, partnerships with academic institutions and the Texas Workforce Commission, continued use of the First Step application process, the visa program, and incentives such as employee referral program, loan repayment, and free continuing education.

HSCS will continue market rate adjustments based on facility need and merit programs at facilities based on budget availability. These financial efforts will be strengthened by supporting retention specialist activities, providing facilities with expanded leadership training programs, analyzing and improving new employee orientation, and increasing activities that promote a culture that prioritizes staff satisfaction, morale, engagement, and retention.

## List of Acronyms

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Full Name</b>
CEU	Continuing Education Unit
CISM	Critical Incident Stress Management
CTR	Click Through Rate
DSP	Direct Support Professional
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
FY	Fiscal Year
FYTD	Fiscal Year to Date
GAA	General Appropriations Act
H.B.	House Bill
HHS	Health and Human Services
HHSC	Health and Human Services Commission
HR	Human Resources
HSCS	Health and Specialty Care System
IT	Information Technology
LVN	Licensed Vocational Nurse
PNA	Psychiatric Nursing Assistant
QR	Quick Response
RN	Registered Nurse
S.B.	Senate Bill
SH	State Hospital
SSLC	State Supported Living Center

# Appendix A. Filled Direct Care Positions

Figure 13. Filled Direct Support Professional Positions, Fiscal Years 2023-24.

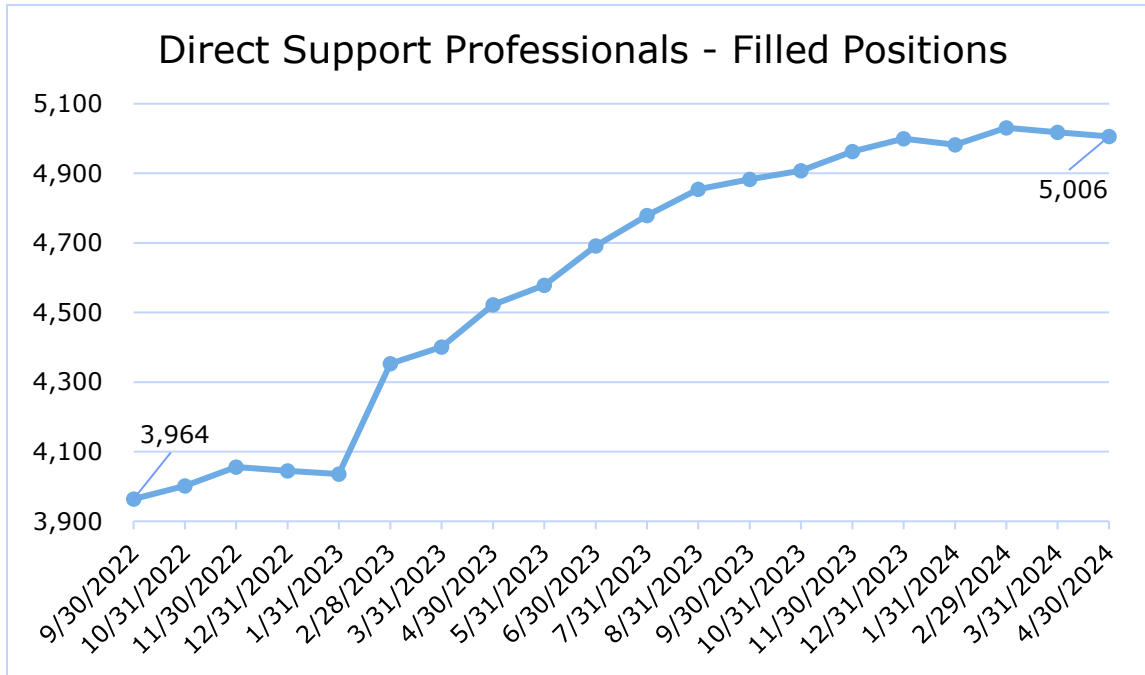
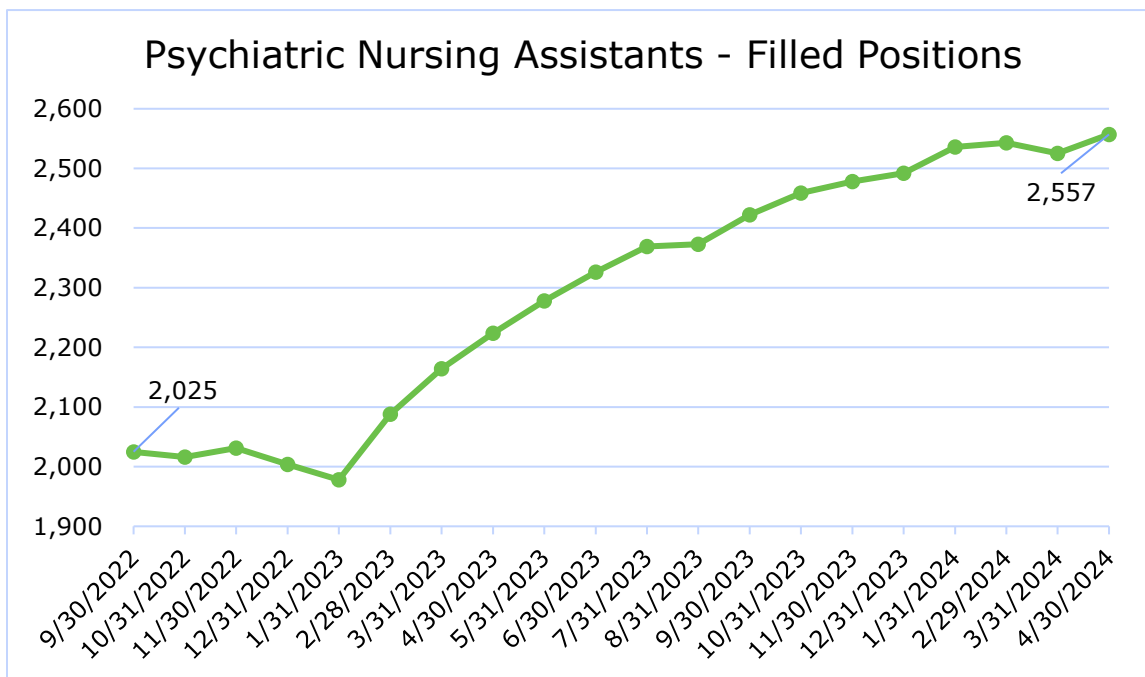
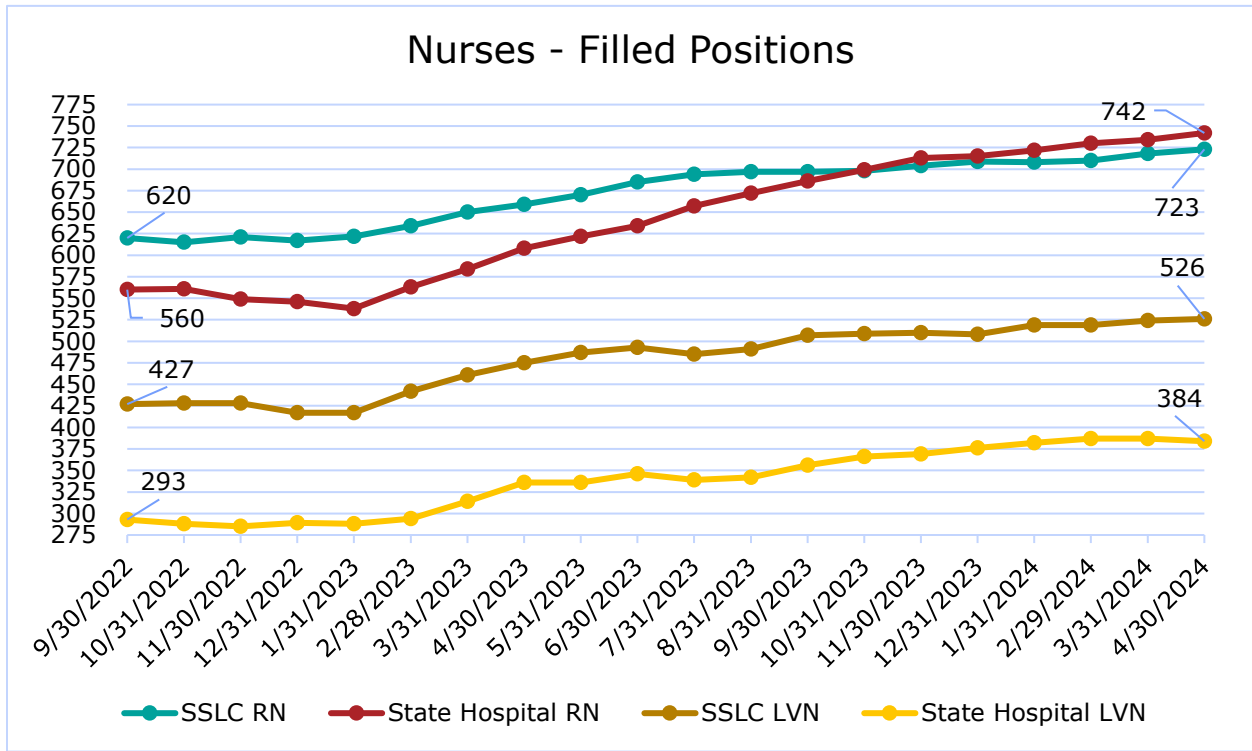


Figure 14. Filled Psychiatric Nursing Assistant Positions, Fiscal Years 2023-24.



**Figure 15. Filled Nurse Positions, Fiscal Years 2023-24.**



# Appendix B. Distribution of Salary Groups

Figure 16. SSLC Employees by Salary Group, Fiscal Year to Date 2024

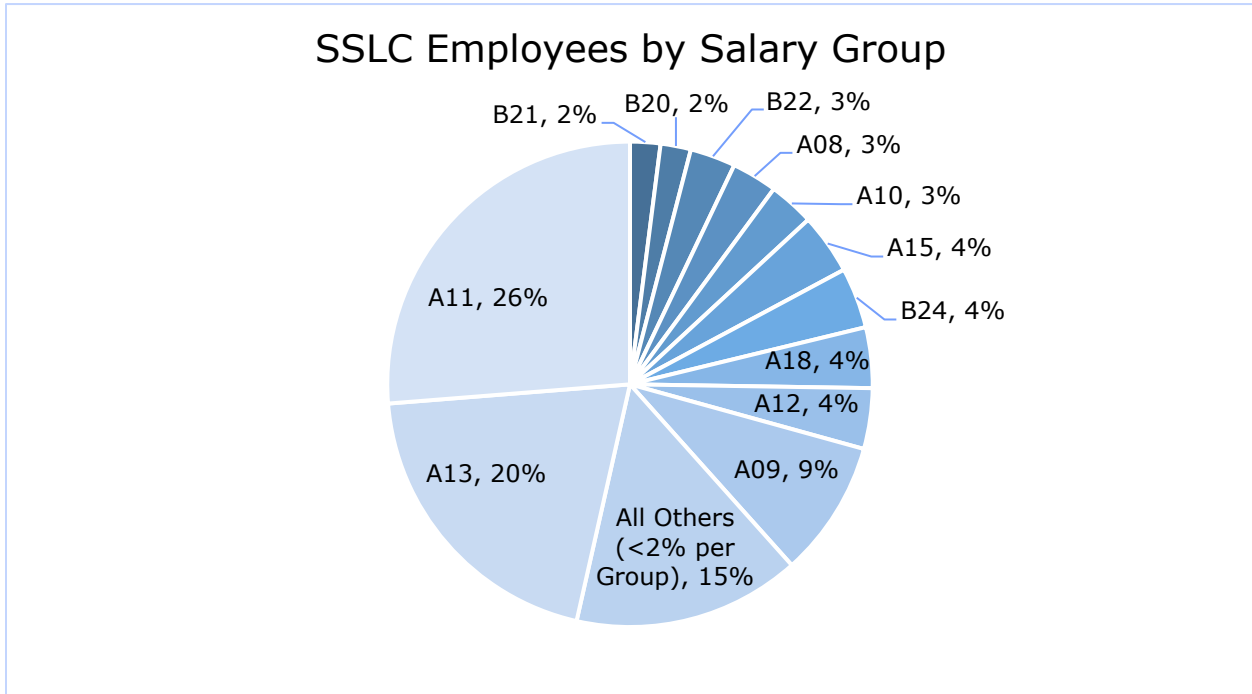
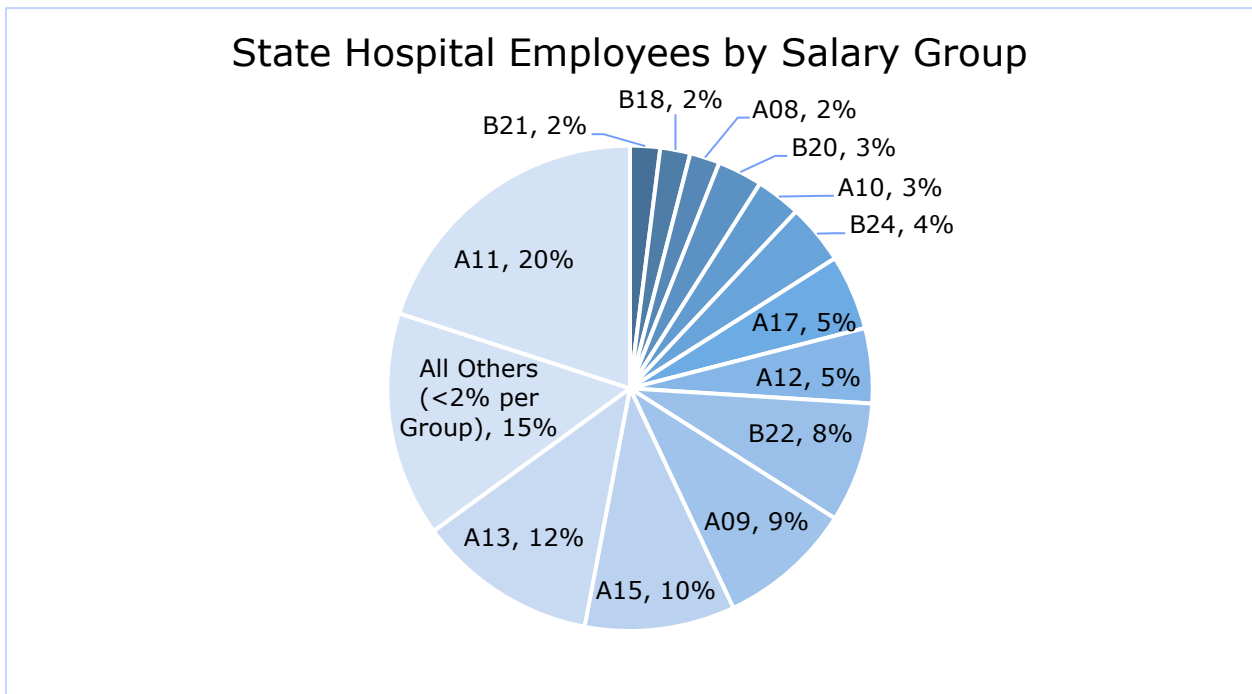


Figure 17. State Hospital Employees by Salary Group, Fiscal Year to Date 2024



## Appendix C. Authority, Fill, and Vacancies

**Table 1. SSLC FTE Authority, Fill, and Vacancies, First Month of Fiscal Years 2018-2024.**

	<b>FTE Authority</b>	<b>Filled Count</b>	<b>Fill Rate</b>	<b>Vacant Count</b>	<b>Vacancy Rate</b>
9/30/2017	12,849	11,580.3	90.13%	1,268.7	9.87%
9/30/2018	12,846	11,417.9	88.88%	1,428.1	11.12%
9/30/2019	12,054	11,544.3	95.77%	509.8	4.23%
9/30/2020	12,054	11,215.2	93.04%	838.9	6.96%
9/30/2021	11,710	9,728.3	83.08%	1,981.9	16.92%
9/30/2022	11,710	9,456.7	80.76%	2,253.5	19.24%
9/30/2023	11,743	10,827.0	92.20%	916.2	7.80%

**Table 2. State Hospital FTE Authority, Fill, and Vacancies, First Month of Fiscal Years 2018-2024.**

	<b>FTE Authority</b>	<b>Filled Count</b>	<b>Fill Rate</b>	<b>Vacant Count</b>	<b>Vacancy Rate</b>
9/30/2017	7,867	7,329.6	93.17%	537.4	6.83%
9/30/2018	7,865	7,434.8	94.53%	430.2	5.47%
9/30/2019	7,711	7,362.2	95.48%	348.5	4.52%
9/30/2020	7,711	7,220.6	93.64%	490.0	6.36%
9/30/2021	7,818	6,593.6	84.34%	1,224.2	15.66%
9/30/2022	7,815	6,031.7	77.18%	1,783.1	22.82%
9/30/2023	7,814	7,039.5	90.09%	774.7	9.91%