Nothing is more critical to providing high-quality, accessible care than rebuilding a health care workforce that feels valued and trusted. Trinity Health is thinking differently about how we empower, engage, reward and create a safe environment for our colleagues. We are committed to meeting the needs of all who serve with us.

COVID-19 has left our front-line caregivers worn-out and burned-out. Many staff have left the industry with no plans to return, the pipeline to replace is woefully inadequate, and those who valiantly stayed are challenged with additional burdens because there are fewer staff to do the work. In December 2021, the health care sector employed 449,500 fewer workers than in February 2020, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Hospitals have lost 95,600 jobs since February 2020, and 420,700 jobs have been lost at nursing and residential care facilities. The BLS projects the need for 1.1 million new registered nurses (RNs) for expansion and replacement of retirees and to avoid a nursing shortage. Similar shortages are projected in other clinical and non-clinical professions.

Like most in the industry, Trinity Health is experiencing a workforce shortage more dire than any we’ve faced in the past. Our workforce has more than 15,000 vacancies, including over 5,000 nursing vacancies. Competition is intense for these resources, and we are currently experiencing a high level of turnover.

The workforce crisis has impacted patient care
Short-term implications on patient care include long emergency department wait times and closure of hospital and nursing home beds. Over the course of the pandemic, studies have shown a sharp decline in routine pediatric vaccines, utilization of behavioral health services and poor management of chronic diseases. Over the long-term, patients in under-served markets may continue to experience delayed access to care.

Rebuilding our nation’s health care workforce will require health professionals, educators, administrators and policymakers all working together. Congress and state leaders have an important role to play beginning with making immediate financial investments in our nation’s health care workforce. **More recommendations including how to strengthen the caregiver pipeline and expand training programs to attract and support diverse students can be found in Trinity Health's Addressing Health Care Workforce Challenges policy card.**

The pandemic challenges Trinity Health to think differently about our investment in colleagues
Following are examples of best practice work to create empowerment, resiliency, job satisfaction and innovative care models.

- **Retention and Recruitment**: Trinity Health is launching new initiatives and pilot programs including retention bonuses, flexible benefits, paid time off (PTO) cash out, colleague referral bonuses and early access to earned wages. We are focused on the pay and benefits provided to our colleagues, with special attention to those who are the lowest paid. Colleagues, who have been with us since the beginning of COVID-19, have received two bonuses to date.

- **FirstChoice**: An internal clinical staffing agency that allows Trinity Health to utilize its nurses and clinicians, such as respiratory therapists, in hospitals across our health system. More than 1,000 traveling Trinity Health nurses and clinicians have served in other Trinity Health hospitals during COVID-19 surges to provide the quality of care our communities expect.

- **Colleague Well-Being**: We continue to support colleague well-being through:
  - Colleague care resiliency rounding: a real-time human one-on-one connection to colleagues in high-volume, highly demanding areas either in person, virtually or telephonically.
  - Virtual support groups: providing for individual counseling services (in person and virtual), phone coaching, self-guided video courses, etc.
Brave space for nurse leaders: webinars designed specifically for nurse leaders to pause, reflect on their experiences, share stories, take time for self-care and support one another.

Healing Experiences: sessions focus on bringing teams or groups of leaders and colleagues together to reflect on their experiences, share stories, take time for self-care and support one another.

- **Virtually Integrated Care**: Launched at MercyOne in Iowa, this connected care model uses video conferencing technology to address staffing shortages and capacity constraints. Patient rooms are equipped with all-in-one computers that connect to a virtual registered nurse (VRN) to provide a seamless patient experience including admission and discharge, provider rounding and pharmacy consultation. The virtual care team offers a role for experienced nurses who might not want to work in inpatient care or who might have otherwise retired.

- **Workforce Development**: Trinity Health has implemented more than 12 programs using the U.S. Department of Labor’s apprenticeship program as a framework that leads to stackable credentials and helps increase workforce diversity for in-demand jobs. Our programs include career development services and pathways that have resulted in $1 million in economic wage increases for colleagues in entry-level roles. In some markets, Trinity Health is the lead employer in creating industry sector strategy councils with other regional employers, community colleges and workforce development agencies.

*Trinity Health is committed* to creating a caring colleague culture; listening to the voices of our workforce is job one.

Trinity Health regularly engages colleagues through surveys and most recently through focus groups. Our colleagues’ suggestions and prioritization, which may vary by demographics and locations (e.g., age, job title, health ministry, etc.), include the following themes:

- More flexibility with work schedules including taking time off when it works best for them.
- Career growth and advancement programs (e.g., learning and development opportunities).
- Higher base pay.
- Additional paid time off to care for an ill immediate family member, or parental time off.
- Ability to gradually transition into retirement.
- Ability to carry over more paid time off from year to year.
- Additional educational assistance (e.g., student loan or support for course reimbursement).

In response to the latest COVID-19 surge, leaders from across Trinity Health formed a team to quickly address colleague resilience, retention and recruitment. The goal of this team was to rapidly understand the reasons for colleague turnover, develop strategies for both the retention of existing colleagues and the attraction of new colleagues, and provide guidance related to potential actions to address issues for individual hospitals.

At a high level, this is what Trinity Health has learned as being important to our workforce:

- The most popular reason people are attracted to and stay at Trinity Health is because of the mission and purpose.
- Adding additional staff to support workload demands is critical to our colleagues.
- A large percentage of colleagues indicate the benefits package is an important reason to work for Trinity Health.

We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with others to rebuild a health care workforce that feels valued and trusted.