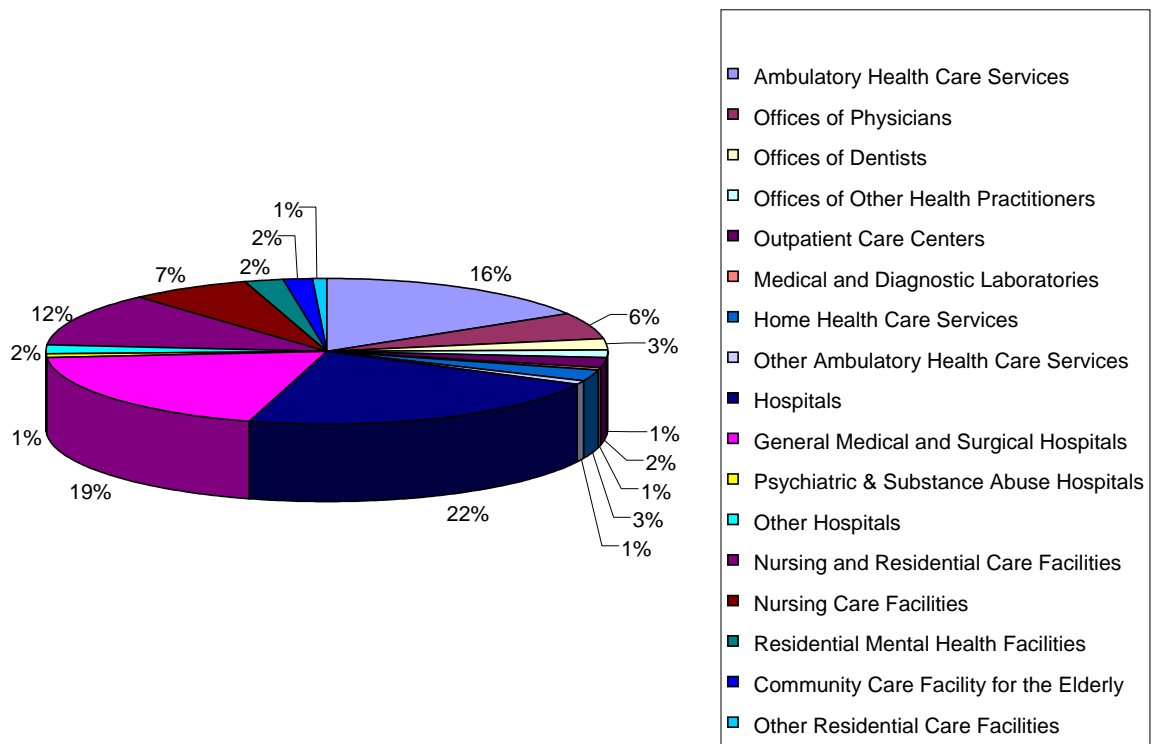




Health Care Workforce Strategy Roundtable

Health Care Jobs in Massachusetts 2005



Shaping a Strategic Approach to Massachusetts' Health Care Workforce Crisis

Background

Health Care employers operate in every region of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The industry is the largest employer in the state, representing 14% of all employment. It is also the industry with the largest number of job openings of the state's 20 major industries, according to the Department of Workforce Development Job Vacancy Survey for the 2nd Quarter of 2005. Presently there are more than 16,200 job vacancies in health care, representing a vacancy rate of 3.8%, which is an increase of 17.5% over the previous year.

At the same time, there are also 165,000 Massachusetts residents seeking employment. In its report released last year, "*The Changing Face of Massachusetts*" MassInc revealed that one third of unemployed residents lack English language literacy and basic skills in reading, writing, math, and science. Additional numbers of workers will require technical training to adequately prepare them for the jobs available.

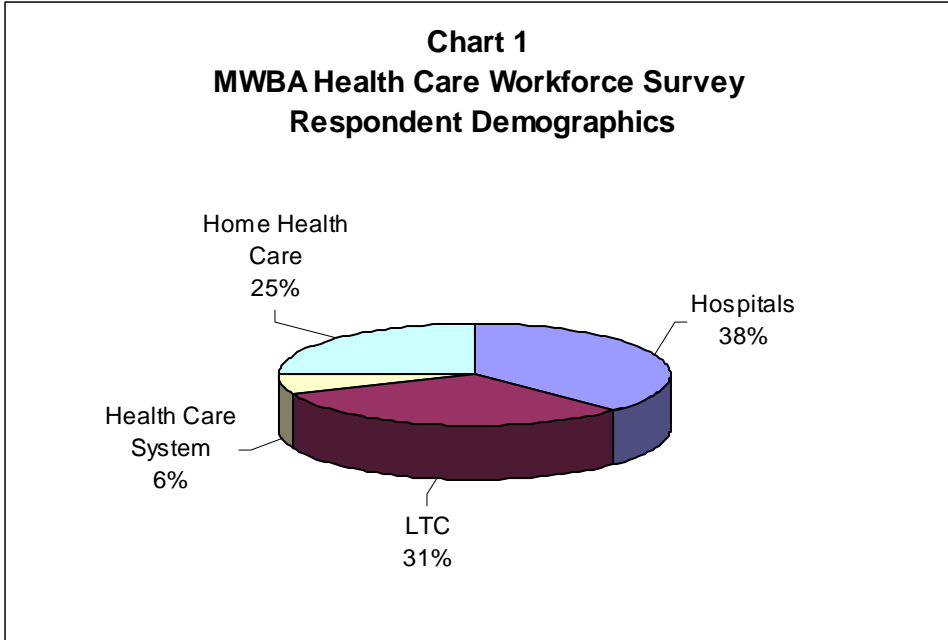
How do we shape a strategy to apply the available resources of our state – the workforce, education, training programs, public and private funding – to meet the needs of business and society for health care services - to increase the inventory of this major economic development engine?

With every opportunity there is challenge. We invite your participation as we respond to the challenge of changing the way the Commonwealth deals with the growing crisis in how health care meets the service and workforce needs in our communities.

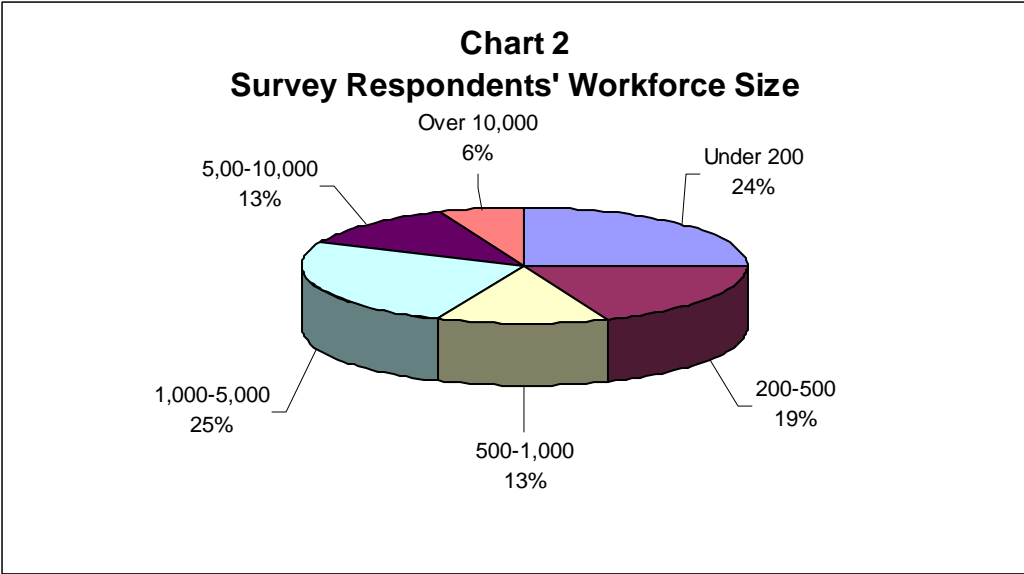
Snapshot of Health Care Workforce Issues

The Massachusetts Workforce Board Association coordinated development of a brief survey of health care employers who serve on the regional workforce investment boards. Respondents represent long term care, hospitals, home health care agencies and comprehensive health care systems, the latter including acute care hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, home health care services and health programming.

Forty-eight WIB members and leaders in health care were asked to respond to questions about their workforce, investment in training programs, collaborative experiences, access to workforce development industry information, and potential interest in coordinating efforts around workforce development. Respondents included hospitals, comprehensive health care systems, skilled nursing facilities, and home health care agencies. (Chart 1- Survey Respondents Demographics)



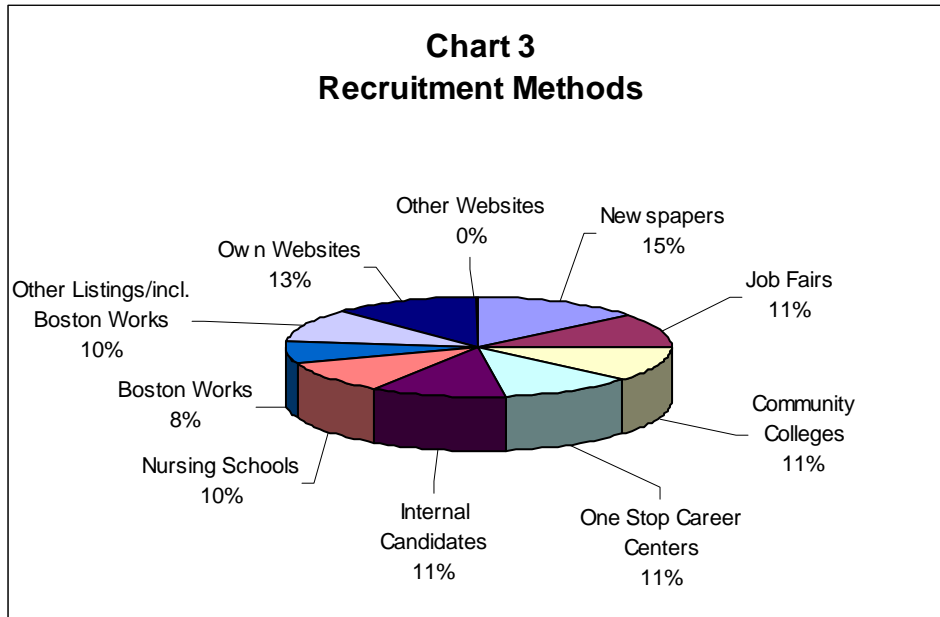
Among them they reported employing over 35,000 workers in the health care industry.
(Chart 2- Respondents Workforce Size)



The following provides a snapshot of the responses received to date.

Recruitment

- Despite a wide variety of recruiting methods being used, employers continue to struggle to attract qualified candidates for positions of RN, particularly in Critical Care nursing, and LPN. (Chart 3 – Recruitment Methods)



- There is a growing need for Radiology and Imaging Technicians, and staff providing Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Speech Therapy. The rehabilitation therapy professionals are being sought not only by hospitals but also by Skilled Nursing Facilities and Home Health Care agencies, thereby increasing the competition for hiring within the industry.
- Employers cite the top three reasons for difficulty recruiting staff as: competition within the industry as well as from retail employers; insufficient supply of trained staff; and lack of licensure for these disciplines.

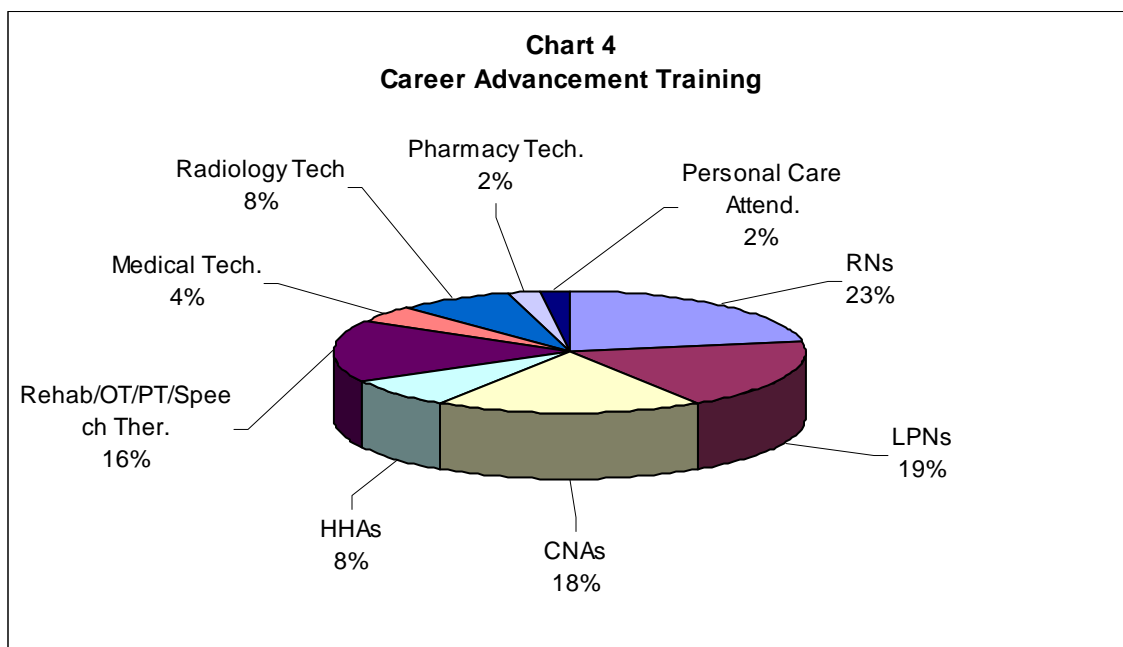
Implications from these findings might include a need for a broader-based, statewide recruitment campaign for qualified candidates, or to identify professionals in the labor market who could – with a minimal amount of skills training or English-language literacy development– attain certification or licensure.

Retention

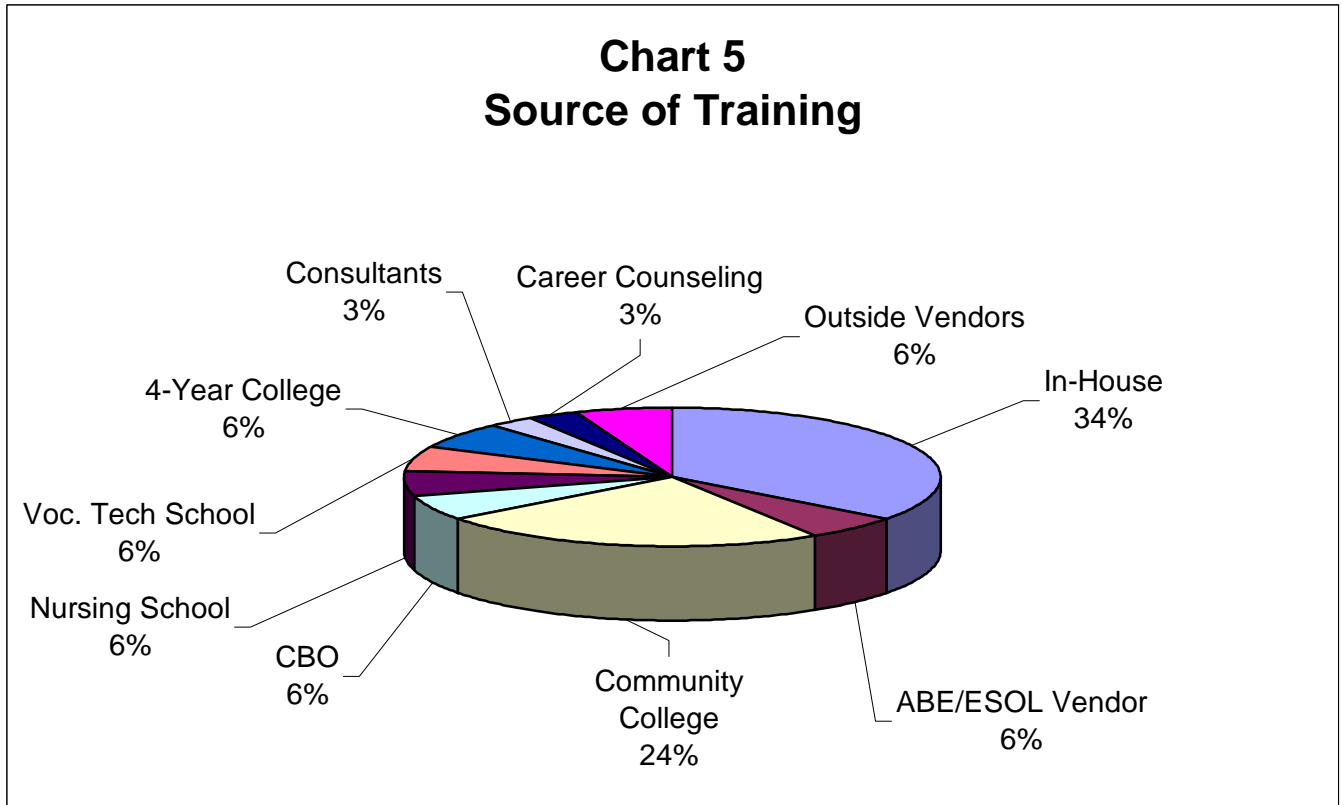
- RN and LPN are among the top three most difficult positions in which to retain staff.
- There is both a growing need for, and an increasing vacancy rate in, the allied health professions of Radiology Technician, Medical Technologist, Respiratory Therapy and Rehabilitation Therapy.
- Employers also report difficulty retaining staff in Dietary, Housekeeping and Environmental Services positions. They attribute high turnover rates to low paying entry-level jobs and opportunities for advancement in other service industry positions. One commented that entry-level workers will shop around for even small wage increases.

Providing Incumbent Worker Training

- All respondents report providing skill enhancement training to RNs, LPNs, and to Certified Nurse Assistants or Home Health Aides (if they employ them). Those who employ Medical Technologists and Radiology Technicians also provide them with skill enhancement opportunities.
- Career advancement training is provided by all respondents, most commonly for RNs, LPNs, CNAs, and the rehabilitation therapy staff. (Chart 4- Career Advancement Training)



- The employers are providing a great deal of training to staff, whether for skill enhancement or career advancement. The results seem to support the finding that most training is being done in-house, on-the-job by existing staff. (Chart 5 – Source of Training)



- Almost half of respondents ranked cost as the greatest barrier to training. Scheduling was cited as one of the top three barriers to training, as were issues relating to training program offerings – whether due to lack of programs or nearby providers, difficulty accessing training slots, or the difficulty committing to the length of training programs. Staff readiness also was mentioned as an impediment to providing training.

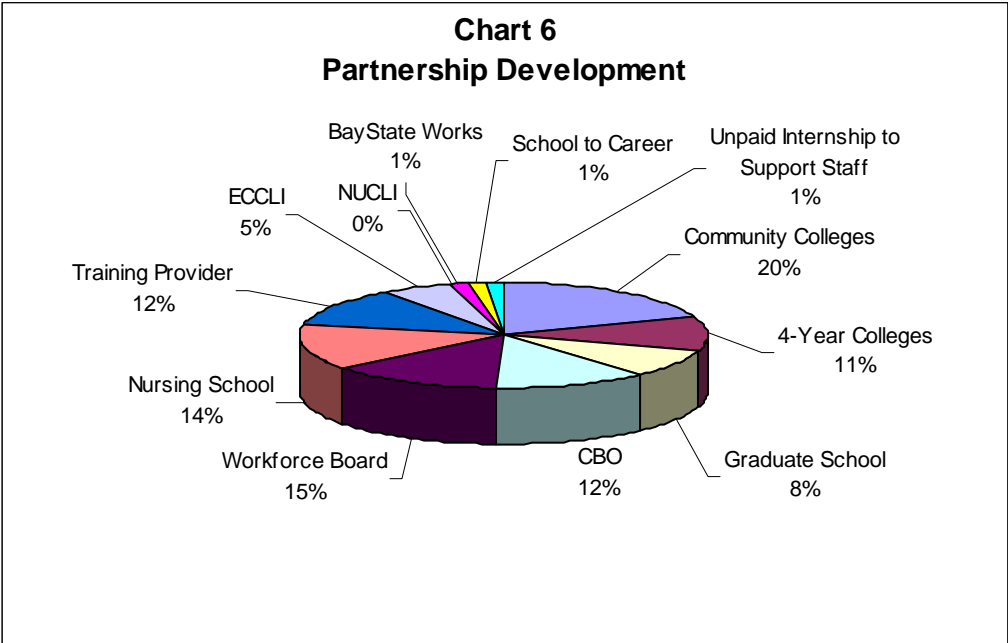
Approaches to Workforce Development

- Benefits most widely provided to further workforce skills included tuition reimbursement, on-site classes, and student internships. Employers also cited loan forgiveness programs, stipends, scholarships, and in-service training as benefits offered to employees.
- Strategies used by employers to recruit new hires include School-To-Career programs, job shadowing, open houses, and branding to set themselves apart

from competitors. In an effort to increase staff retention employers report offering career development programs, career counseling, mentoring and utilizing the principles of case management to help workers balance work/life issues. Flexible schedules and four-day work weeks are other incentives used to attract or retain workers.

Partnership Development

- Collaboration on workforce development was widely reported. Most employers have worked with community colleges (20%), Workforce Boards (15%) and Nursing schools (14%). (Chart 6 – Partnership Development)



Resources and Information

- All respondents indicated they would use a website offering clearinghouse information, especially to connect with other health care industry leaders, and Education and Training providers. They also seek access to workforce development and labor market information.

Coordination of Workforce Development Efforts

- Respondents were asked to indicate if they had an interest in joint purchase of services in categories ranging from curricula and technical skills training, to diagnostic monitoring equipment and e-learning. (Chart 7- Interest in Coordination of Efforts)

Chart 7
Interest in Coordination of Workforce Efforts

