



State Hospital Workforce Shortages Worsen Despite Salary Gains and New Recruitment Efforts

State governments operate **195 state psychiatric hospitals**, providing care to **more than 40,000 individuals** every day, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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states reported a state hospital workforce shortage in 2026 — 17 called it “catastrophic,” the rest at least “moderate.”



STATES REPORTING ANY SHORTAGE, BY DISCIPLINE



Child psychiatrists had the most catastrophic shortages (8 states) — though most hospitals in this survey do not treat children.

WORSENERD MOST SINCE 2023

5 states saw psychologists (Ph.D.) shortages worsen to catastrophic — more than any other discipline

IMPROVED MOST SINCE 2023

10 states saw social worker (MSW) shortages ease — the largest improvement of any discipline

SALARIES ARE RISING, BUT RECRUITERS STILL CALL THEM INADEQUATE

\$230K → \$327K

median psychiatrist entry & top salary, 2026

+30.0%

largest entry-salary gain, 2023–2026 (pharmacists)

19 states

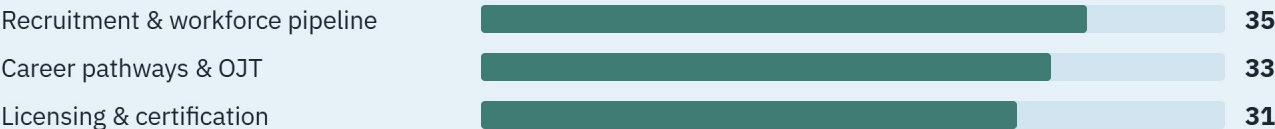
still call psychologist (Ph.D.) pay inadequate

28

states use locum tenens staff to fill hospital vacancies

Most often used for **physicians/psychiatrists (21 states)** and **registered nurses (19 states)**. Twelve states now face pressure to reduce locum tenens use, citing rising costs — often two to three times the cost of permanent staff.

HOW STATES ARE RESPONDING — OF 43 STATES REPORTING WORKFORCE INITIATIVES



Based on NRI State Profiles surveys: 45 states responded on state hospital workforce shortages in 2026. Source: NRI State Hospital Workforce Shortage, Salary, and Locum Tenens surveys, 2023 and 2026.