

The Nurse Aide Training and Competency Evaluation Program (NATCEP): A Solution for Developing Nurse Aides in Long Term Care



Prepared by: Alex Deffer, Kiran Sreenivas, and Stephanie Kissam

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The demand for nurse aides in long term care is growing as the aging population increases demand for long term care services. In 2022, people 65 years of age and older represented 17 percent of the population in the United States. It is expected that the percentage will grow to 22 percent by the year 2040 (United States Census Bureau, 2025). As the population of older adults grows, the demand for nursing aides is expected to grow by 41 percent between 2022 and 2040 (HRSA, 2025).

Facility-based NATCEPs are a solution for developing the long term care workforce and meeting the needs of an aging population.

What are NATCEPs?

A NATCEP is a nurse aide training program that has federal minimum requirements and additional requirements by state. Minimum federal training requirements include:

- At least 75 hours of training, some of which must be supervised practical training
- A Registered Nurse instructor
- A curriculum that covers the following topic areas: basic nursing skills, personal care skills, care of cognitively impaired residents, basic restorative services, and resident's rights
- A competency evaluation

NATCEPs can be facility-based and operated by a nursing home. Alternatively, they can be provided by a college, high school, or proprietary school. Through partnerships, both facility- and non-facility-based programs provide an opportunity for nurse aides in training to get clinical experience in long term care.

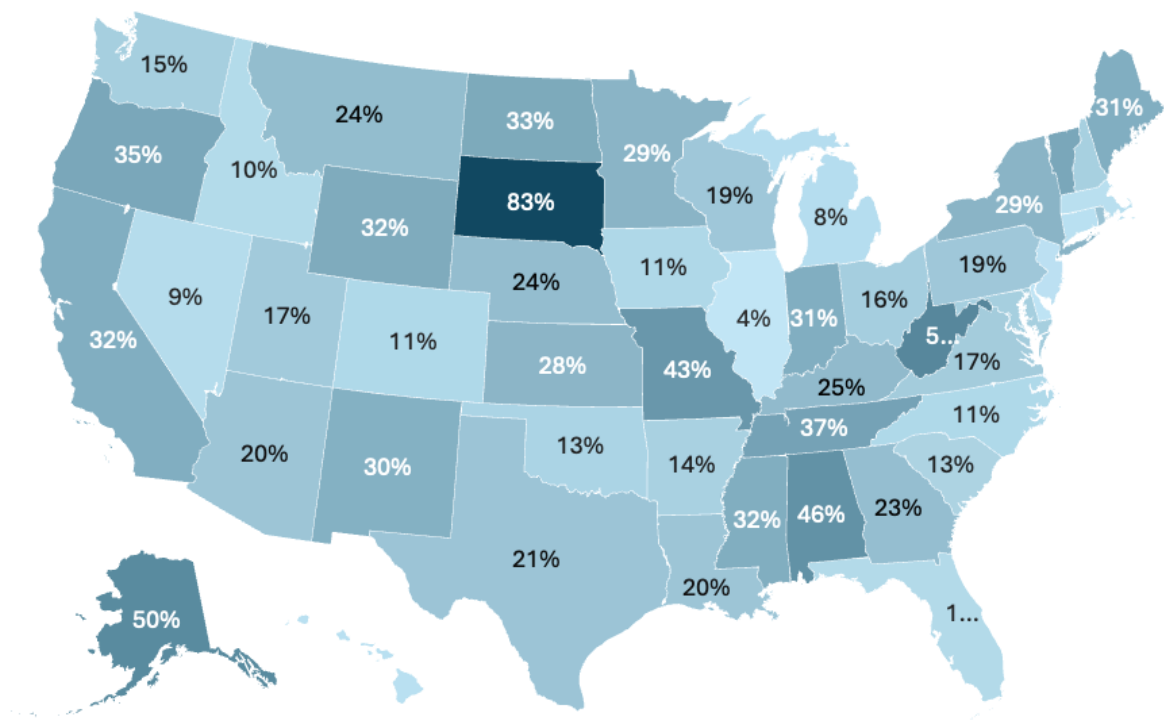
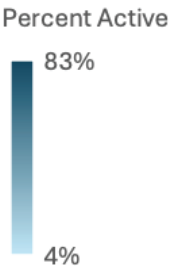
One in five nursing homes operated a facility-based NATCEP, training 40,000 nurse aides in 2024.¹

3,135 nursing homes, or 21 percent of all nursing homes, operated a NATCEP.

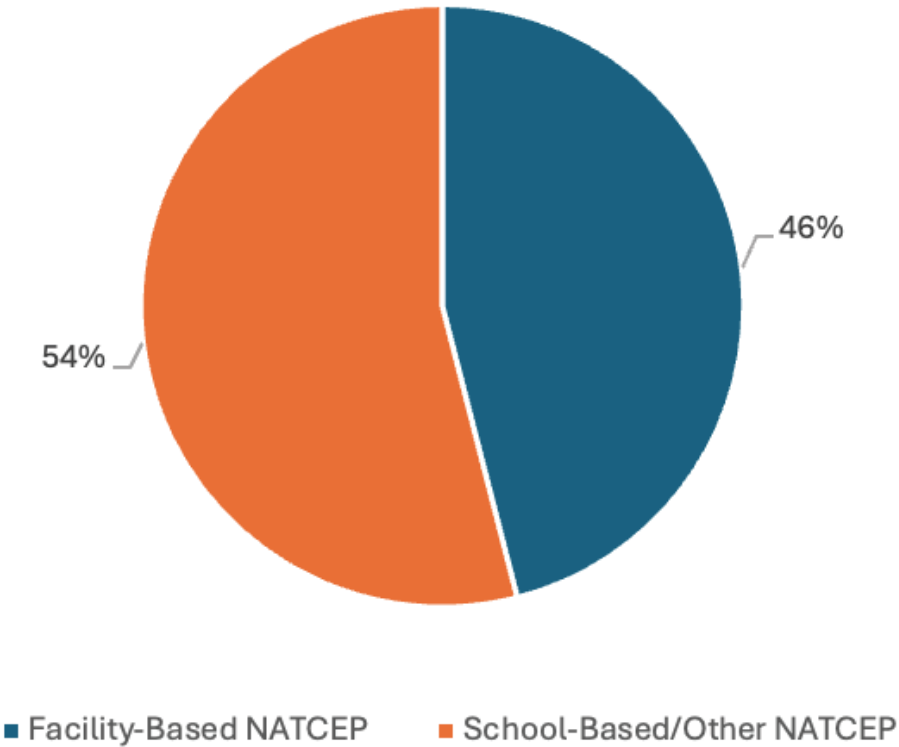
¹ - Using Payroll-Based Journal staffing data and CASPER certification data, we identified NATCEP programs and nurse aides in training in 2024.

Where are NATCEPs located?

Percentage of Active NATCEPs by State



Where Nurse Aides in Training Completed Training

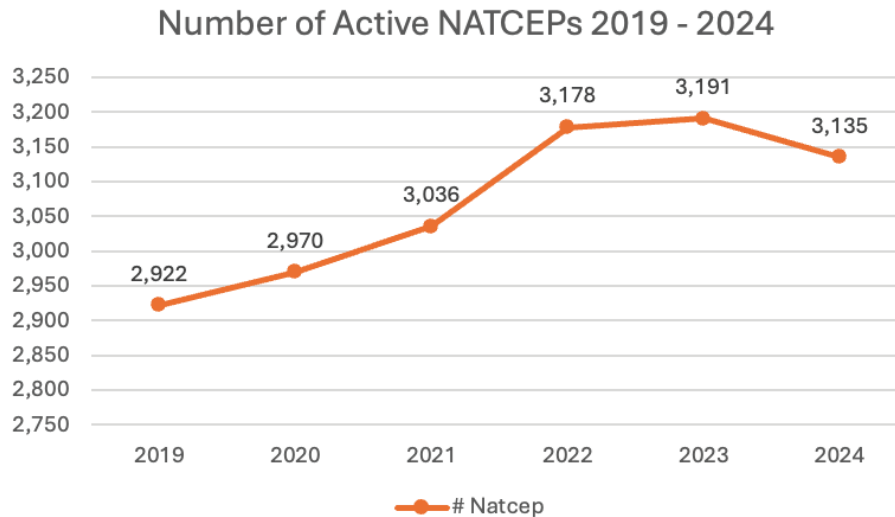


NATCEPs lead to more staffing for residents, particularly in rural areas.

Rural nursing homes were more likely than urban nursing homes to have a NATCEP. Twenty-nine percent of rural nursing homes had an active NATCEP in 2024 compared to 18 percent of urban nursing homes. In rural nursing homes with a NATCEP, each resident received 30 minutes more care per week as a result of having a nurse aide in training in the nursing home.

Current growth of NATCEPs is not on pace to meet workforce needs.

With only one in five nursing homes currently operating a NATCEP, there is an opportunity for growth. NATCEPs have been growing over the past five years but declined in 2024.



Barriers to Growth in NATCEPs.

A major hindrance to the growth of NATCEPs is the statute that imposes an automatic two-year suspension to programs in specific situations. If a Civil Monetary Penalty exceeding the threshold (\$13,343) was imposed for an issue such as paperwork compliance – unrelated to nurse aides in training – it will jeopardize an entire training program because of rules about automatic suspensions of the facility-based NATCEP or hosting clinical training for NATCEPs operated by local schools.

Some nursing homes that have been suspended from operating a NATCEP may be able to restart their program before the end of their two-year ban through a waiver. Some reasons a waiver may be granted are if it is determined there are no other nurse aide training programs within a reasonable distance or if through further oversight it is determined that the environment is adequate for operating the program. Despite the availability of NATCEP waivers, there were only 85 waivers approved in 2024.