



**Report on State Hospital Staffing  
Fourth Quarter Fiscal Year 2014**

**As Required By  
The 2014-2015 General Appropriations Act  
83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013  
S.B. 1, Article II  
Department of State Health Services, Rider 87.a.**



**Department of State Health Services  
February 2015**

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## **Executive Summary**

[The 2014-2015 General Appropriations Act, S.B. 1, 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013 \(Article II, Department of State Health Services, Rider 87a\)](#) requires the Department of State Health Services to submit a quarterly report on staffing at state mental health hospitals. The report is required to contain specific data on fill and turnover rates as well as a summary of any actions taken to improve recruitment and retention.

For the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2014, the lowest fill rate was once again for physicians, at 77 percent. The highest fill rate was social worker at 96 percent. The highest turnover rate is 35 percent for psychiatric nurse assistants and licensed vocational nurse. In the fourth quarter, psychiatrists had the lowest turnover rate of 12 percent.

Actions were taken during the fourth quarter to improve state hospital staffing. An approved request for establishing standard job descriptions (benchmarks) for psychiatric and medical clinicians was received. A workgroup was established to explore the Sunset Advisory Commission Staff Report on hiring and staffing management within the state hospitals. Action memos for the DSHS Commissioner and HHSC Executive Commissioner were prepared to address some of the issues and were approved in November 2014. Those issues include hiring salary barriers for internal candidates, job audits for reclassification of needed positions, and designation of certain approvals for staffing to allow more efficient business processes. DSHS will be monitoring implementation of these streamline processes over third quarter of fiscal year 2015.

HHSC has requested an exceptional item (EI) for the 2016-17 biennium, to address retention and recruitment at DSHS for several key staff positions at state hospitals. The EI would provide funds necessary to provide a five percent pay increase for a number of direct care staff positions: registered nurses, licensed vocational nurses, and psychiatric nursing assistants. A five percent pay increase was also requested for custodial and laundry staff and food personnel.

## **Introduction**

The 2014-2015 General Appropriations Act, S.B. 1, 83<sup>rd</sup> Legislature, Regular Session, 2013 (Article II, Department of State Health Services, Rider 87a) requires the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to provide a quarterly staffing report to the Legislative Budget Board, the Office of the Governor, and the permanent standing legislative committees that have jurisdiction over health and human services. The report must include data on turnover, fill rates, and use of contractors by state hospital and position type; initiatives undertaken during the reporting period to improve staff recruitment and retention; resources expended on the initiatives; and outcomes quantifying the impact of the initiatives.

## **Background**

DSHS operates nine psychiatric hospitals and one inpatient residential treatment facility for adolescents. The facilities are located on eleven campuses across the state: Austin State Hospital, El Paso Psychiatric Center, Kerrville State Hospital, Big Spring State Hospital, North Texas State Hospital (Vernon and Wichita Falls campuses), Rio Grande State Center, Rusk State Hospital, San Antonio State Hospital, Terrell State Hospital, and Waco Center for Youth. These facilities provide psychiatric inpatient hospital services for adults, geriatrics, adolescents, and children. Services include diagnostics, treatment, liaison with appropriate courts and law enforcement, and discharge planning. DSHS also provides psychiatric residential treatment for youth (ages 10-17) and the services include therapeutic programming and discharge planning.

The state-operated psychiatric facilities have struggled to recruit and retain adequate staff. In order to maintain staffing levels appropriate to provide patient care, the state hospitals have had to use contractors for certain clinical positions that are significantly more expensive than staff positions.

To help address the staffing issues at state hospitals, the 83rd Legislature appropriated \$14.7 million (biennium) to provide a ten percent pay increase for all psychiatric nurse assistants (PNAs).

### **Actions Taken: First Quarter Fiscal Year 2014**

The ten percent pay increase for all PNAs approved by the Legislature in 2013 was implemented during the first quarter of fiscal year 2014. As a result, the fill rate went up, but the turnover rate remained the same. Health and Human Services – Human Resources Manual (Chapter 7 Compensation, Section D Starting Salaries) limits internal applicants for a position in a higher salary group to a maximum of seven percent or the minimum of the new salary group, whichever is greater unless a higher increase is authorized by the agency head. Because PNAs are not the only job title in their classification, actions were taken to allow the PNAs to maintain their pay increase when they advance from PNA I to II, III, and IV and allow other internal applicants to receive the approved PNA salaries.

Actions were taken, within existing funding levels from the interagency contract with the Department of Aging and Disability Services at Rio Grande State Center, to begin to hire 12

additional nurses, a dental hygienist, and a settlement coordinator. Prior to this action, contract positions were being utilized, which is more costly than hiring employees. The hiring process has been difficult because of a shortage of healthcare workers in the area.

DSHS completed an analysis of the cost of locum tenens (contracted physicians and/or psychiatrists) and discovered that locum tenens are roughly double the hourly cost of an employee. To decrease psychiatrist turnover, DSHS elected to increase psychiatric salaries and pay for this salary increase with a decrease in locum tenens usage. The state hospitals have already had some success with recruitment by increasing the psychiatrist salaries for new hires.

#### **Resources Expended: First Quarter Fiscal Year 2014**

Appropriated funds were used to implement the ten percent salary increase for PNAs, as approved by the Legislature.

#### **Actions Taken: Second Quarter Fiscal Year 2014**

All the chief nurse executives were reclassified into a benchmarked position of the same name included in the Nurse V category. This is the first time the nurse executives have been in the same classification and it will enable them to take advantage of the Nurse Compensation Plan, which allows for periodic increases in the nurses salary based on experience and advanced education and certification. It is anticipated that this change will help to stabilize nursing leadership at the hospitals.

DSHS began evaluating the potential development of a Social Work Compensation Plan to address the loss of experienced social workers similar to what has been done for nurses with the Nursing Compensation Plan.

Two psychiatrist positions were converted to three psychiatric advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs). The use of telemedicine and employing more psychiatric APRNs continues to help address the psychiatrist shortage.

#### **Resources Expended: Second Quarter Fiscal Year 2014**

Existing funds were redistributed to convert two psychiatrist positions to nurse practitioner positions. DSHS also began to shift funds from contract psychiatrists to psychiatric employee positions using existing funds.

#### **Actions Taken: Third Quarter 2014**

Actions taken during the third quarter include continued efforts to convert psychiatrist positions to APRN positions, and exploring the development of a Social Work and Psychology Compensation Plan. Additionally, a psychiatrist equity adjustment was implemented in May. Prior to this adjustment, new psychiatrists were being hired at salaries higher than psychiatrists already employed at the hospitals, and this difference was resulting in the loss of some very

experienced psychiatrists. The equity adjustment should improve the retention rate for psychiatrists.

### **Resources Expended: Third Quarter Fiscal Year 2014**

Funds were redirected to initiate the psychiatrist equity adjustment in May, and it is anticipated that this action will have a positive impact on the turnover and fill rates.

### **Staffing: Fourth Quarter Fiscal Year 2014**

The description for psychiatric nurse practitioner was approved and used to convert three psychiatrist positions to psychiatric nurse practitioners. One of those positions has been filled and interest has been shown from qualified individuals for the other two. The use of these practitioners improves the clinical staffing of the hospitals as a substitute for hard-to-fill psychiatrists.

### **Psychiatrists**

The psychiatrist fill rate is 87 percent with a vacancy rate of 13 percent. The fill rate is up four percent over the third quarter. The psychiatrist turnover rate is 12 percent, a one percent increase over the third quarter.

### **Physicians**

The physician fill rate is 77 percent with a vacancy rate of 23 percent. The fill rate is up two percent from the third quarter. The turnover rate for physicians is 16 percent, no change from the third quarter.

### **Nurses**

For registered nurses (RNs), the fill rate is 92 percent, with a vacancy rate of 8 percent. The turnover rate for the fourth quarter is 28 percent, a two percent increase from the third quarter.

Licensed vocational nurses (LVNs) have a 91 percent fill rate with a 9 percent vacancy rate and a 35 percent turnover rate. The fill rate decreased by three percent between the third and fourth quarters.

### **Social Workers**

The social workers fill rate is 96 percent with a vacancy rate of 4 percent for the fourth quarter. The turnover rate for social workers is at 26 percent. The fill rate is up two percent from the third quarter. Experienced social workers continue to move into higher paying positions with the federal Veterans Administration or the private sector, leaving a less experienced workforce to provide services at the state hospitals.

## **Psychiatric Nurse Assistants**

PNAs have a fill rate of 94 percent with a 6 percent vacancy rate, which is two percent higher than the third quarter. The turnover rate is 35 percent, which is one percent lower than the third quarter. The Legislature provided a ten percent pay increase effective September 1, 2013 in an effort to improve staffing trends. For all quarters of fiscal year 2014, it appears to have helped the hospitals maintain PNA staffing levels. Some individual hospitals have shown improvement while others continue to struggle to fill positions.

## **Pharmacists**

DSHS state mental health hospitals have board certified psychiatric pharmacists working in the facilities and providing services to patients on the units. The fill rate is 91 percent with a 9 percent vacancy rate. This is a four percent decrease from the third quarter. The turnover rate is 14 percent, which is the same as third quarter.

## **Use of Consultants**

Appendix II reflects the actual number of hours contractors have spent at the hospitals. Terrell State Hospital has the most contractor hours worked with a total of 11,813 hours during the fourth quarter. Kerrville State Hospital has the least hours worked by contractors with a total of 175 hours. Nurses had the most contracted hours worked (16,908 hours) and ophthalmologists had the least (72 hours).

## **Actions Taken: Fourth Quarter 2014**

A workgroup was established to explore the Sunset Advisory Commission Staff Report Recommendation regarding hiring and staffing management within the state hospitals. Action memos for the DSHS and HHSC Commissioners were prepared to address some of the issues and were approved in November 2014. Those issues include salary barriers for hiring internal candidates, job audits for reclassification of needed positions, and designation of certain approvals for staffing decisions in order to allow for more efficient business processes. Due to the lag time of this report it should be noted that these memos were submitted and approved. DSHS will be monitoring implementation of the streamlined process over the third quarter of fiscal year 2015.

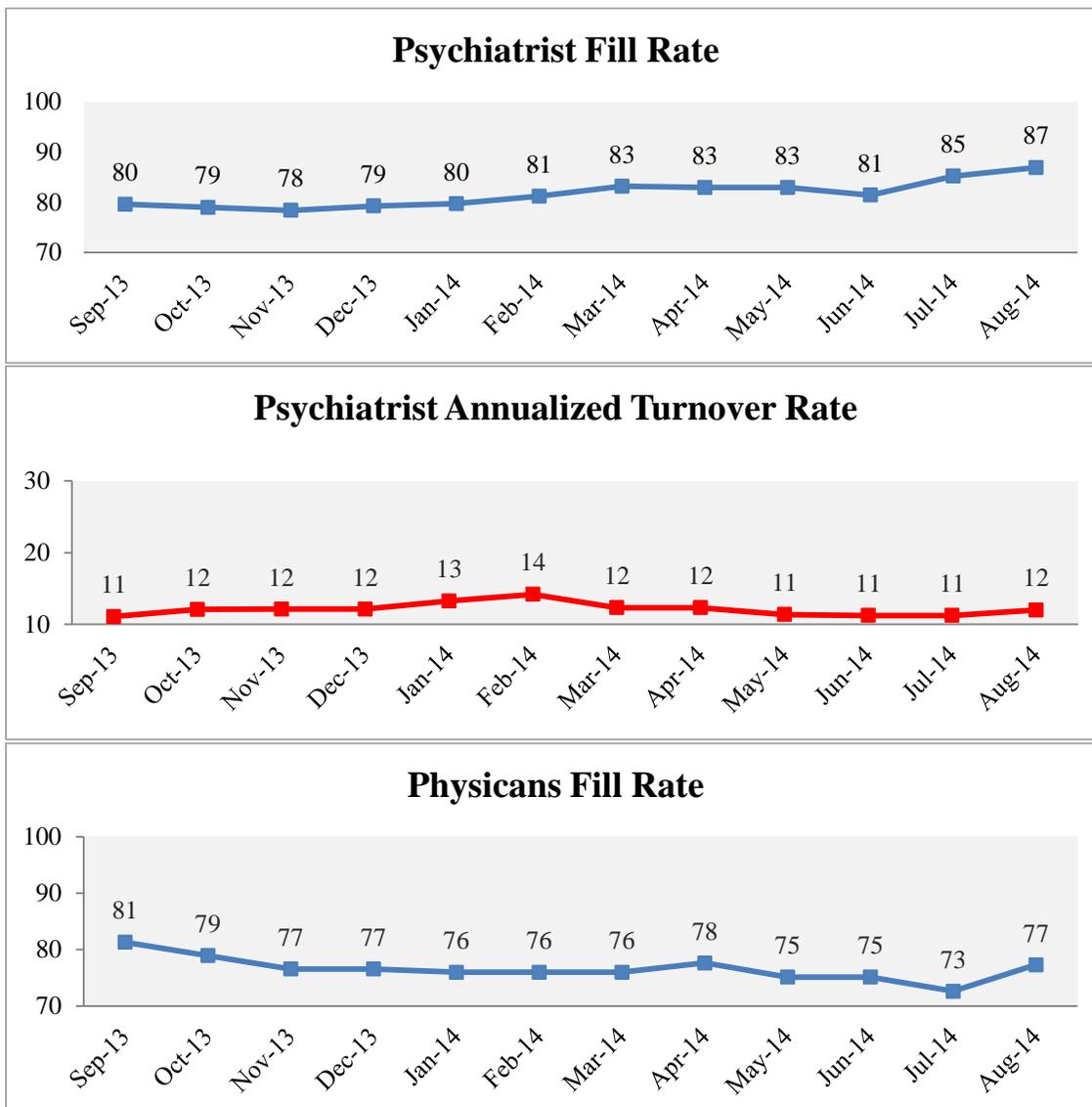
## **Resources Expended: Fourth Quarter 2014**

No additional resources were expended during the fourth quarter.

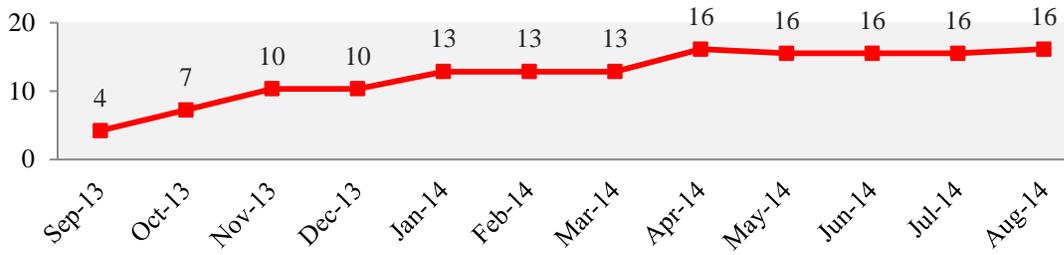
## **Conclusion**

Fourth quarter fill rates were higher for psychiatrists, physicians, social workers and PNAs than they were during the third quarter. Fill rates for psychiatrists, social workers, and PNAs were higher at the end of the fourth quarter than they were during the rest of fiscal year 2014. Turnover rates remain a challenge across almost all areas.

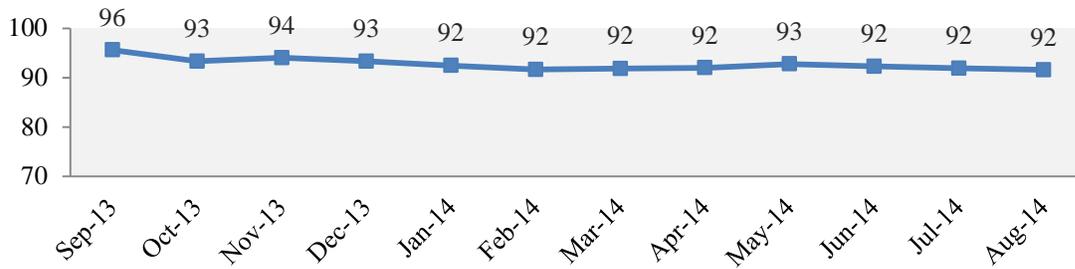
## **Appendix I: Fill Rates and Annualized Turnover Rates by Staff Position**



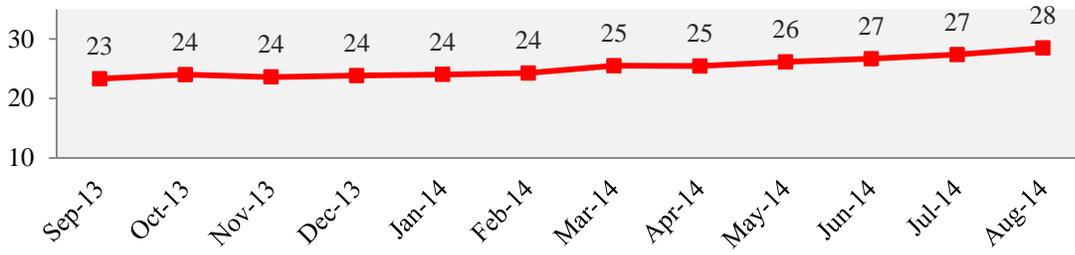
### Physicians Annualized Turnover Rate



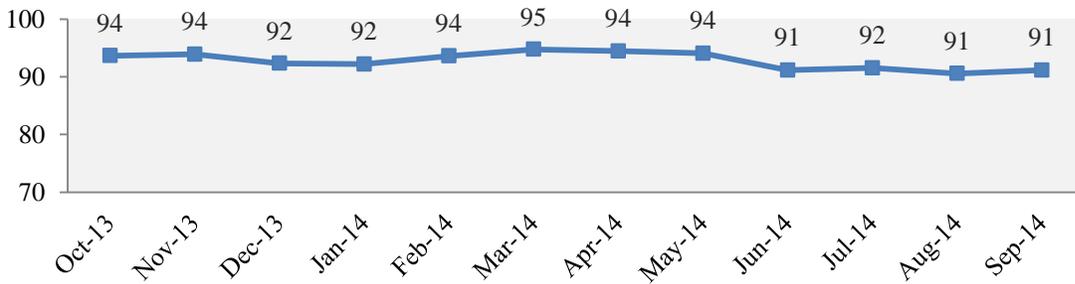
### Registered Nurses Fill Rate

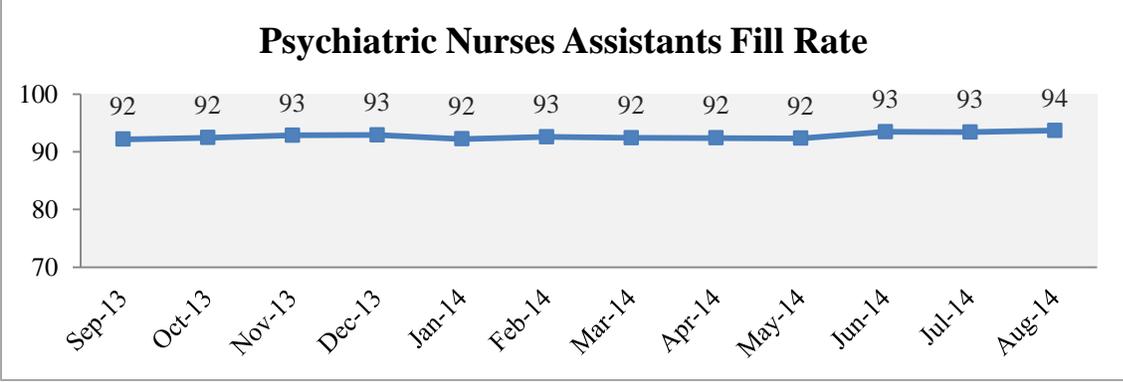
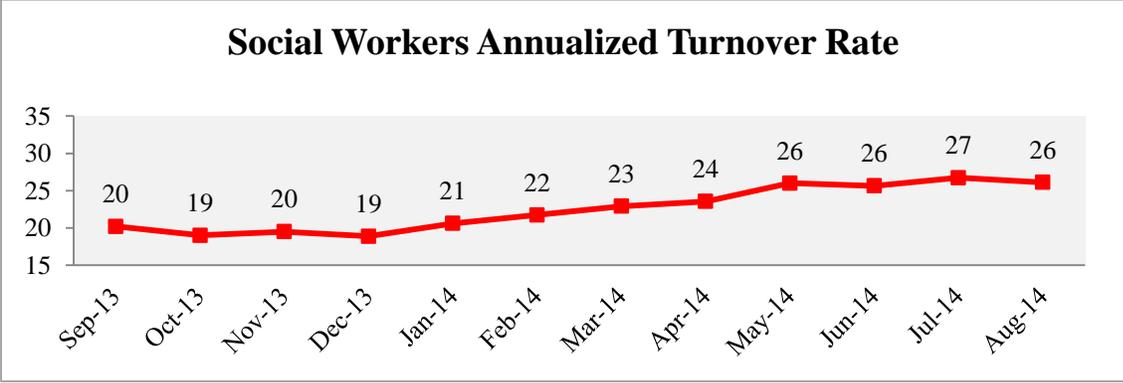
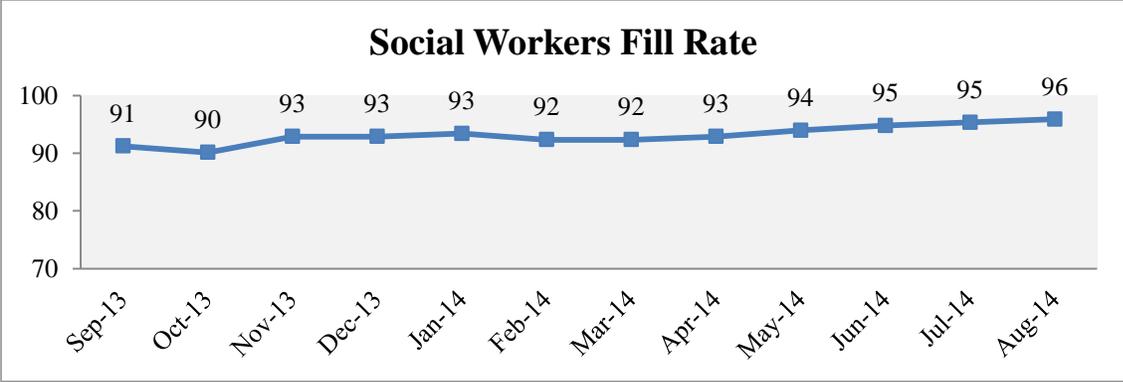
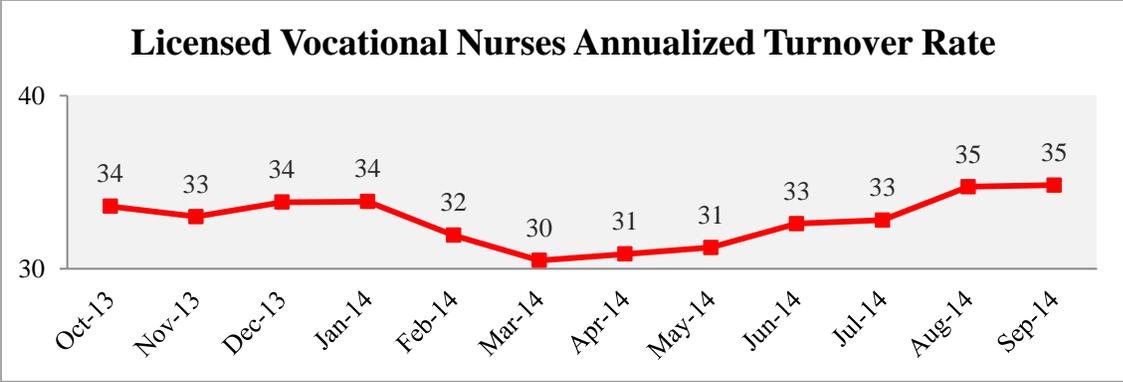


### Registered Nurses Annualized Turnover Rate

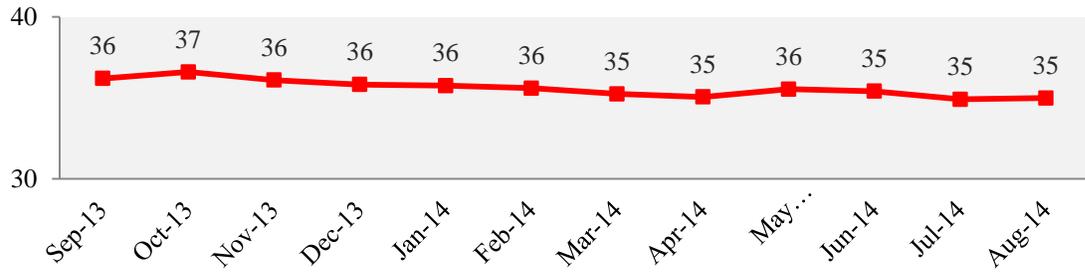


### Licensed Vocational Nurses Fill Rate

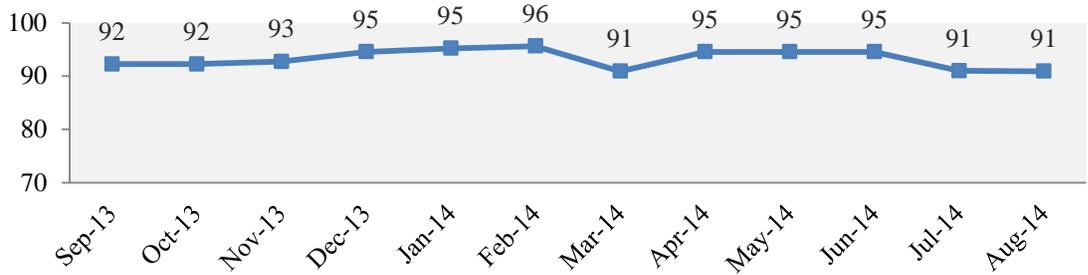




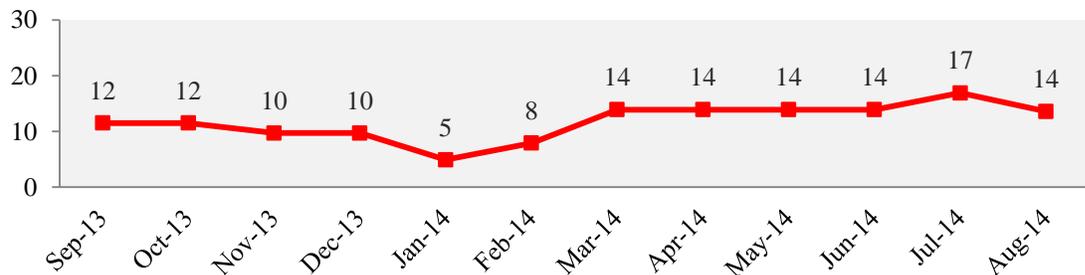
### Psychiatric Nurses Assistants Annualized Turnover Rate



### Pharmacists Fill Rate



### Pharmacists Annualized Turnover Rate



**Appendix II: Use of Contractors in State Hospitals**

Number of Contract Hours in State Hospitals Fourth Quarter Fiscal Year 2014												
		ASH	BSSH	EPPC	KSH	NTSH	RGSC	RSH	SASH	TSH	WCY	TCID
Locum Tenens	Psychiatrists	0	0	0	0	1,135	496	0	630	0	408	0
	Physicians	0	0	0	0	592	76	104	0	0	0	0
Contract	Psychiatrists	1,919	454	0	0	0	240	134	0	550	71	17
	Physicians	59	76	0	0	0	239	0	0	44	0	880
	Nurses	0	3,960	0	0	0	3,583	7,151	135	2,079	0	0
	PNAs	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,406	967	7,971	0	0
	Clerks	0	0	0	0	0	1,761	0	0	0	0	0
	Registered Therapist	283	0	0	0	0	506	0	15	0	0	67
	Social Worker	0	174	0	0	0	50	0	0	0	0	0
	Dentist	0	4	0	175	0	0	0	267	0	0	0
	Ophthalmologist	0	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	48	0	0
	Patient Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	108	0	0
	Psychologist	0	0	0	0	0	565	0	960	147	0	0
	Nurse Practitioner	0	0	359	0	578	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Dietitian	0	0	0	0	0	113	0	0	405	0	0
	Dental Hygienist	0	9	0	0	0	167	0	0	0	0	0
Pharmacist	0	0	0	0	0	92	0	224	461	0	0	

ASH - Austin State Hospital  
 BSH - Big Spring State Hospital  
 EPPC - El Paso State Hospital  
 KSH - Kerrville State Hospital  
 NTSH - North Texas State Hospital  
 RGSC - Rio Grande State Center  
 RSH - Rusk State Hospital  
 SASH - San Antonio State Hospital  
 TSH - Terrell State Hospital  
 WCY - Waco Center for Youth  
 TCID - Texas Center for Infectious Disease