



# THE STATE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STAFFING **A School District's Guide for 2025/2026**



# Welcome to Soliant's 2025/2026 Education Staffing Industry Report

School districts nationwide continue to face persistent staffing challenges, especially in special education and student support services. This report delivers an **up-to-date view of the education talent landscape**, offering regional and national insights to support informed planning and proactive decision-making.

All data presented here is drawn from trusted sources, including the **National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)**, the **Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)**, and **Lightcast Analyst**. These findings reflect the most current and comprehensive labor market trends affecting school-based roles today.



## Who is Soliant?

At Soliant, we're committed to helping education leaders meet staffing challenges with clarity and confidence. We believe that when students have access to the right education professionals, outcomes improve—and schools become stronger. Whether you're navigating immediate needs or preparing for the year ahead, we hope this report serves as a valuable tool in building resilient, student-centered teams.

## Inside: Talent Market Outlook for Key School-Based Roles

Including current employment trends, candidate supply, projected growth, and competitive demand for:

- [Speech-Language Pathologists](#) (pg 6)
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# Special Education Industry At-A-Glance

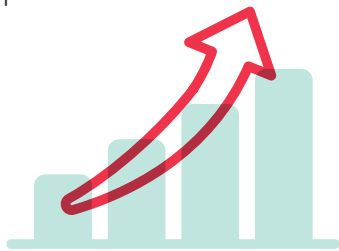
Across the country, school districts are grappling with a growing talent gap—particularly in special education and student support services. As student needs become more complex and workforce pressures intensify, the demand for skilled professionals continues to outpace supply.

**Rising Student Needs:** The population of students requiring specialized education services has been climbing steadily. In the 2022–23 school year, 7.5 million U.S. students ages 3–21 received special education under IDEA – about 15% of all students. At the current pace, the U.S. gained **one million additional students with disabilities in 2025**.

**Aging Workforce:** Nearly 1 in 5 professionals in education-related fields is approaching retirement age within the next five years, intensifying pressure on recruitment pipelines.

**Limited Graduate Pipeline:** U.S. universities produce **only around 25,000–30,000 newly licensed special education teachers** each year. This falls far short of need: public schools must hire an estimated 46,000 new special education teachers per year to replace those leaving or retiring.

**Competitive Labor Market:** Intense competition for credentialed professionals often results in prolonged vacancies and an increased reliance on contract and interim support. During the 2022–23 school year, **21% of schools reported at least one vacancy in special education** and 55% of schools reported it was difficult to fill special education teacher positions.



Recent findings from the **National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)**, **Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)**, and **Lightcast Analyst** highlight persistent shortages in key roles such as Special Education Teachers, Speech-Language Pathologists, School Psychologists, and Behavioral Specialists.

In response, many school districts are partnering with experienced staffing providers like Soliant to ensure students continue receiving the care and support they need. By bridging these critical gaps, specialized staffing solutions help districts stay focused on their top priority: student success.

## Turnover & Vacancy Duration

**High Turnover Rates:** Special education roles experience significantly higher attrition than general education. About 15% of special education teachers leave their schools each year – nearly double the turnover rate of general education teachers. Roughly half of new special educators exit within their first 5 years. This constant churn is fueled by burnout, stressful working conditions, low pay, and insufficient support.

High turnover isn't limited to teachers – many related service providers (like speech therapists and school psychologists) also face heavy workloads and burnout, contributing to attrition.

**Persistent Vacancies:** Entering 2023–24, about 70% of schools reported having a special education teacher vacancy. On average, public schools started 2024–25 with six teacher openings and only filled about 79% of them before classes began. Special education had one of the lowest fill rates – only 77% of special education teaching vacancies were filled with a fully certified teacher (meaning nearly 1/4 remained unfilled or filled by less-qualified staff).

Specialized support roles often go unfilled for months or longer. The labor market data reflect these challenges: job postings for school-based SLPs, occupational/physical therapists, and psychologists often stay open far longer than general teaching roles (a sign of limited supply). In short, special education related jobs have among the longest “time-to-fill” of any education positions, especially in underserved regions (Lightcast Analyst data, 2022–2024).

**Attrition Drivers:** Across special education roles, common factors drive high turnover. Difficult working conditions and inadequate compensation fuel an ongoing cycle of vacancies and attrition across districts. Paraprofessional support staff (teaching aides, SLP assistants, sign language interpreters, etc.) also see high turnover when wages are low and training is minimal. Other contributors include:

- Chronic burnout from excessive caseloads and paperwork
- Lack of administrative support
- Professional isolation
- Juggling legal compliance tasks (IEPs, evaluations) under intense pressure
- Overwhelming student loads far above recommended ratios

70%



*of schools reported special education vacancies at the start of the year. Some positions go unfilled for the entire school year.*

## Student Impact Metrics

**Behavioral Incidents:** Understaffed schools report increased classroom disruptions, disciplinary referrals, and even bullying or violence due to lack of adequate supervision and interventions. When there are too few adults to address students' emotional and behavioral needs, minor issues can escalate into major incidents.

Conversely, schools that maintain recommended ratios of school psychologists and counselors tend to see lower suspension rates and better student behavior – yet only 8% of districts meet the recommended 1:500 psychologist-to-student ratio nationally (most students attend schools far understaffed in mental health professionals).

### Delays in Services & Evaluations:

Federal investigators found that in some cases, students' initial special education evaluations (a gateway to receiving services) were backlogged, delaying the start of services for which the students qualified. Likewise, the U.S. Government Accountability Office noted that some

students did not receive services on their IEPs, or received them only after significant delays, due to special education staffing challenges. These delays can have compounding effects: missing early intervention windows, worsening learning gaps, and increasing frustration for students and families.

8%



*of districts meet the 1:500  
psychologist-to-student  
ratio nationally.*

## Compliance & Legal Risk Indicators

**IEP Implementation Gaps:** Administrators admit that staffing gaps have caused IEP services to go unfulfilled or delayed, despite legal requirements. Advocacy organizations warn that if a child's IEP isn't implemented as written due to a vacancy (for instance, no interpreter or no occupational therapist available), the school district is liable for denying FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education). Indeed, a court recently affirmed that staff shortages are not a valid excuse for failing to deliver IEP services.

**Audit Findings & Federal Scrutiny:** Federal reviews (e.g. by the U.S. Department of Education or GAO) have highlighted that many students with disabilities attend schools without key personnel (such as no school nurse, no counselor, or no psychologist on staff). These data gaps and resource deficits are drawing national scrutiny. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in 2024 convened hearings on special education shortages, finding that the shortage of special educators and support staff is directly hurting students' due process rights under IDEA.



# Speech-Language Pathologists

Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) are key contributors in school environments, helping students overcome speech, language, and communication difficulties. With rising demand and a limited talent pool, gaining insight into today's SLP workforce is more important than ever.

## Nationwide Snapshot



**171,773**

Currently Employed



**113,229**

Active Job Seekers  
(Matching Online Profiles)



**186,942**

Annual Job Postings



**7,204**

Employers Competing



**Nearly 30,000**

Approaching Retirement Age



**13.4%**

Projected Job Growth  
(2024-2029)



### Lead Graduate Programs

- Baylor University
- Emerson College
- Utah State University

## Market Highlights

**Vacancy Duration:** Among the longest-to-fill therapy roles in schools; **high demand** from both education and healthcare sectors makes competition fierce.

**Compliance Risk:** Delays in speech **evaluations** can result in missed IDEA timelines and unfulfilled IEP services.

**Student Impact:** Missed or delayed speech therapy contributes to **literacy delays** and **social-emotional struggles**, especially in early elementary.

## Hiring Strategy

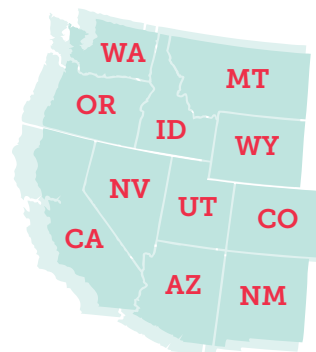
Districts should **build early partnerships** with graduate programs to secure practicum placements that transition into job offers.

Retention hinges on **manageable caseloads**, **dedicated time for paperwork**, and **robust professional learning communities** that reduce isolation. SLPs value autonomy and support; ensuring both can significantly curb attrition in this high-vacancy field.

## Regional Staffing Insights

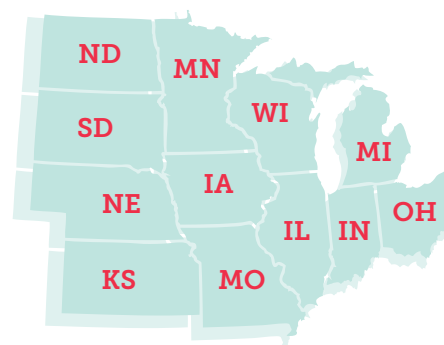
### West Region

- **Highest compensation nationally:** California's average SLP wage is the highest in the U.S.
- **Strongest job growth:** SLP employment in the West is expanding rapidly, often exceeding the national projected growth rate of 18% over the decade.
- **High competition** due to demand outpacing supply.



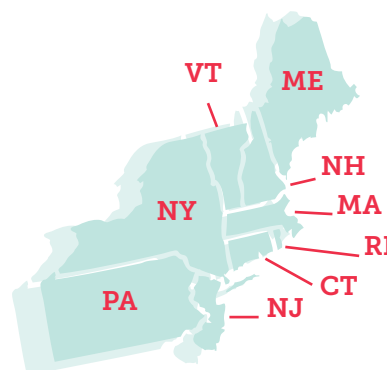
### Midwest Region

- **Affordable labor market:** Salaries are generally more budget-friendly for districts.
- **Less competitive for candidates:** Lower wages may deter talent from relocating or remaining in the region.
- **Stable hiring landscape**, but limited inflow of new professionals.



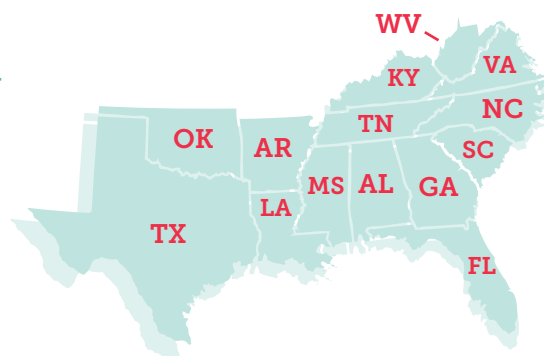
### Northeast Region

- **Balanced pay and opportunity:** Average salaries typically range from the high \$80k to low \$90k.
- **Strong hiring hubs:** New York and New Jersey alone employ 16,000+ SLPs combined.
- **Moderate job growth**, but candidate supply is not as deep as in the South.



### South Region

- **Largest overall SLP market:** Texas and Florida together employ over 26,000 SLPs.
- **Lower compensation:** Median salaries in the South are significantly below Western averages.
- **High volume of openings:** Indicates strong demand, but pay disparity challenges retention.



# Speech-Language Pathologist Assistants

Speech-Language Pathologist Assistants (SLPAs) play a supportive and impactful role within school-based therapy teams, working under licensed SLPs to ensure students receive high-quality services. As the need for speech therapy grows, understanding SLPA availability and workforce trends is critical.

## Nationwide Snapshot



**107,483**

Currently Employed



**4,575**

Active Job Seekers  
(Matching Online Profiles)



**19,476**

Annual Job Postings



**1,342**

Employers Competing



**Around 23,224**

Approaching Retirement Age



**5.9%**

Projected Job Growth  
(2024-2029)

## Lead Graduate Programs



- Ivy Tech Community College
- Hillsborough Community College
- Black River Technical College

## Market Highlights

**Turnover Risk:** Often underpaid and underutilized; limited autonomy without SLPA oversight contributes to dissatisfaction.

**Student Impact:** Critical for extending services in districts with SLPA shortages, yet role underutilization limits effectiveness.

**Support Gap:** Many schools fail to maximize SLPA capabilities, contributing to service backlogs.

## Hiring Strategy

Districts can expand their SLPA workforce by working with local colleges and creating structured supervision plans that align with state requirements. Clear pathways to becoming fully licensed SLPs can help with long-term retention, as can access to quality therapy materials and inclusion in school-based teams.

Investing in training and recognition gives SLPAs a stronger sense of purpose and belonging, improving job satisfaction and long-term commitment.



## Regional Staffing Insights

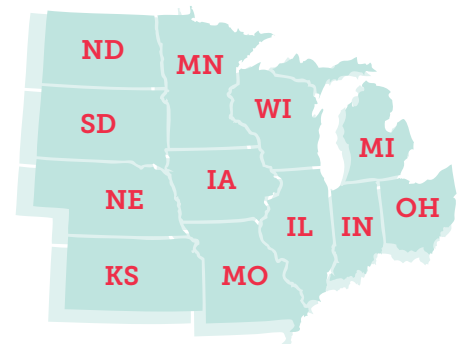
### West Region

- Leads in compensation and **growth potential** for SLPAs.
- SLPA demand is growing rapidly in tandem with rising needs—**projected 18–19% growth** this decade.
- **High competition** for talent due to robust service expansion and limited supply, largely driven by Western states.



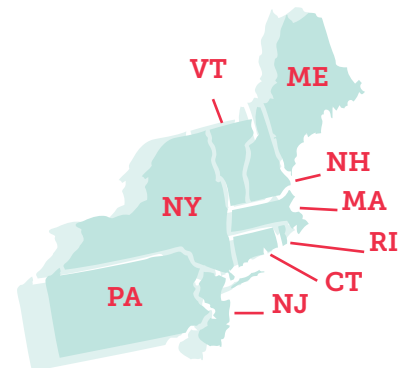
### Midwest Region

- **Moderate compensation and growth environment.**
- SLPA rates typically range from **low to mid \$20s/hour**, depending on metro or rural location.
- Offers a **stable supply of candidates** with less competition than the coasts.
- **Recruitment and retention** more predictable, but fewer dramatic opportunities for expansion.



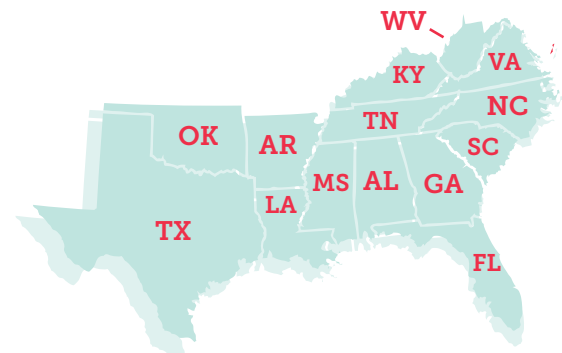
### Northeast Region

- **Similar to Midwest:** moderate pay and steady growth.
- **Balanced hiring market**—supply and demand are relatively aligned, though regional shortages still occur.
- A good region for **sustainable staffing strategies** without the volatility of high-growth markets.



### South Region

- **Largest SLPA employment volume nationwide.**
- **High demand but lower pay** creates retention challenges—many SLPAs may migrate to better-paying regions.
- **Attractive for entry-level staffing**, but harder to maintain long-term workforce stability.



# Special Education Teachers

Special Education Teachers are indispensable when it comes to delivering individualized instruction and support to students with unique learning needs. However, a nationwide shortage of qualified professionals continues to strain school districts, making recruitment and retention a top priority.

## Nationwide Snapshot



**222,281**

Currently Employed



**5,145**

Active Job Seekers  
(Matching Online Profiles)



**4,709**

Annual Job Postings



**1,412**

Employers Competing



**Over 47,000**

Approaching Retirement Age



**2.6%**

Projected Job Growth  
(2024-2029)



### Lead Graduate Programs

- Grand Canyon University
- Arizona State University
- Ball State University

## Market Highlights

**Turnover Rate:** Among the highest in K-12 — ~15% annually, with 50% exiting within 5 years.

**Vacancy Duration:** One of the hardest roles to staff nationwide; 70% of schools started 2023-24 with at least one open special education position.

**Compliance Risk:** Directly tied to IDEA violations when IEPs are unfulfilled or altered due to staffing constraints.

## Hiring Strategy

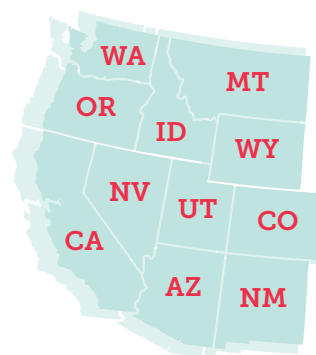
Hiring efforts should focus on “grow your own” initiatives, residencies, and alternate licensure pipelines to build a stable special education workforce. Offering contracts early, providing mentorship for new teachers, and reducing IEP-related paperwork are critical to increasing retention.

Career advancement opportunities, such as becoming special education leads or instructional coaches, can also motivate veteran staff to stay. Given the intense demands of the role, districts must create a supportive culture to reduce burnout and improve tenure.

## Regional Staffing Insights

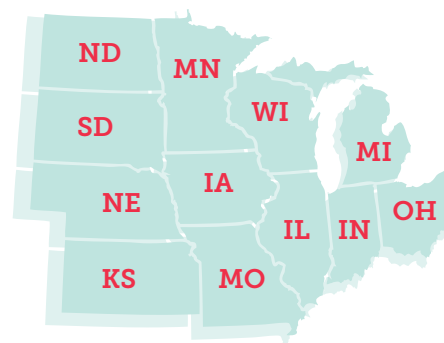
### West Region

- **Severe shortages:** Only 33.3% of Western schools reported having all special education roles fully staffed in 2023.
- **Chronic undercoverage** despite attractive compensation, driven by high demand and workforce scarcity.
- **Recruitment is highly competitive**, especially in urban and rapidly growing districts.



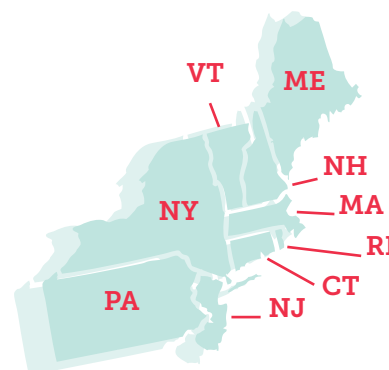
### Midwest Region

- **Lower cost environment** with more affordable teacher salaries (often 20–30% below Northeast rates).
- **Moderate staffing levels:** Only ~59.9% of schools reported full special education staffing in 2023.
- **Stable but smaller market**—useful for budget-conscious districts, though talent pipelines remain thin.



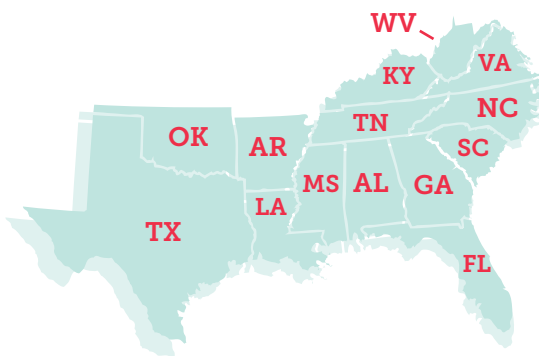
### Northeast Region

- **High compensation:** Districts often pay 10–20% above the national teacher pay median.
- **Better-than-average staffing:** Around 88.2% of schools report full-time coverage, though gaps still exist.
- **Limited candidate supply:** Despite strong pay, vacancies remain due to regional talent shortages.
- **Competitive hiring market** requiring early planning or external support to fill roles.



### South Region

- **Largest employment volume** for special education teachers due to the region's large student population.
- **High student-to-teacher ratios** in special education programs, straining service delivery capacity.
- **Frequent turnover and staffing churn** in high-need areas, despite high workforce volume.



## Talent Market Outlook

# School Psychologists

School Psychologists are integral to fostering students' emotional, behavioral, and academic development, particularly for those facing complex challenges. Persistent staffing shortages across the country make it increasingly difficult for schools to meet this vital need.

## Nationwide Snapshot



**62,124**

Currently Employed



**30,143**

Active Job Seekers  
(Matching Online Profiles)



**52,376**

Annual Job Postings



**2,378**

Employers Competing



**Over 14,000**

Approaching Retirement Age



**3.8%**

Projected Job Growth  
(2024-2029)



### Lead Graduate Programs

- Southern New Hampshire University
- Liberty University
- Capella University

## Market Highlights

**Caseload Overload:** Only 8% of schools meet the recommended 1:500 ratio — most operate far above it.

**Student Impact:** Shortages lead to **delays in evaluations** and missed opportunities for early intervention.

**Turnover Risk:** Isolation and unmanageable assessment loads drive **burnout and attrition**.

## Hiring Strategy

To fill psychologist roles, districts should build recruitment pipelines through EdS/ NASP-accredited programs and offer **flexible scheduling or hybrid assessment models**. Itinerant or shared-service staffing can help smaller districts manage needs while vacancies are filled.

Retaining school psychologists requires **adherence to recommended student-to-psychologist ratios**, protected time for proactive **mental health work**, and funding for CEUs and licensure maintenance.

# Regional Staffing Insights

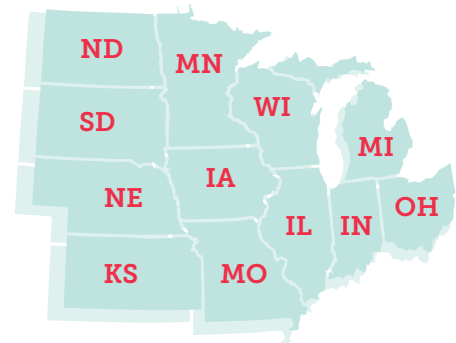
## West Region

- **Severe shortages:** Only 33% of Western schools have a full-time school psychologist on staff.
- **High demand, low supply:** Despite strong salaries, competition is intense and positions are hard to fill.
- Schools often operate **below recommended student-to-psychologist ratios**, increasing pressure on existing staff.



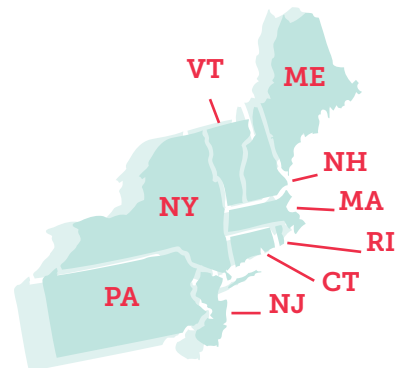
## Midwest Region

- **Lowest projected job growth:** Growing slowly due to smaller enrollments and tighter budgets.
- **Flat hiring outlook:** Few new candidates entering the pipeline; proactive/succession hiring planning are critical.
- **Moderate compensation:** Salaries often fall below national average, limiting appeal to out-of-region professionals.
- **Stable employment pool**, but vulnerable to future retirements without strategic planning.



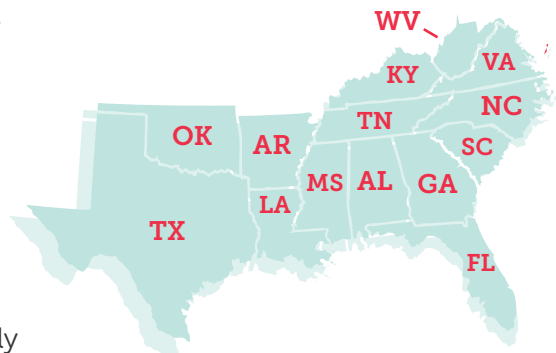
## Northeast Region

- **Strong student support ratios**, but few unemployed candidates on the market.
- **Steady but slower growth** in demand compared to the West.
- **Competitive hiring landscape**, especially in urban districts or those seeking bilingual or specialized psychologists.



## South Region

- **Largest employment volume** due to regional population size and student enrollment.
- **Retention challenges:** Lower compensation makes it difficult to compete with private practice or higher-paying states.
- **High turnover risk** despite large workforce, particularly in underserved rural or urban areas.



# Behavioral Specialists

The demand for behavioral specialists—including Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs), Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs), and Applied Behavior Analysts (ABAs)—is on the rise as schools expand mental health services and autism support. These roles remain some of the hardest to fill, reflecting a competitive hiring landscape in education.

## Nationwide Snapshot



**215,429**

Currently Employed



**44,307**

Active Job Seekers  
(Matching Online Profiles)



**36,599**

Annual Job Postings



**4,519**

Employers Competing



**33,073**

Approaching Retirement Age



**10.9%**

Projected Job Growth  
(2024-2029)

## Lead Graduate Programs



- Grand Canyon University
- University of Southern California
- Ivy Tech Community College

## Market Highlights

**Understaffed Role:** Not mandated in all districts, yet critical for **managing complex behaviors** and **reducing classroom disruptions**.

**Student Impact:** Absence often correlates with **increased behavioral incidents**, restraint use, and suspensions.

**Compliance Concern:** Lack of behavior **support** can lead to failure to implement Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs) or Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIPs).

## Hiring Strategy

Districts should seek candidates with ABA, counseling, or social work backgrounds and use **scenario-based interviews** to assess their fit for school environments.

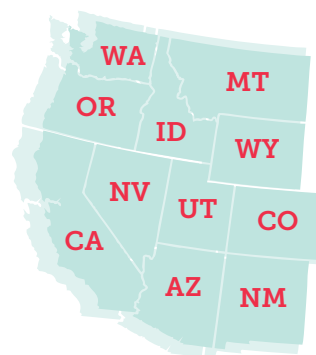
Embedding behavioral specialists into Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) frameworks **clarifies their role and enhances impact**. With proper boundaries and administrative backing, these professionals can transform school climate while remaining committed to their positions.



## Regional Staffing Insights

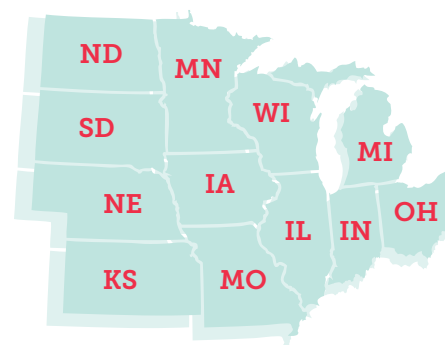
### West Region

- **Explosive demand:** California saw 19,500+ job postings in 2024, a 62% increase from the previous year.
- **Severe talent shortage:** Despite high salaries, open roles often remain unfilled due to limited supply.
- **Highly competitive market,** with schools and clinics vying for the same small candidate pool.



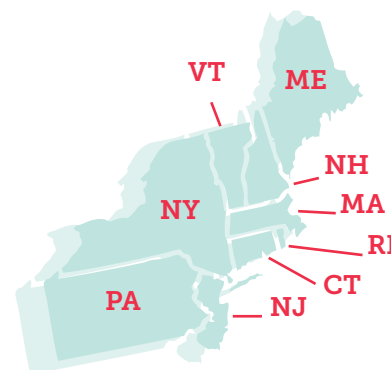
### Midwest Region

- **Undersupply persists:** Despite manageable pay, candidate shortages and low provider-to-student ratios persist.
- **Rising demand:** Some states saw triple-digit increases in postings (e.g., 133% in Washington, 153% in Utah).
- **Steady but strained market**—many districts compete for a limited number of specialists.



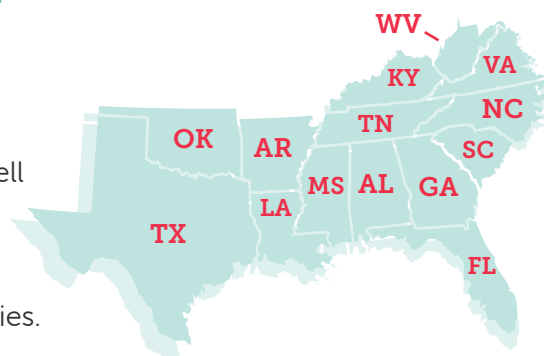
### Northeast Region

- **Rapidly increasing demand:** MA and NJ saw 45–70% growth in job postings in 2024.
- **Extremely limited candidate pool** leads to prolonged vacancies and intense competition.
- **Challenging hiring environment** despite favorable compensation.



### South Region

- **Largest employment volume** of behavior specialists, especially in states like Texas, Florida, and Georgia.
- **Lower compensation:** Many Southern BCBAs earn well below coastal averages.
- **Retention struggles:** Professionals often leave for better-paying private roles or out-of-state opportunities.
- **Service disruptions** are common due to high turnover and recruitment gaps.



# Sign Language Interpreters

Sign Language Interpreters (SLIs) provide essential communication support for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, ensuring equitable access to education. As schools prioritize inclusivity, the need for trained interpreters continues to increase.

## Nationwide Snapshot



**60,706**

Currently Employed



**2,241**

Active Job Seekers  
(Matching Online Profiles)



**2,639**

Annual Job Postings



**585**

Employers Competing



**~12,607**

Approaching Retirement Age



**6.8%**

Projected Job Growth  
(2024-2029)



### Lead Graduate Programs

- Gallaudet University
- Western Oregon University
- Rochester Institute of Technology

## Market Highlights

**Severe Shortage:** Particularly scarce in rural districts and low-population states.

**Compliance Risk:** Absence violates FAPE under IDEA for Deaf/hard-of-hearing students; cannot legally “substitute” other roles.

**Recruitment Challenge:** Few preparation programs and low pay compared to freelance or video relay work.

### Hiring Strategy

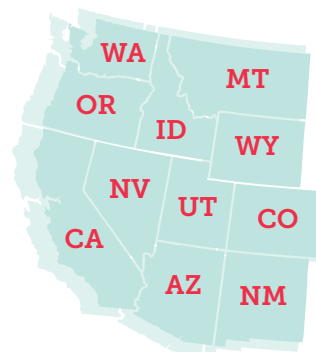
Hiring interpreters begins with relationships—districts should build pipelines with interpreter training programs and leverage national interpreter registries for hard-to-staff areas.

Retaining interpreters requires more than just placement; schools should support National Interpreter Certification (NIC) renewals, include interpreters in student planning, and ensure they're viewed as integral members of the educational team. When they're seen and supported, interpreters are more likely to stay long-term.

## Regional Staffing Insights

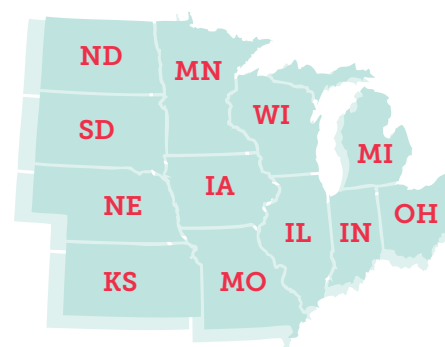
### West Region

- Far exceeds the national interpreter median wage.
- High demand driven by fast-growing populations and strong Deaf community advocacy.
- Recruitment challenges persist despite strong wages—many districts report difficulty filling certified interpreter roles.



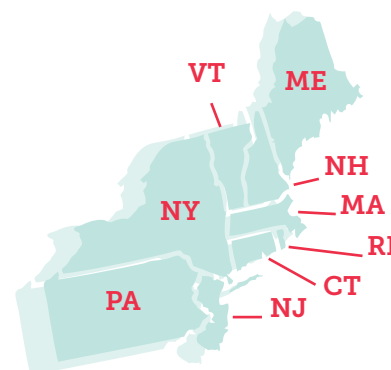
### Midwest Region

- Moderate compensation and steady growth.
- More balanced market than coasts but still sees rural shortages.
- Stable recruitment conditions, though increasing demand may stress supply in smaller districts.



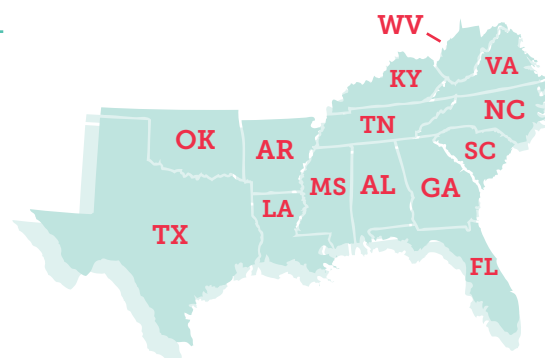
### Northeast Region

- Wide salary range across states.
- Steady demand, without the explosive growth of the South or hiring strain of the West.
- Strong compensation in metro areas, but districts must still plan ahead to ensure consistent coverage.



### South Region

- Fastest projected job growth for SLIs—estimated ~24% increase in some areas this decade.
- Retention difficulties: Lower salaries prompt many certified interpreters to shift to freelance or video relay roles.
- Expanding need + modest pay = risk of unfilled or rotating interpreter positions in schools.



# School Nurses

School Nurses (RNs) serve as the front line of student health and safety, delivering critical care and wellness support across school campuses. With steady demand nationwide, ensuring reliable staffing is vital to maintaining student well-being.

## Nationwide Snapshot



**3,336,597**

Currently Employed



**1,684,043**

Active Job Seekers  
(Matching Online Profiles)



**2,314,425**

Annual Job Postings



**45,639**

Employers Competing



**~ 837,889**

Approaching Retirement Age



**5.7%**

Projected Job Growth  
(2024-2029)



### Lead Graduate Programs

- Western Governors University
- Chamberlain University
- University of Phoenix

## Market Highlights

**Student Safety Impact:** Understaffing linked to delays in emergency response, medication errors, and reduced chronic care support.

**Coverage Gaps:** Many nurses serve multiple buildings, **compromising care** for medically fragile students.

**Compliance Risk:** May result in violations of 504 plans or state health mandates.

### Hiring Strategy

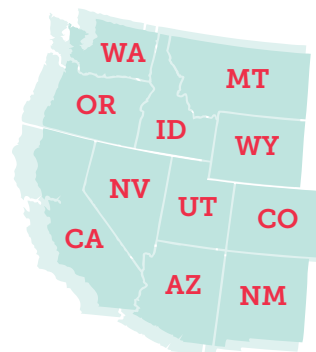
To attract school nurses, districts can **target professionals from pediatric and public health backgrounds**, highlighting benefits like predictable schedules and strong school-year alignment. Offering **part-time roles or flexible schedules** can also appeal to nurses transitioning from hospitals.

Retention improves when nurses are connected through professional networks, **receive training support** for certifications like NCSN, and are empowered to take a proactive role in school wellness initiatives.

## Regional Staffing Insights

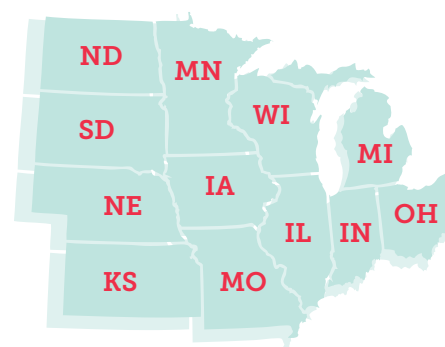
### West Region

- **Severe shortages despite high pay:** Only 33.3% of Western schools have a full-time nurse on staff.
- **High demand and competition** for qualified RNs, especially in urban and fast-growing districts.
- **Nurse-to-student ratios** are among **the worst in the U.S.**, leading to large service gaps.



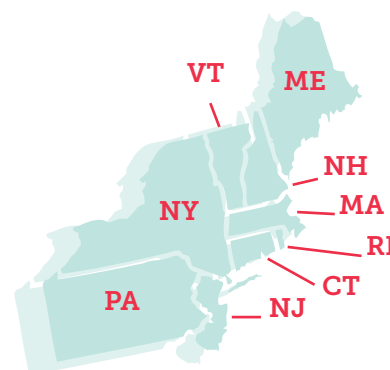
### Midwest Region

- **Coverage is uneven:** Only ~59.9% of schools have a full-time nurse.
- Rural districts especially impacted by **shortages** and **limited candidate pools**.
- **Staffing is more stable** than in the West/South, but still strained.



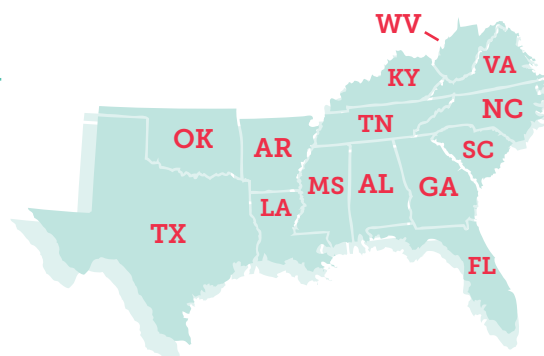
### Northeast Region

- **Best regional coverage:** About 88.2% of schools have a full-time nurse.
- **Strong funding and healthcare networks** support better recruitment and retention.
- **Fewer shortages overall**, though competition remains in urban districts.



### South Region

- **Largest employment volume** due to more schools and students.
- **Retention challenges:** Many nurses leave for higher-paying hospital roles.
- **Coverage still lacking:** Only ~78.9% of schools have a full-time nurse, leaving 1 in 5 without one.



# Physical Therapists

Physical Therapists (PTs) are crucial in supporting students' physical development, mobility, and participation in school life. However, schools face ongoing challenges in finding enough qualified PTs to meet growing service demands.

## Nationwide Snapshot



**251,549**

Currently Employed



**133,010**

Active Job Seekers  
(Matching Online Profiles)



**268,364**

Annual Job Postings



**7,300**

Employers Competing



**~ 38,511**

Approaching Retirement Age



**10.1%**

Projected Job Growth  
(2024-2029)



### Lead Graduate Programs

- University of Southern California
- University of Pittsburgh
- Northwestern University

## Market Highlights

**Hard to Fill:** PTs often choose private practice due to higher wages; vacancies go unfilled for months and reduced chronic care support.

**Student Impact:** Missed PT services affect mobility goals and classroom access, especially for students with physical disabilities.

**Role Competition:** Strong healthcare demand intensifies hiring difficulty for schools.

### Hiring Strategy

PTs are often drawn to roles that offer **meaningful student interaction and balanced schedules**, so school-based recruiters should emphasize autonomy, breaks, and reduced administrative demands compared to clinical settings.

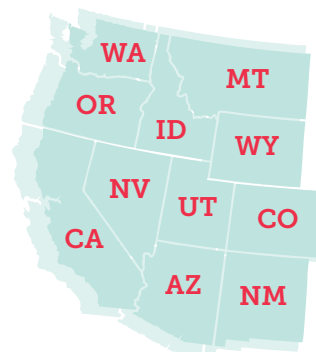
**Offering relocation stipends and clear role expectations** helps with hiring, while providing **site stability, choice in service delivery models, and access to professional networks** increases retention. Many PTs thrive when they feel part of a broader student support team.



## Regional Staffing Insights

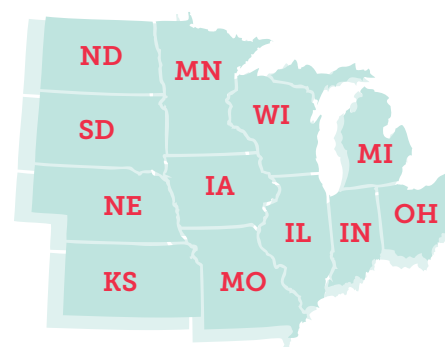
### West Region

- **Intense hiring demand:** California alone employs 24,000+ PTs but still projects 19% growth by 2030.
- **Competitive labor market:** PTs have ample private-sector options, making recruitment in schools difficult.
- **Districts often scramble to fill PT openings**, especially in high-cost areas.



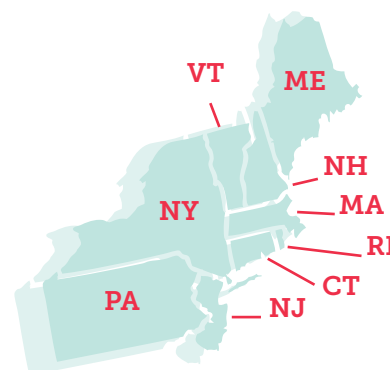
### Midwest Region

- **Growth projections of ~10–15%**, slightly below national average.
- **Relatively stable market**, but rural shortages persist.
- **Good region for sustainable staffing**, with fewer extremes in supply or demand.



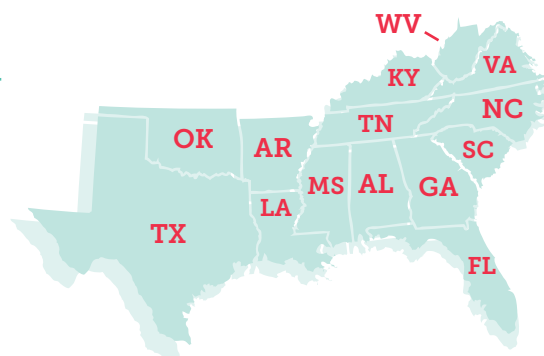
### Northeast Region

- **Limited talent pipeline:** Fewer new graduates and modest growth (~13%) strain the market.
- **High competition** among schools and healthcare systems for each opening.
- Vacancies often lead to **prolonged searches for qualified candidates**.



### South Region

- **Largest PT workforce:** ~17,170 PTs in Texas; ~16,150 PTs in Florida.
- **Retention challenges:** Experienced PTs may leave for higher-paying states or private roles.
- **High job availability**, but difficulty maintaining long-term staffing stability.



# Physical Therapist Assistants

Physical Therapist Assistants (PTAs) support PTs by delivering hands-on care that improves students' mobility and quality of life. As demand for these services continues to grow, having a clear view of the current PTA workforce is essential for staffing success.

## Nationwide Snapshot



**109,084**

Currently Employed



**60,136**

Active Job Seekers  
(Matching Online Profiles)



**76,480**

Annual Job Postings



**7,979**

Employers Competing



**~ 14,651**

Approaching Retirement Age



**15.6%**

Projected Job Growth  
(2024-2029)



### Lead Graduate Programs

- Keiser University
- Herzing University
- Pima Medical Institute

## Market Highlights

**Turnover Risk:** High due to competition with outpatient clinics and hospitals.

**Retention Challenge:** Southern districts struggle most despite large employment numbers.

**Support Function:** Vital for meeting IEP movement goals, especially when PTs are shared across multiple schools.

### Hiring Strategy

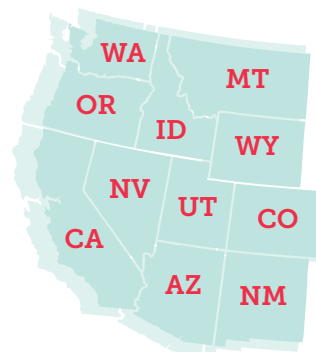
Districts should partner with PTA programs to source candidates and ensure they have a **structured supervisory relationship** with licensed PTs.

Hiring is stronger when PTA responsibilities are **clearly defined and aligned with student outcomes**. Retention improves when PTAs receive training in **adaptive and assistive technologies**, regular feedback, and are equipped with the tools needed to confidently deliver interventions within school environments.

## Regional Staffing Insights

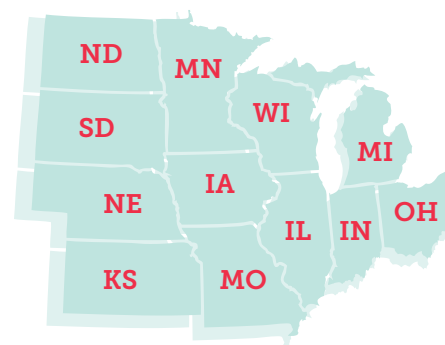
### West Region

- **Top compensation and fastest growth nationally.**
- **Projected growth:** Above-average job expansion, with many states expecting 19%+ growth by 2033.
- **High competition** from private clinics and hospitals makes school recruitment difficult.
- **Frequent vacancies** due to strong demand and limited supply.



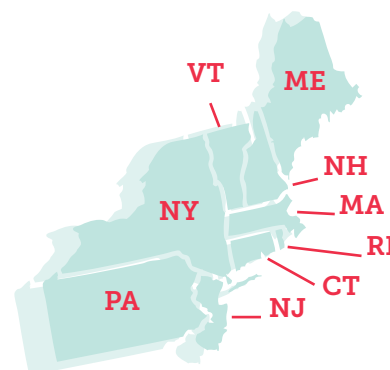
### Midwest Region

- **Balanced compensation and steady growth.**
- Expected **growth in the 10–15% range** over the decade.
- **Stable recruitment landscape**, though rural shortages may persist.
- **Less intense competition**, making it easier for districts to plan long-term staffing.



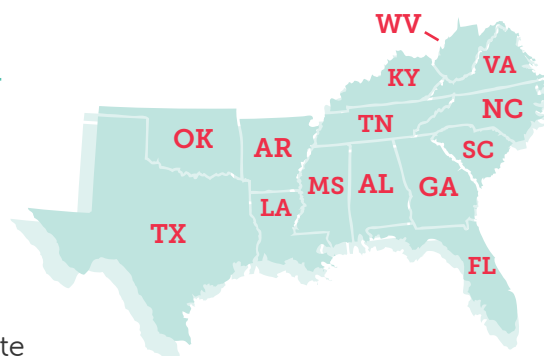
### Northeast Region

- **Stable hiring environment**, with expected growth similar to the Midwest.
- **Fewer dramatic shortages**, but recruitment still requires forward planning.
- Good potential for **long-term staffing stability** if supported by strong HR practices.



### South Region

- **Largest PTA workforce in the U.S.:** 10,110 PTA jobs in Texas; ~9,000 PTA jobs in Florida
- **Retention challenges:** Many PTAs are drawn to higher-paying regions.
- Schools must invest in **retention strategies** to compete with private sector and out-of-state employers.



# Occupational Therapists

Occupational Therapists (OTs) help students thrive by addressing challenges that affect their ability to participate in school routines and academic tasks. With student needs rising, the demand for OTs remains consistently high.

## Nationwide Snapshot



**153,019**

Currently Employed



**122,773**

Active Job Seekers  
(Matching Online Profiles)



**137,819**

Annual Job Postings



**6,403**

Employers Competing



**~ 21,995**

Approaching Retirement Age



**8.7%**

Projected Job Growth  
(2024-2029)



### Lead Graduate Programs

- University of Southern California
- University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences
- New York University

## Market Highlights

**High Demand:** National job growth of 8.7% through 2033; schools must compete with healthcare providers for talent.

**Vacancy Impact:** Unfilled roles delay development of fine motor, sensory, and daily living skills.

**Compliance Risk:** Lack of OT support jeopardizes IEP goals in handwriting, self-regulation, and adaptive equipment usage.

### Hiring Strategy

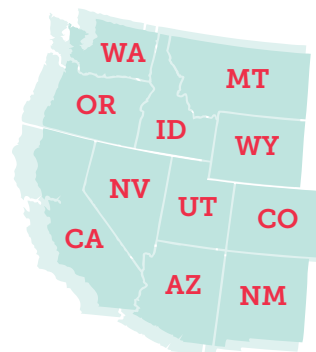
OT recruitment is most successful when districts offer competitive perks like **housing stipends, clear schedules, and a focus on student-centered impact**. Retention depends on minimizing travel between sites, reducing caseload strain, and encouraging collaborative work with other providers.

OTs appreciate opportunities for **professional growth and involvement in cross-functional planning**, both of which foster long-term commitment to school-based roles.

## Regional Staffing Insights

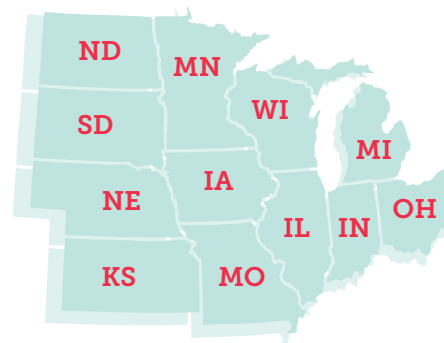
### West Region

- **Strong job growth:** California is projected to add 1,000+ OT jobs in the coming years.
- **Recruitment pressure is intense:** OTs are in high demand across school and medical settings.
- **Districts must compete** with clinics and hospitals to fill roles.
- **Candidate's market:** therapists have multiple job options, slowing school hiring.



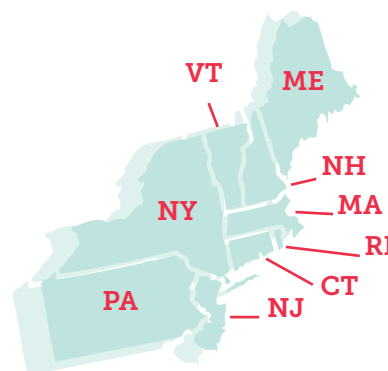
### Midwest Region

- **Steady job growth:** Most states project 8–12% OT growth over ten years.
- **Regional OT training programs** help maintain workforce supply.
- **Fewer vacancies** than in coastal or Sunbelt regions, but rural areas still face gaps.



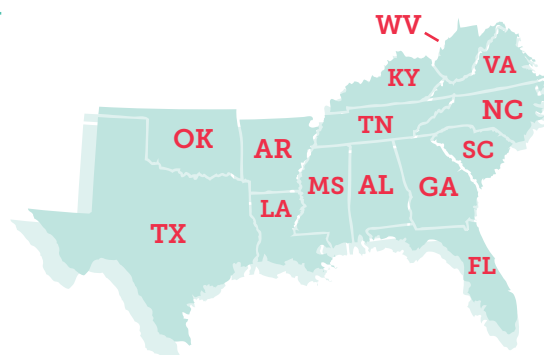
### Northeast Region

- **Strong hiring demand**, especially in densely populated urban and suburban areas.
- **High job growth projections** aligned with national average .
- **Shortages persist** despite strong funding, due to limited candidate supply and competition with healthcare employers.



### South Region

- **Large OT workforce:** ~11,000 OTs in Texas; ~7,500 OTs in Florida (all settings)
- **Many OTs migrate to better-paying regions or sectors.**
- **Large caseloads and moderate salaries** contribute to **burnout and turnover.**



# Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants

Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTAs) provide vital assistance in delivering therapeutic services that support students' functional independence and daily participation. Understanding the dynamics of this in-demand workforce is key to maintaining quality care in schools.

## Nationwide Snapshot



**48,897**

Currently Employed



**13,613**

Active Job Seekers  
(Matching Online Profiles)



**21,414**

Annual Job Postings



**2,179**

Employers Competing



**~ 8,129**

Approaching Retirement Age



**13.8%**

Projected Job Growth  
(2024-2029)



### Lead Graduate Programs

- Keiser University
- Pima Medical Institute
- Herzing University

## Market Highlights

**Recruitment Strain:** Western districts offer highest pay but **face competition**; Southern districts hire more but **retain fewer**.

**Role Leverage:** Often key to scaling services under an OT's supervision, yet underdeployment slows progress.

**Attrition Driver:** Career ceiling, low pay, and job misalignment contribute to exit from school settings.

## Hiring Strategy

Districts can expand their COTA workforce by forming relationships with community colleges and **offering mentorship opportunities tied to supervising OTs**. Hiring success increases when COTA roles are clearly positioned as hands-on contributors to student progress.

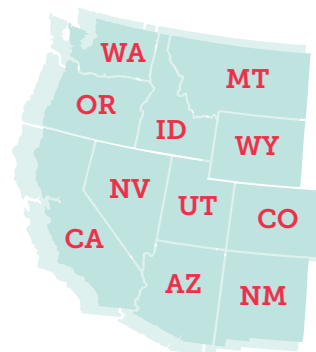
For retention, **regular check-ins, inclusion in team discussions, and recognition during IEP planning** ensure that COTAs feel valued and motivated to stay within the school system.



## Regional Staffing Insights

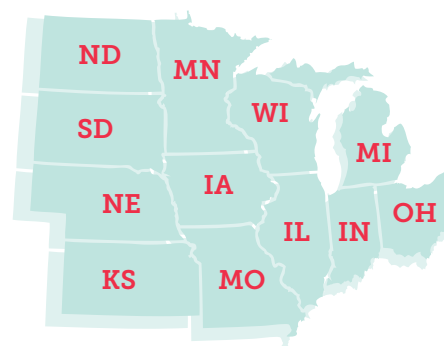
### West Region

- High growth in school therapy programs: Rising demand across Western states, especially in growing regions like Arizona.
- COTAs often hired quickly by hospitals or private providers.
- Districts struggle to attract/retain candidates due to cross-sector competition.



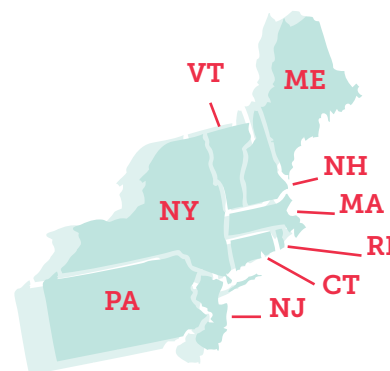
### Midwest Region

- Balanced compensation aligned with cost of living.
- Steady hiring outlook: Modest growth means fewer large-scale shortages, but rural areas can face staffing gaps.
- Recruitment relatively stable, though districts still need proactive planning for retirements and role expansion.



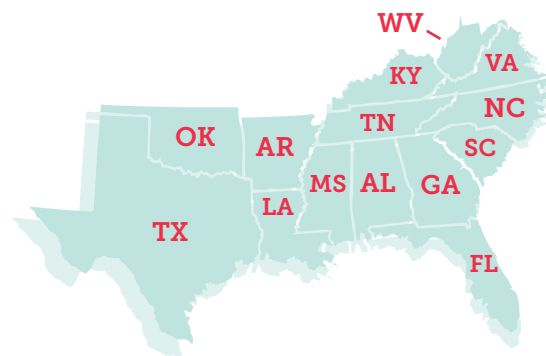
### Northeast Region

- Stable but modest job growth: Recruitment conditions are more balanced; Vacancies exist but aren't as severe as in the West or South.
- Competition still present, especially in urban/suburban school systems.



### South Region

- Largest workforce, but lower pay overall.
- Some Southern states (e.g., Arkansas, Louisiana) show nominally high wages, but real earnings drop after adjusting for cost of living.
- High student needs keep hiring high, but staff turnover remains an issue.



# Should You Partner with an Education Staffing Agency?

## A STRATEGIC COMPARISON FOR EDUCATION LEADERS

With growing student needs, workforce shortages, and rising administrative burdens, school districts are rethinking how they build and sustain their teams. While internal hiring remains essential, many districts are now partnering with staffing agencies to **fill critical roles quickly, flexibly, and effectively**. Here’s a look at the key differences to help you determine what’s right for your district:

Category	Staffing Partner	Internal Hiring
<i>Time-to-Fill</i>	Rapid—often days to weeks	Longer—typically weeks to months
<i>Access to Talent</i>	Nationwide pool, includes hard-to-reach professionals	Limited to candidates who apply directly
<i>Credentialing &amp; Compliance</i>	Managed by the agency	Requires internal HR oversight
<i>Cost Structure</i>	Fixed hourly/contract rates with admin included	Salary + benefits + hiring + onboarding costs
<i>Flexibility</i>	Scalable based on short- or long-term needs	Fixed FTE model; harder to adjust mid-year
<i>Administrative Burden</i>	Offloaded—agency handles onboarding, documentation	Managed internally by HR and admin teams
<i>Staff Retention</i>	Professionals often receive agency support and development	Retention dependent on district resources
<i>Workforce Gaps</i>	Ideal for covering leaves, mid-year exits, rural roles	Challenging to backfill quickly without disruption

# Why Choose Soliant

## WE MAKE LIFE BETTER FOR THOSE WHO MAKE LIVES BETTER

When it comes to education staffing, Soliant brings more than experience—we bring a partnership rooted in responsiveness, precision, and results. For over 30 years, Soliant has supported school districts nationwide in filling critical special education and student support roles.

### National Reach, Local Support

We connect school districts with **credentialed professionals across the country**—supported by regional teams who understand your community’s unique needs.

### Speed & Scalability

From one placement to hundreds, we have the infrastructure to **move quickly—without compromising quality**. Our network includes thousands of pre-vetted candidates, ready to step in when and where they’re needed most.

### Specialized Talent, Ready to Work

We focus on **hard-to-fill roles across special education**, behavioral health, school nursing, therapy, and more. Our professionals are licensed, experienced, and equipped to make an impact from day one.

### Full-Service Support

We handle **credentialing, compliance, onboarding, and professional development**—so your team can focus on what matters most: student success.

### Special Education Advisory Team

We provide a special education advisory team of 50+ educators who provide resources, mentorship, and IEP support to school professionals, along with professional development and administrative guidance.

## TRUSTED BY DISTRICTS NATIONWIDE

From small rural schools to large metropolitan districts, education leaders turn to Soliant for dependable staffing support that scales with their needs. When you’re ready to strengthen your team, reduce administrative burden, and ensure every student receives the care they deserve—Soliant is here to help.



## Success Stories

# How a New Hampshire School District **Filled 100+ Special Education Roles**



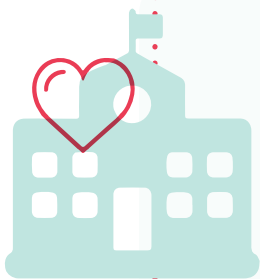
[Click Here to Find More Stories Like This ➔](#)

Our partner serves a diverse student population, with **50% minority enrollment** and **37% economically disadvantaged students**. This diversity underscores the critical need for dedicated professionals who can deliver exceptional education and care—particularly for students who have special needs.

## Soliant's Solution:

Our client has placed its trust in Soliant's consistent delivery of quality professionals—**over 100 placed to date**. Many of our consultants have returned for **more than 17 assignments**; some have stayed with the district for over 11 years, and several have transitioned into full-time roles. The results of our partnership include:

- **Rapid placement** of hard-to-fill, specialized roles
- **Reduced administrative workload** for district leaders
- **High contractor retention**, ensuring continuity for students and staff



*"The Soliant team is an outstanding support system. They're consistently responsive, approachable, and genuinely invested in making things run smoothly. From day one, it's been easy to reach out, get answers, and feel supported in every step of the process. Their professionalism and warmth make working together a breeze."*

— Nicole, Occupational Therapist

## Success Stories

# 120+ Special Educators Placed in Georgia's 6th Largest District



[Click Here to Find More Stories Like This ➔](#)

Our partner supports a uniquely diverse student population, representing **over 130 countries and speaking more than 160 languages across the district**. This remarkable diversity underscores the critical need for dedicated professionals who can deliver exceptional education and care—particularly for students with special needs.

The district is also home to one of the nation's largest children's hospitals, where they deliver educational services to medically fragile children. To ensure every student has the opportunity to thrive, the **district relies on staffing agency support** to garner highly qualified education professionals capable of meeting diverse learning needs.

## Soliant's Solution:

For more than 20 years, Soliant has been a trusted partner in staffing quality special education professionals for our client. By leveraging our deep knowledge in the education space and our **extensive candidate network**, we've successfully placed skilled education professionals across the district who are equipped to support their students, parents, and teachers.

Soliant's commitment to providing dedicated account management who understands our partner's unique needs and recruiting the right talent has led to measurable improvements for the district, including:

- **Enhanced quality of education and student support** particularly for their bilingual students
- Increased ability to locate and **fill highly-specialized, hard-to-fill roles**
- **Lower costs associated with hiring**, onboarding, and training new staff



## Success Stories

# 20-Year Partnership Places **150+ Special Educators** in Colorado's 6th Largest District



[Click Here to Find More Stories Like This ↗](#)

Our partner serves a uniquely diverse student population, representing **90 different ethnicities and countries**, with **72 languages spoken across the district**. Given this diversity, it is essential to have the right professionals in place to provide exceptional care and education—especially for students with special needs.

The district required highly qualified education professionals who could not only meet students' educational requirements but also support parents and teachers in fostering student success.

## Soliant's Solution:

In 2018, Soliant was engaged as a trusted partner due to our expertise in the education space and our ability to understand the district's specific staffing needs. By leveraging our deep knowledge and extensive network, we successfully placed skilled education professionals who were equipped to support their students, parents, and teachers.

Soliant's commitment to understanding our partner's unique needs and recruiting the right talent has led to measurable improvements, including:

- **Enhanced quality of education and student support**
- **Increased retention** of specialized professionals, reducing turnover in hard-to-fill roles
- **Lower costs** associated with hiring, onboarding, and training new staff



# Let's Start the Conversation

## CONNECT WITH A PARTNER WHO UNDERSTANDS EDUCATION STAFFING

Whether you're facing an urgent vacancy, planning for the next school year, or simply exploring new ways to support your students and staff, we're here to help. At Soliant, we make it easy to get the answers—and the talent—you need.

Reach out directly to connect with one of our education staffing experts. We'll listen to your goals, assess your needs, and work with you to find the right solution—so you can focus on what matters most: your students.

### RELIABLE STAFFING, READY TO SUPPORT. THAT'S SOLIANT.



800.849.5502



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