



# THE ANESTHESIA PROVIDER SHORTAGE

A MEDICUS HEALTHCARE SOLUTIONS WHITE PAPER

# A MEDICUS HEALTHCARE SOLUTIONS WHITE PAPER

## THE ANESTHESIA PROVIDER SHORTAGE

By 2030, the United States could see a shortage of up to [120,000](#) physicians. Between the onset of COVID-19 and November 2021, the healthcare sector lost close to [half a million](#) workers.

In the field of anesthesia, there are currently [42,264](#) active anesthesiologists and [56,000](#) active certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs). By 2033, The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) predicts that there will be a shortage of [12,500](#) anesthesiologists, nearly 30% of the current staff. CRNA shortages are also predicted, especially for rural communities. By 2025, it is estimated there will be a gap of between 200,000 to 450,000 nurses for direct patient care.

The overall demand for physicians and advanced practitioners — including specialists in anesthesiology — will surge faster than the supply for the foreseeable future.

### ANESTHESIOLOGIST SUPPLY VERSUS DEMAND



The anesthesiologist market is battling an aging patient population and physician workforce. Over [17%](#) of anesthesiologists are nearing retirement, and [56%](#) are older than the age of 55. Currently, there are [7,727](#) people per one active anesthesiologist. The gap between supply and demand will continue to grow in the anesthesiologist space.

There are [172](#) anesthesiology residency programs in the United States, with 1,609 positions offered. In 2023, 1,353 medical students seeking an anesthesiology residency

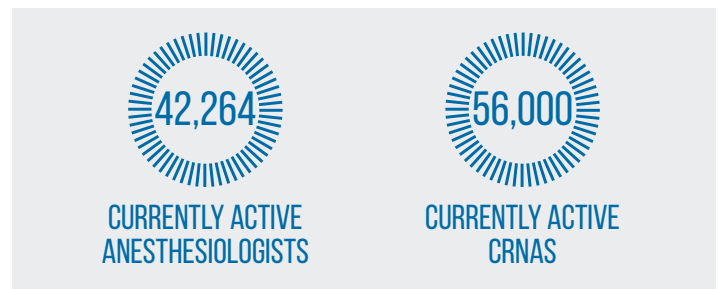
did not match, equating to [46%](#) of applicants. This fact suggests that there are simply not enough residency positions available in anesthesiology.

### CRNA SUPPLY VERSUS DEMAND



Of the current CRNA population, [62%](#) are 40 years or older, 36% are 30-40, and only 2% are 20-30. In addition, CRNAs represent more than [80%](#) of anesthesia providers in rural communities and administer more than 50 million anesthetics to patients each year in the United States. It is estimated that 30,200 new APRNs in master's and doctoral programs will be required each year through 2031 to meet the rising demand for care.

Starting in [2025](#), all new CRNAs will be required to have a doctorate degree, In turn this will likely cause a reduction in the number of new graduates. Today, CRNA school is already highly competitive, with an average acceptance rate of [24%](#). To meet patient demand, CRNA programs would need to more than double the number of new graduates entering and staying in the nursing workforce every year for the next three years straight.



## ANESTHESIOLOGIST JOB OUTLOOK

The employment growth of physicians and surgeons between 2021 and 2031 is projected to increase by 3%. Within that percentage, [1.1%](#) or an estimated 400 jobs will become available for anesthesiology physicians. States with the highest published employment include New York, New Jersey, and Illinois.

*Employment growth between 2021 & 2031*



## CRNA JOB OUTLOOK

The job outlook for advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) workforce, including nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists, and nurse midwives, is expected to grow [40%](#) from 2021 through 2031, much faster than average for all occupations. This results in about, on average, 30,200 openings each year over the decade. CRNA employment is estimated to increase by [11.8%](#) with 5,300 CRNA jobs. States with the highest employment levels in May 2022 include Florida, Michigan, and Ohio.



## IMPACT ON REVENUE

Surgical services make up about [60%](#) of a facility's revenue. The OR is one of the more challenging hospital sectors to keep adequately staffed and optimally utilized. Healthcare leaders continue to face challenges in how to prioritize the recruitment and retention of surgeons, anesthesia providers, and OR staff. These roles are critical to maintaining revenue and providing a continuity of care for the communities a hospital or health system supports.

## OVERCOMING THE ANESTHESIA PROVIDER SHORTAGE

Many healthcare organizations have turned to interim directors and locum tenens to fill critical roles and supplement existing staff. Others have implemented AI-based technology to improve OR utilization, reduced costs, and expand efficiencies. However, prioritizing your provider's work/life balance is one of the most effective ways to maintain a dependable, collaborative, and positive team.

Last year, [47%](#) of anesthesiologists reported being burned out. [54%](#) of anesthesiologists attributed their burnout to a lack of control or autonomy over their life, and [44%](#) attributed it to too many hours at work. On the CRNA side, [56%](#) of CRNAs shared that they felt very or somewhat burned out. [15%](#) of CRNAs shared that the most rewarding aspect of their job is having a good work/life balance, and [14%](#) said workplace autonomy.

Shifting the focus to create a supportive and flexible work environment is an effective strategy for retaining existing anesthesia staff. Implementing measures such as flexible scheduling, professional development opportunities, and mentorship programs can help your healthcare organization overcome the anesthesia provider shortage.

## IN CONCLUSION

Hospitals, healthcare systems, and patients are feeling the effects of the anesthesiologist and CRNA staffing shortage now more than ever. The growing disparity between the number of anesthesia providers and the growing job opportunities in the healthcare industry presents a clear need for action. It is crucial for healthcare organizations to prioritize addressing the anesthesia provider shortage to sustain quality patient care, inbound revenue, and improve OR utilization.

