

Growing Economy Poses Issue for Hiring Health Workers



April 4, 2014 — Two newly released reports show that nonprofits employ 14.5% of Massachusetts workers, with health care workers accounting for a slight majority of all nonprofit employees, but as the economy continues to improve it will become increasingly difficult to recruit and retain workers in low wage jobs such as personal care aides and home health aides.

Health care workers comprise 51%, or 232,509, of the 455,900 people working in the Massachusetts nonprofit sector, according to a profile developed by Independent Sector, a national organization that connects nonprofits, foundations, and corporations. Others working in the sector include:

- Educational services: 25%
- Social assistant: 10%
- Religious, grantmaking, civic, and professional organizations: 5%
- Professional, scientific, and technical services: 4%
- All others: 6%

The 38,198 nonprofits that make up the state's sector include 63% that are 501(c)(3) public charities and 11% that are private and public foundations. The remainder includes 501(c) organizations that includes civic leagues, chambers of commerce, veterans organizations, and other entities.

Human Services Employment Growth Outpaces Rest of State

Human services employment in Massachusetts has experienced significant growth since 2003 (47.9%), outpacing expected growth of 37.5% overall between 2004 and 2014, according to a study commissioned by the **Providers Council**, a statewide association of health and human service agencies.

The analysis, conducted by the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth and the Donahue Institute, found that “a significant amount of this growth may be in part-time employment given that 41% percent of workers are part-time.”

Many human services workers are also paid less than other workers. The study found that nearly one-fifth earn of human services workers earn at or below 200% of the poverty level, compared to 11% of health care workers, and 13% of workers in all other industries.

Home health care workers in 2012 earned an hourly average of \$12.80, below the so-called economic independence wage of \$13.65 per hour.

As the economy grows, and the population ages, demand for services will increase, the study concluded, citing forecasted 68% growth in employment related to services to the elderly and disabled between 2012 and 2022.

“As the economy improves, it will again become increasingly difficult to recruit and retain workers in low wage jobs such as personal care aides and home health aides,” the study noted.