

2026 Long-Term Care Imperative Survey

Key messages and talking points

1. The workforce shortage remains severe.

Minnesota's long-term care workforce is still operating with massive staffing shortages.

- Vacancies in key positions remain about 11,750 statewide.
- CNA/caregiver vacancies have dropped significantly since 2022 but still represent the largest workforce gap (7,700 positions).
- RN vacancies remain over 1,300 statewide and have recently increased slightly.

Advocacy framing: Aging services providers in Minnesota are still short thousands of caregivers needed to serve seniors.

2. Workforce pressures are directly limiting access to care for Minnesota seniors.

Staffing shortages are still affecting whether providers can admit or serve residents.

- 35% of nursing facilities have waiting lists.
- On average, nursing facilities must defer more than 13 admissions per month because of limited staffing and capacity.
- Workforce pressures, specifically the lack of available staff, are one of the major reasons nursing homes are forced to decline admissions.

Advocacy framing: Workforce shortages are not just an employment issue—they are restricting access to care for older Minnesotans seeking care—whether that's leaving a hospital or other setting.

3. Financial stability remains fragile across the long-term care system.

- Even as margins improve slightly, many providers lack financial cushions, limiting their ability to make capital improvements and/or investments in staff.
- Over 25% of nursing facilities and more than 50% of assisted living providers have exhausted or never had financial reserves.
- More than half of providers do not have access to a line of credit.

Advocacy framing: Many providers are operating with little or no financial safety net, making them highly vulnerable to policy or funding changes, which have a direct impact on affordability and access to care for Minnesota seniors.

4. New state policies are negatively impacting the care seniors receive.

Nursing home rate caps and wage mandates create an untenable situation for providers, forcing them to make difficult tradeoffs that can have negative consequences for seniors.

- Over 70% of nursing facilities plan to lower wage increases for workers not covered by the minimum wage standard.
- 65% plan to reduce non-staffing costs that impact residents.
- Nearly 60% expect to delay infrastructure investments.

Advocacy framing: Without sustainable funding, providers must make difficult tradeoffs that can impact staff and residents.

5. Already strained affordability for those seeking assisted living options will only worsen due to major cost impacts from the NHWSB wage mandates.

Many assisted living providers expect the Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board's rules to significantly increase costs.

- About half say they will need to raise private-pay rates to residents afford wage increases.
- Elderly Waiver rates will not increase to reflect the rising costs.
- Another 23% say they do not know how they will pay for them.

Advocacy framing: New workforce standards will increase costs and could drive higher private-pay rates for seniors, further harming affordability and access to care.