

The future of work in health and human services

What will jobs look like in the age of AI



Health and human services (HHS) jobs will likely undergo major changes due to factors such as technology advances and changing demographics. Explore how a range of HHS jobs could look in 2025.

HEALTH AND HUMAN services (HHS) agencies often struggle to serve some of society's most needy populations. At many HHS agencies today, tight budgets limit the size of the workforce, even as the volume of caseloads continues to grow. That imbalance makes it hard to provide efficient and effective solutions to address the critical needs of individuals and families, and can leave employees feeling stressed and overworked. Those same employees may also see few opportunities for career development or advancement. High rates of turnover can put a steady stream of inexperienced staff into critical jobs with little training to prepare them.

To compound those challenges, most HHS agencies are still using workforce approaches that were designed in the distant past to meet the needs of that era, not of today.

HHS agencies may strain to cope with some of the disruptions on the horizon. How, for example, can they reorganize to serve a growing aged population, while also meeting the needs of younger constituents who adapt easily to new technology and prefer to communicate via digital means? How can agencies offer workers the job flexibility they demand, replace older workers as they retire, and attract younger generations into the workplace? How can they manage and analyze vast pools of

data, so they can gain new insights to guide their policies, track performance and outcomes, and drive efficiencies?

At the same time, these disruptors—if leveraged correctly—may also help HHS agencies address the challenges that make their work so difficult today. New partnerships with businesses and nonprofit organizations, for instance, can create community networks that fill a broader array of critical needs than an agency could on its own. Mobile technologies can give employees the job flexibility they crave, allowing them to work anywhere, at any time. Advances in artificial intelligence and virtual reality can change the nature of work at HHS agencies while also enhancing training capabilities.

If HHS leaders can learn to view these disruptors as potential accelerators, rather than obstacles, they can use them to reform outdated bureaucracies and introduce new practices to meet the needs of the workforce and the public.

As part of that reform, HHS agencies will likely see major changes in the jobs their employees perform. For one thing, technology will handle many of the repetitive tasks that now take up a large portion of the typical agency worker’s day. Freed from much of their data entry, report writing, and other routine functions, caseworkers will be able to spend more time working directly with individuals and families on strategies to meet their specific needs. Managers can focus on coaching and supervising the people who report to them and on overseeing relationships with community partners. All employees will have tools to help them work more efficiently and effectively and gain better insights to inform their decisions.

Some jobs that are currently fixtures in an HHS agency will likely disappear as new ones emerge. Other roles may retain familiar titles but will undergo a profound shift in emphasis.

Understanding how the HHS workforce will evolve can help agency leaders get ready for this profound transformation.

To help HHS leaders and employees visualize the possibilities, we’ve developed a series of personas that describe what a range of different jobs could look like in 2025. We have chosen to describe these 2025 jobs from the vantage point of the workers themselves, exploring how their work has changed, what kinds of skills and career pathways they have, the types of digital tools that assist them in their work, and what a typical day on the job may look like.

Bringing these future jobs to life can help stimulate conversations around what needs to change in order to address the workforce challenges HHS agencies contend with today.

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About the authors

Libby Bacon | elbacon@deloitte.com

Libby Bacon has more than 20 years of experience leading large-scale organizational change management efforts across the government sector. She leads Deloitte's Organizational Transformation practice across Government and Public Services. Her work includes a focus on organizational change management, talent, learning, employee engagement, and culture. She is based in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Will Arnold | wiarnold@deloitte.com

Will Arnold is a managing director in Deloitte Consulting LLP's Government & Public Services practice with more than 15 years of experience. Arnold is also Deloitte's asset leader for GoCase, a suite of configurable applications focused on mobile case management, leveraging innovative technology such as VR to create immersive learning experiences. He is based in Pittsburgh.

Michael Walsh | micwalsh@deloitte.com

Michael Walsh is a manager in Deloitte Consulting LLP's Government & Public Services practice and has more than eight years of experience working with state and local government clients driving large business transformations. Walsh also serves as the champion for Deloitte's ChangeScout solution, then firm's organizational change management platform. He is based in Chicago.

Tiffany Fishman | ptfishman@deloitte.com

Tiffany Fishman is a senior manager with the Deloitte Center for Government Insights. Her research and client work focus on how emerging issues in technology, business, and society will impact organizations. She has written extensively on a wide range of public policy and management issues, from health and human services reform to the future of transportation and the transformation of higher education. Fishman is based in Arlington, Virginia.

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Industry leadership

David Parent

Human Capital | Principal | Deloitte Consulting LLP
+1 313 396 3004 | dparent@deloitte.com

David Parent is a principal with Deloitte Consulting LLP with personal areas of focus including workforce strategy and transformation, HR operations, organizational transformation, leadership development, and technology implementation.

Libby Bacon

Organizational Transformation | Principal | Deloitte Consulting LLP
+1 717 695 5317 | elbacon@deloitte.com

Libby Bacon leads Deloitte's Organizational Transformation practice across Government and Public Services.

Will Arnold

Government & Public Services | Managing director | Deloitte Consulting LLP
+1 412 338 7960 | wiarnold@deloitte.com

Will Arnold is a managing director in Deloitte Consulting LLP's Government & Public Services practice.

Kenneth J. Smith

Human Service Transformation leader | Principal | Deloitte Consulting LLP
+1 404 202 1026 | kensmith@deloitte.com

Kenny Smith is Deloitte Consulting LLP's national leader and principal for the Integrated Eligibility practice.

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Creative: Adama Manshiva

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