

HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE STORYBOOK

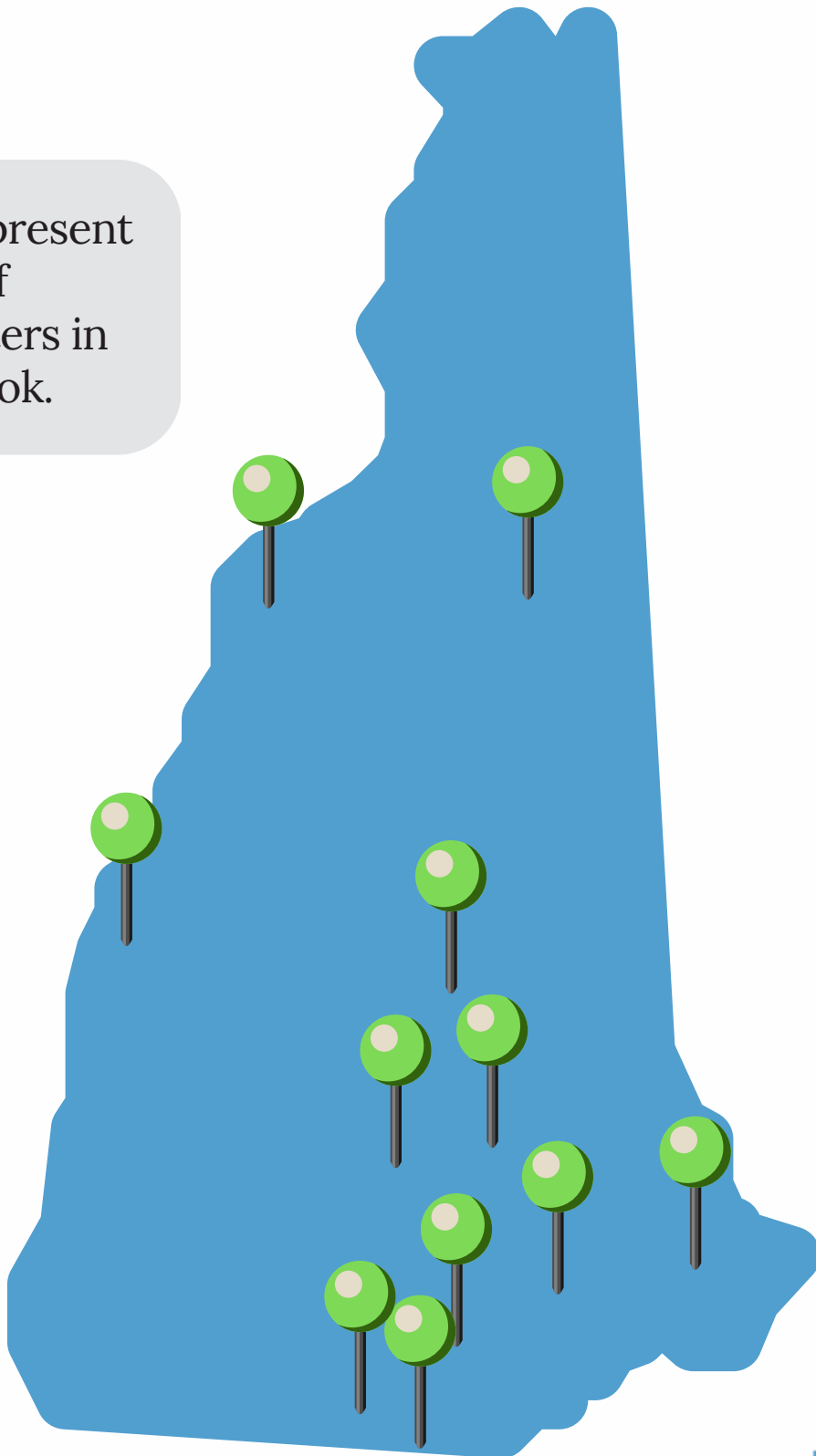


**Stories from around the Granite
State about the impact of the health
care workforce shortage**

STORIES ACROSS THE STATE

Granite Staters are **struggling** to access the health care they need when they need it. This is seen **across the state**.

The pins represent the towns of Granite Staters in this storybook.





My mother was a single parent and because of that when it was her time to retire, she was extremely poor and had several chronic conditions. She had to rely on direct support providers to come into her home to help her with daily living. She died during COVID due to having no one to help her bathe, go shopping, and get her to her doctor appointments. The direct care workforce is in dire need of funding, better pay, better insurance, benefits and the understanding of how very valuable they are to our communities. **They can literally mean the difference between life or death for our loved ones.** I am a New Hampshire resident and so was she.



Lori Jean Raymond, Loudon



I'm a caregiver for my husband, an older adult who has Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. **I've put my own health on the backburner for years** to take care of him. There used to be one church-based, adult day program in our area, but it **closed down due to staffing shortages**. They weren't able to take my husband anyways since he's a wanderer, and they didn't have enough volunteers to keep an eye on him. I wish I had more support and didn't have to do this alone.



Mary Ruppert, Lyman





Over the last year, I started to have increasing muscle and joint pain. My PCP referred me to a specialist at a New Hampshire hospital. My PCP later received a letter that I couldn't be seen by the specialist because I didn't have severe enough symptoms.

A few years ago, I was experiencing some memory loss, so my PCP recommended a neuropsychology evaluation. **Finding a provider that was covered by my insurance was difficult.** That same hospital accepted my insurance so I decided to start there. My PCP made a referral twice in two different years and the hospital never gave me an appointment. I ended up going south to Massachusetts for the evaluation and am **now on the hook for thousands of dollars in payment for this evaluation**, despite my inability to find care at the New Hampshire hospital that accepted my insurance.

After one of my appointments, the regular scheduler was out of the office and so I couldn't schedule my next appointment at the time. I was told that I would be called by the scheduling office to make the appointment. I was never contacted.



Patient, Manchester





When my family moved to Concord from Nashua, the only way I could get my toddler into a local pediatrician's office was to give birth to my son, who was able to get in since I used the same office for my obstetric care, and then they let her in as his sibling. **If there wasn't such a workforce shortage, we wouldn't have had to go months without a local pediatrician for her.** We ended up needing to use a local urgent care for an appointment for her one time that summer when her eye swelled shut because we didn't have a local doctor.

I also continue to travel to Nashua for dermatology care, as it has been four years since we moved and we still haven't been able to find a dermatologist in Concord. My mother, a melanoma survivor who lives in Chichester, also travels to Nashua for dermatology care. We are lucky that we are physically able and can afford to drive, but not everyone can.

It's tough as a working parent with small children to find the time to travel that far for a doctor appointment, and I am sure there are many in my situation who might even skip necessary appointments because of the inconvenience. Just this week, we were unable to get my daughter in for a same-day appointment with her pediatrician. We had to choose between sitting for hours in urgent care or waiting a day.

Investments in the health care workforce will help families like mine with concerns like these.



Patient, Concord





At Southern NH AHEC (one of three offices of our statewide network of AHEC programs), we promote recruitment and retention of the health care workforce by offering continuing education programs to health professionals, facilitating community-based rotations for health professions students, and promoting health career awareness.

Currently, New Hampshire is one of the only states that does not fund its AHEC programs, and our reliance on grant funds make systematic deployment of programs across the state challenging.

One student, Margaret, was interested in becoming an Occupational Therapist. In our program, she set goals and engaged in a panel discussion with health professionals who shared how they overcame challenges to reach their goals. AHEC facilitated a job shadowing at an OT practice, so Margaret could see up close what being an OT would be like. Margaret graduated from high school and is currently enrolled in an OT program.

Another high school student was interested in becoming a nurse. We linked her to an LNA prep program, which prepared her to successfully apply to nursing school.

Each of these high school students, with proper support and coaching, can realize their dreams and be our future workforce.

There is a lot of competition between manufacturing, retail, and health care. We need to invest in our health care workforce.



Paula Smith, Director, Southern NH AHEC, Raymond





Health care workforce shortages in New Hampshire have been growing at a concerning pace for years and now extend across both clinical and non-clinical positions. At Lamprey Health Care (a federally qualified health center), our vacant FTE positions include Registered Nurses, Family Practice Physicians, Family Nurse Practitioners, Physician Assistants, Behavioral Health Clinicians, and Medical Assistants. **It is critical that we invest in policies in 2024 to help retain our current staff – who we cannot afford to lose – and broaden the pipeline for the future workforce.**



Greg White, Co-CEO, Lamprey Health Care,
Nashua, Newmarket, and Raymond

We are in a very significant staffing shortage within our Community Mental Health Centers. We have benefited greatly from the State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP). **Riverbend alone has had 40 SLRP participants. Of the 17 past participants, 12 are still employed with Riverbend – an outstanding 70% retention rate.** Being able to help staff with their loans has helped them stay in community mental health, which is critical to be able to open services for those living with mental illness and addiction. We believe if we're able to offer loan repayment for our Bachelor's Level staff as well, we can keep the talent that is coming from our University and College system in our state.



Lisa Madden, President and CEO, Riverbend
Community Mental Health, Concord





The health care workforce shortage is one of the biggest challenges facing the 26,000 Granite Staters living with Alzheimer's disease. The number of folks with Alzheimer's disease is expected to go up by 23.1% by 2025.

The workforce shortage is resulting in long waits for diagnostics, evaluations, and ultimately treatment. This is happening at a time when early detection is more important than ever due to exciting research advances - underscoring all the more the importance of early detection and care for Alzheimer's disease.

Investment in the Area Health Education Center (AHEC) workforce development pipeline would increase the number of entry-level clinical staff, including direct care workers in NH - this will lead to more LNAs, and ultimately, more PCPs in the state, who are on the front lines facing our dementia issues.

Because of enhanced focus on early detection of Alzheimer's disease, we want to be sure we're doing everything we can to ensure these individuals are getting the quality and timely care they need to give them the best chance they have.



Jessica Eskeland, Senior Policy Manager,
Alzheimer's Association, Concord



DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO ADD TO OUR STORYBOOK?



Countless Granite Staters have a story to share about their experience with the workforce shortage and how it impacts their ability to access the care they need. If you have a story, we can add it to our storybook here.

Scan the QR code or go to investinnhhealth.org/take-action/share-your-story to share yours.



Your name and town would go here.

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