

Health Care Provider COVID Survey Results

May 4 through September 2, 2020

About the Survey

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, MDH designed a brief survey to learn more about the changes Minnesota's health care providers are facing at work as they respond to the pandemic. The COVID Health Provider survey focuses on a handful of COVID-specific topics, including providers' concerns, time spent working, use of telemedicine, and related topics. The survey is designed to help better understand the impact of the pandemic and related policies, and the pressing concerns facing providers and their patients. The findings may be used to assess ongoing response efforts, community engagement strategies, planning efforts, and to forecast changing trends in the delivery of health care post COVID.

Responses are collected at the time of providers' license renewal. Individual responses to the COVID provider survey are private and protected. Licensed nurses, physicians, respiratory therapists, physician assistants, and mental health providers who have renewed their license between May 4 and September 2, 2020 responded to the survey. The table on the next page shows both the number of licensees and the share that each profession represents.

For additional information on the survey methodology or related questions, please contact lead workforce analyst, Teri Fritsma (teri.fritsma@state.mn.us).

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER COVID SURVEY RESULTS

Total survey respondents, by provider license type, May 4 through September 2, 2020

Provider license type	Number	Percent of Total
<i>Registered Nurses (including APRNs)</i>	13,402	43%
<i>Physicians</i>	7,884	25%
<i>Physician Assistants</i>	3,159	10%
<i>Licensed Practical Nurses</i>	2,160	7%
<i>Respiratory Therapists</i>	1,745	6%
<i>Social Workers</i>	1,663	5%
<i>Licensed Professional Counselors & Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors</i>	701	2%
<i>Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselors</i>	578	2%
<i>Psychologists</i>	218	<1%
Total	31,510	100%

*Due to a technical problem, we are not currently collecting data from oral health professionals. We also did not have the opportunity to collect data from Pharmacists, Pharmacy Technicians, Physical Therapists, Physical Therapy Assistants, or Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists because license renewal for these five professions occurs during the fall and winter. Therefore, they could not be part of this study.

Overview of Results

- Overall, 17 percent of respondents reported that they had not worked any hours the previous week. This share varied by profession, from a low of nine percent for respiratory therapists, to 30 percent for social workers. Of those providers who were not working, physician assistants were by far the most likely to report being laid off because of COVID-19.
- The majority of health care providers who were working reported that they had worked at least 40 hours per week. Eight percent of providers said they were working more hours than usual because of COVID-19, and 14 percent said they were working fewer hours.
- Approximately 15 percent of providers reported that their primary work location was some sort of remote site (such as their home), where they consulted with patients via telemedicine. However, this varied greatly by profession, with mental health professionals far more likely than others to be working in a remote setting away from patients or clients. An estimated 57 percent of licensed professional counselors (including LPCs and LPCCs); 54 percent of social workers; and 58 percent of psychologists reported that they were working remotely.
- More than half of all providers reported that at least *some* of the care they provided was remote—either via telephone, email, or dedicated telemedicine equipment (or all three). Again, this varied greatly by profession, with mental health providers most likely to be providing care via telemedicine or telephone.
- More than 85 percent of all respondents who were using telemedicine said they thought they would continue to provide at least some care via telemedicine after the pandemic ended.
- Nearly two-thirds of all respondents reported that their work had changed in some way because of COVID-19—for example, taking on new responsibilities at work, backfilling for other employees, and/or managing patients’ and clients’ COVID-19-related concerns.
- An estimated 23 percent reported that their worksite had been “totally prepared” to respond to the pandemic.
- When asked what changes their worksite had to make as the result of COVID-19, the two most common responses were “obtain more PPE” and “train staff in the use of PPE, patient triage, or other infectious disease protocols.”

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER COVID SURVEY RESULTS

1) During the last week, did you...

Profession	Work at least one hour as a healthcare provider	Work no hours as a healthcare provider
LPNs	77%	23%
RNs	82%	18%
Physician Assistants	83%	17%
Physicians	86%	14%
Respiratory Therapists	89%	11%
Alcohol & Drug Counselors	81%	18%
Licensed Professional Counselors*	91%	9%
Social Workers	70%	30%
Psychologists	87%	13%
Overall	83%	17%

*In this and all subsequent tables, the category of Licensed Professional Counselors includes both licensed professional counselors (LPCs) and licensed professional clinical counselors (LPCCs).

2) (If respondent indicated they worked no hours as a health care provider) Were you...

Profession	Temporarily laid off due to COVID-19	Retired	Quarantined and unable to work	Permanently laid off due to COVID-19	Not working for some other reason (family/personal)
LPNs	21%	14%	4%	1%	60%
RNs	18%	28%	3%	2%	50%
Physician Assistants	61%	4%	3%	5%	27%
Physicians	11%	51%	2%	1%	35%
Respiratory Therapists	42%	4%	6%	2%	46%
Alcohol & Drug Counselors	21%	8%	9%	13%	49%
Licensed Professional Counselors	10%	5%	3%	3%	78%
Social Workers	7%	8%	1%	2%	83%
Psychologists	10%	21%	0%	3%	66%
Overall	21%	25%	3%	2%	49%

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER COVID SURVEY RESULTS

3) During the last week, approximately how many hours did you work performing all duties of your job?

Profession	10 hours or less	11 to 20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 hours or more
LPNs	5%	8%	12%	62%	9%	2%	2%
RNs	4%	7%	14%	59%	11%	4%	2%
Physician Assistants	3%	7%	13%	55%	16%	5%	2%
Physicians	3%	5%	9%	32%	24%	16%	11%
Respiratory Therapists	3%	4%	12%	66%	9%	3%	3%
Alcohol & Drug Counselors	6%	5%	6%	61%	18%	2%	1%
Licensed Professional Counselors	4%	9%	13%	53%	16%	4%	1%
Social Workers	6%	5%	9%	64%	13%	3%	<1%
Psychologists	8%	13%	16%	38%	20%	5%	1%
Overall	4%	6%	12%	52%	15%	7%	4%

4) Was this more, less, or about the same number of hours you usually work?

Profession	More	Less	About the same
LPNs	8%	14%	78%
RNs	9%	11%	80%
Physician Assistants	6%	21%	73%
Physicians	8%	17%	75%
Respiratory Therapists	10%	11%	80%
Alcohol & Drug Counselors	6%	11%	83%
Licensed Professional Counselors*	9%	16%	75%
Social Workers	7%	14%	79%
Psychologists	9%	14%	77%
Overall	8%	14%	78%

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER COVID SURVEY RESULTS

5) In which setting did you work the most hours during the last week?

Profession	Temporary site or structure set up for COVID	Home health care	Long-term care facility	Remote location (treating patients via telemedicine)	Clinic or other ambulatory care	Hospital	Other
LPNs	1%	10%	34%	5%	35%	6%	10%
RNs	1%	5%	8%	12%	17%	47%	10%
Physician Assistants	1%	0%	1%	11%	50%	34%	3%
Physicians	<1%	<1%	1%	12%	42%	33%	12%
Respiratory Therapists	1%	5%	1%	5%	8%	76%	4%
Alcohol & Drug Counselors	<1%	<1%	6%	29%	47%	4%	13%
Licensed Professional Counselors	1%	1%	1%	57%	26%	3%	12%
Social Workers	<1%	2%	6%	54%	14%	11%	13%
Psychologists	1%	0%	1%	58%	27%	6%	7%
Overall	1%	3%	6%	15%	28%	37%	10%

6) During the last week, did you provide any care using phone OR email/text OR a dedicated telemedicine platform?

Profession	Yes, all three	Yes, telemedicine only	Yes, phone or email only	No
LPNs	18%	5%	20%	57%
RNs	36%	16%	15%	34%
Physician Assistants	37%	16%	16%	31%
Physicians	38%	16%	13%	33%
Respiratory Therapists	5%	2%	11%	83%
Alcohol & Drug Counselors	36%	16%	20%	57%
Licensed Professional Counselors	45%	32%	12%	12%
Social Workers	38%	15%	30%	17%
Overall	25%	10%	17%	48%

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER COVID SURVEY RESULTS

7) (If respondent provided at least some care using a dedicated telemedicine platform) Approximately how much of the care you provided was via a dedicated telemedicine platform?

Profession	100%	75 - 100%	50 - 75%	25-50%	Less than 25%
LPNs	4%	5%	14%	25%	52%
RNs	26%	12%	11%	16%	36%
Physician Assistants	11%	12%	14%	20%	44%
Physicians	9%	9%	11%	22%	50%
Respiratory Therapists	9%	10%	23%	13%	46%
Alcohol & Drug Counselors	35%	24%	13%	12%	16%
Licensed Professional Counselors	40%	28%	13%	12%	8%
Social Workers	35%	26%	13%	11%	16%
Psychologists	37%	32%	13%	5%	13%
Overall	17%	13%	12%	18%	40%

8) (If respondent provided at least some care using a dedicated telemedicine platform) Do you think you'll continue to provide care via telemedicine once this pandemic has passed?

Profession	No, not at all	Yes, some	Yes, frequently	Unsure
LPNs	6%	62%	10%	23%
RNs	5%	50%	35%	10%
Physician Assistants	4%	70%	17%	10%
Physicians	3%	63%	27%	7%
Respiratory Therapists	3%	59%	25%	13%
Alcohol & Drug Counselors	7%	48%	27%	18%
Licensed Professional Counselors	3%	59%	29%	9%
Social Workers	9%	56%	23%	12%
Overall	4%	60%	26%	9%

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER COVID SURVEY RESULTS

9) Please share any comments you may have about ways in which telemedicine works or doesn't work in caring for patients or clients.

Please note: what follows are representative examples of open-ended responses to this question. Responses have been edited slightly to protect the identity of respondents.

"Telemedicine can be very challenging for patients who need an interpreter."

"Should be allowed going forward. It's very helpful for elderly patients who have a difficult time getting to appointments."

"I work in mental health and I think it works well. We have fewer no-shows, and clients generally like it. A lot of people are uncomfortable coming in to the office even without a pandemic."

"It's okay for follow-up or non-acute care, but it doesn't work for evaluating new, acute problems."

"It's been a great tool for some patients, but some (non-tech savvy) don't have the ability to use it."

"Exacerbates existing inequities in health care."

"Telemedicine works well for me for people who struggle with transportation issues in rural areas."

"It works in the sense that I can still provide much-needed client care. But it doesn't work in the sense that there's inequality in clients being to access telemedicine."

"We need to do more of it. It improves patients' care and our professional lives."

"Telemedicine has been integral in providing services to vulnerable and oppressed populations that face transportation issues, scheduling concerns, unforgiving work schedules, family demands, and poor organization due to a variety of factors. It behooves us as social workers to fight for this service to remain a widely-available platform for services that have typically been gatekept for those with flexible business hours, reliable transportation, and available childcare."

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER COVID SURVEY RESULTS

“I have found telemedicine a great way to provide care especially for established patients with whom I am familiar. It is a bit more difficult for complex medical issues and for multiple concerns but I think my patients really appreciate the option. There are some things that we still need to see patients for.”

“The CMS rules going forward are unclear.”

“Works great.”

10) During the last week, have you treated or cared for any of the following underserved groups *more frequently* than you typically would?
(Select all that apply.)

Profession	Medicaid / MN Care recipients	Low-income or uninsured patients	Populations with disabilities	Immigrants/ refugees	Patients needing an interpreter	Other racial or ethnic minority group members	Veterans	LGBTQ population	None of these	Unsure
LPNs	18%	11%	10%	4%	7%	10%	11%	4%	35%	14%
RNs	15%	14%	11%	6%	11%	13%	9%	5%	40%	17%
Physician Assistants	17%	16%	11%	8%	12%	15%	10%	6%	39%	21%
Physicians	17%	18%	12%	11%	13%	16%	11%	8%	41%	20%
Respiratory Therapists	14%	13%	11%	8%	13%	16%	9%	5%	39%	29%
Alcohol & Drug Counselors	25%	26%	14%	4%	3%	24%	9%	15%	37%	10%
Licensed Professional Counselors	27%	27%	16%	6%	3%	24%	5%	18%	36%	12%
Psychologists	18%	20%	11%	5%	2%	18%	5%	12%	46%	8%
Social Workers	21%	20%	16%	7%	6%	16%	7%	9%	32%	7%
Overall	16%	16%	11%	7%	11%	15%	10%	7%	40%	18%

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER COVID SURVEY RESULTS

11) Has your work changed in any of the following ways as the result of the COVID-19 outbreak? (Select all that apply.)

Profession	I've changed employers	I've taken on work to cover or backfill for other providers	I've taken on new responsibilities	I've spent more time addressing patients'/clients' COVID-related needs or concerns	My work hasn't changed	Other
LPNs	2%	9%	17%	19%	35%	9%
RNs	1%	10%	15%	29%	32%	12%
Physician Assistants	1%	20%	17%	33%	24%	19%
Physicians	1%	16%	12%	31%	35%	14%
Respiratory Therapists	1%	10%	14%	23%	44%	11%
Alcohol & Drug Counselors	4%	13%	18%	29%	30%	12%
Licensed Professional Counselors	3%	14%	18%	49%	25%	14%
Psychologists	1%	11%	8%	31%	29%	15%
Social Workers	1%	9%	13%	32%	22%	13%
Overall	1%	12%	15%	30%	33%	13%

12) How prepared would you say your worksite was to respond to this pandemic? (Be assured that your responses to this and all questions will be kept private and will be used for research purposes only.)

Profession	Totally unprepared	Somewhat unprepared	Somewhat prepared	Totally prepared
LPNs	8%	14%	46%	32%
RNs	9%	21%	47%	23%
Physician Assistants	8%	21%	51%	20%
Physicians	7%	19%	49%	24%
Respiratory Therapists	7%	16%	51%	26%
Alcohol & Drug Counselors	13%	19%	46%	32%
Licensed Professional Counselors	10%	24%	47%	20%
Social Workers	11%	22%	49%	18%
Overall	8%	20%	49%	23%

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER COVID SURVEY RESULTS

13) Which of the following did your worksite do as a result of COVID-19? (Select all that apply.)

	LPNs	RNs	Physician Assistants	Physicians	Respiratory Therapists	Alcohol & Drug Counselors	Licensed Professional Counselors*	Social Workers	Psychologists	Overall
Add new staff	10%	10%	3%	5%	15%	9%	11%	6%	6%	8%
Close down, either permanently or temporarily	9%	12%	18%	22%	10%	13%	25%	16%	28%	15%
Add more beds	4%	12%	18%	18%	22%	3%	1%	6%	8%	13%
Train staff on managing their emotional trauma (e.g. Psychological First Aid, self-care)	17%	22%	26%	31%	25%	25%	22%	23%	21%	25%
Obtain a telemedicine platform	32%	27%	54%	44%	21%	52%	50%	35%	44%	35%
Create an isolation unit	31%	36%	37%	41%	49%	23%	9%	16%	13%	36%
Expanded the use of an existing telemedicine platform	20%	29%	38%	42%	26%	28%	43%	30%	42%	33%
Create an emergency preparedness plan	33%	37%	43%	47%	47%	37%	24%	29%	22%	40%
Take specific steps to keep non-COVID patients/clients away from urgent care or emergency departments	40%	41%	57%	53%	48%	30%	18%	22%	21%	44%
Acquire more personal protective equipment (PPE)	41%	58%	68%	68%	68%	57%	42%	41%	50%	61%
Train staff in the use of PPE, patient triage, or other infectious disease protocols	54%	56%	64%	66%	68%	47%	28%	33%	36%	58%
None of the above	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%
Unsure	2%	3%	3%	4%	4%	2%	3%	2%	2%	3%
Other	4%	6%	4%	4%	4%	8%	8%	7%	5%	5%

14) What are your patients'/clients' most pressing needs or concerns during this time?

Please note: what follows are representative examples of open-ended responses to this question. Responses have been edited slightly to protect the identity of respondents.

"They're worried about getting sick with COVID-19."

"Managing the following mental health issues: Anxiety, depression, isolation, fear of infection, excessive technology use, distance learning, and family relationships."

"Loss of income / financial concerns."

"Whether they'll contract the virus by coming into the hospital for some other procedure."

"They're wondering when things can go back to normal."

"Clients are feeling isolated and are weary of stay-at-home. They present with depression, anxiety, agitation, aggression, and suicidal ideation. I see high levels of stress with parents are working from and homeschooling children."

"My patients want to be seen for non-COVID procedures, but can't."

"Visitor restrictions."

"Uncertainty, worry, anxiety, loss of income."

"They miss seeing their families."

"They are suffering from the emotional trauma of not being able to receive the physical touch they would normally receive from caregivers and isolation from their loved ones."

"Testing."

"Substance abuse and mental health."

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER COVID SURVEY RESULTS

“Some are sicker because they won’t come in for fear of catching COVID.”

Most of my patients, who are elderly, are just staying at home. However, this creates a lot of mental health concerns and people are not as active as they used to be.

“Mental health.”

15) What are YOUR most pressing concerns during this time? (Feel free to include both personal and/or professional needs.)

“I’m worried for my WIC participants and their families. I’m worried about my kids or family members getting sick. I’m worried about all the healthcare professionals on the front lines. And I’m worried about the effects of racism during the pandemic.”

“I’m concerned about getting COVID.”

“We’re working with less staff, and I don’t like wearing a constrictive face mask over my glasses.”

“Working long hours and not being paid for them.”

“I’m concerned about getting laid off or having my hours cut more than they already have been.”

“When will it end? And what will the future be like?”

“Staying healthy.”

“Wearing a mask and a shield is very taxing for an 8- to 10-hour shift.”

“Inadequate PPE.”

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER COVID SURVEY RESULTS

“We have a hiring freeze and pay cuts, and pay cuts aren’t eligible for unemployment.”

“Trying to keep up with all the latest facts without becoming too anxious myself.”

“Staff cuts.”

“Trying to balance work and raising kids who are distance learning. More providers have elementary/early middle school aged kids than may be realized. There is the COVID work crunch and then a COVID homefront crunch. Not fun.”

“There is constant change for everyone, including the patient. I am worried patients are not getting the care they need for chronic illnesses and are afraid to seek medical care with acute illnesses. Also, mental health concerns of patients have significantly increased with kids being home from school, work changes, and the stress of COVID19/politics.”

“Stress.”

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