

CRAIN'S Health Pulse

NY providers on track to meet workforce investment goals

As the state looks to cut avoidable hospital admissions by 25%, a state Department of Health [report](#) shows that participants in its Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment program met midway spending targets for retooling their workforce.

The state's 25 Performing Provider Systems committed to spend \$415 million over five years and had spent \$247.5 million through September, the halfway mark of the program.

When the state began DSRIP in 2015, health care providers acknowledged that they would need to [dramatically reshape their workforce](#) to succeed in reducing hospital visits.

The new paradigm would require an army of workers to coordinate care and help people navigate services so they wouldn't unnecessarily end up in the emergency room. Demand would lessen for hospital-dependent jobs, especially nonclinical ones, as volume fell.

One of the largest fears was that DSRIP's workforce changes would lead to lower salaries or layoffs. The PPSs initially projected thousands of job titles would be eliminated. The department's report did not include the number of job losses through the first half of the program.

John August, a program director in health care labor relations at Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations, said that those fears haven't been validated. Instead, workers have stepped into new roles that are more in-demand—for example, some nurses and social workers have become diabetes counselors, he said.

"People kind of volunteer to get into something interesting and challenging," he said. "Hospitals are not doing that much purposeful large-scale redeployment or layoffs."

The PPSs spent money on recruiting for high-need positions, developing pipelines by working with high schools and colleges, creating certificate and college-credit programs for new roles, and adding incentives and bonuses to encourage retention and recruitment in underserved areas, according to the Health Department.

The workers that were most in-demand under DSRIP were nurses' aides/assistants and care managers/coordinators, the report said. Hospitals most often hired nurse managers to facilitate DSRIP work. In the city, the most common hires tied to DSRIP were certified home health aides and personal-care aides.

Statewide, health care organizations hired more than 2,000 care managers and care coordinators.

The workforce spending included a significant amount of retraining for employees, from physicians to administrators. More than 4,000 nurse managers and more than 2,700 primary care physicians received retraining to accomplish the goals of DSRIP. The PPSs also redeployed workers to better fit roles that met DSRIP goals, including about 1,300 registered nurses.

"These new-hire findings appear to reflect PPS progress toward transitioning care away from institutions to community- and home-based care settings, strengthening and expanding primary care and behavioral health, and integrating these services," the Health Department wrote.