



# Rethinking safety for home healthcare, hospice and social services workers

Alert. Locate. Communicate. Respond.







# The changing workforce

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There are nearly 4 million home healthcare workers who often work in isolation and without the typical protections and benefits that workers in traditional health care settings receive. It's important that home health care workers have the knowledge and tools to protect themselves from the serious and even life-threatening hazards they may experience while at work.

**Director John Howard**  
NIOSH





Sam entered Utility Facility #3  
7:10 AM

Joe exited patient home  
8:30 AM

Broadcast Message:  
Fire on 72nd Street; avoid area  
1:23 PM

# How home healthcare, hospice, and social services workforces are changing

All working people have the right to a safe workplace—whether that workplace is a facility or someone’s home. But how do you protect a home healthcare, hospice or social services worker who’s left a controlled workplace from threats such as:

- 👤 Accidents and health issues
- 👊 Workplace violence
- ☁️ Bad weather
- 👤 Physical attacks
- 🌪️ Natural disasters

To complicate their situations, mobile workers can be miles away from cities or towns, with limited access to assistance should something go wrong.

## Rise in home healthcare workers

Payors are working to contain rising healthcare costs for all patient populations by moving care from the hospital to the home. In addition, aging adults are opting to receive quality medical care in the comfort of their home rather than in a healthcare or nursing facility. According to the U.S. 2020 Census, the 65 and older population hit 55.8 million people or 16.8% of the U.S. population in 2020.<sup>1</sup> Waiver expansion from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services are also increasing the demand for at-home care.<sup>2</sup>

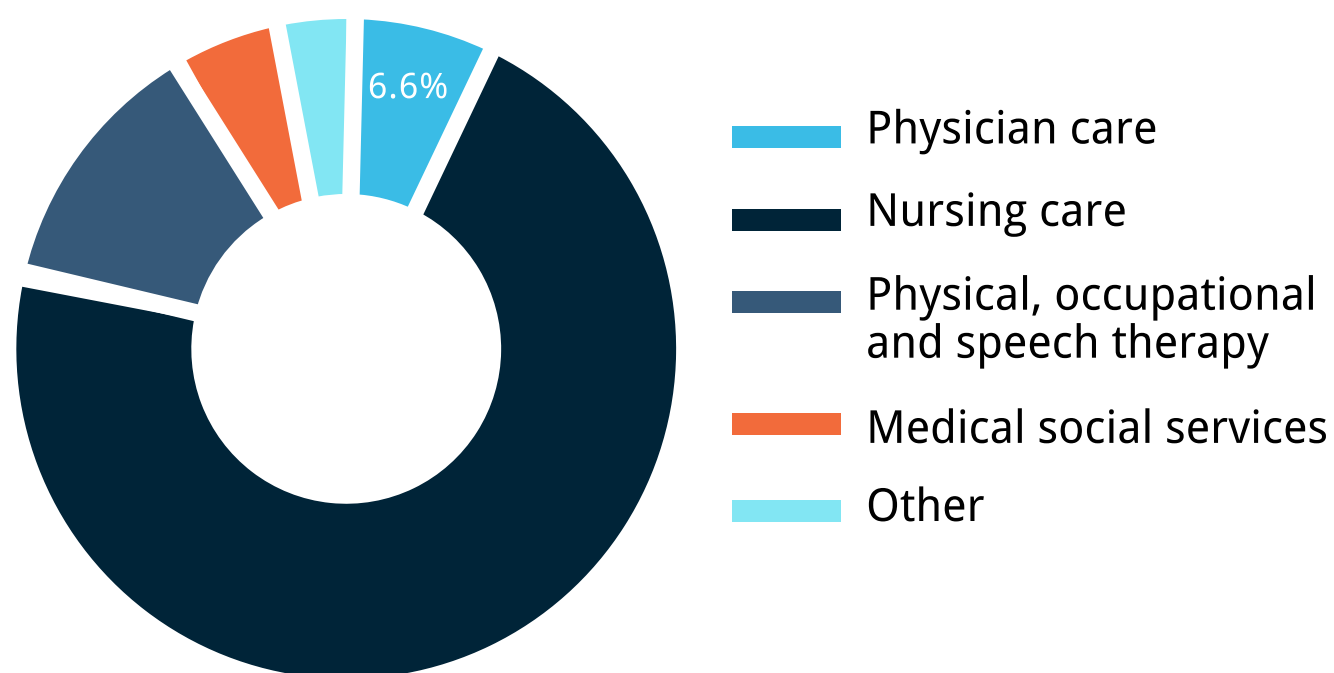
As a result, the home healthcare market is predicted to grow **21%** from 2021 to 2031, adding **711,700 jobs each year** on average over the decade... a growth rate that is **300% higher** than the average industry employment growth rate.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, the value of the U.S. Home Healthcare market is expected to grow from \$94.17 billion in 2022 to \$153.19 billion in 2029, according to. As the market grows, it will continue to create new challenges for home healthcare, hospice and social services workers.

# Nursing care segment will dominate market owing to rising demand for these services

The nursing care segment is poised to hold a significant U.S. home healthcare services market share during the forecast period.<sup>4</sup> The segment's dominance is attributed to the increasing demand for skilled nursing care at home.<sup>4</sup>

**U.S. Home healthcare services market share, by type, 2022**



[www.fortunebusinessinsights.com](http://www.fortunebusinessinsights.com)







## New risks and challenges

### Safety concerns among home healthcare providers

With the growing demand for at-home care comes growing concern for worker safety. When workers operate outside of traditional health care settings it becomes increasingly difficult for organizations to manage the potential risks a worker may encounter, to know when a worker needs emergency assistance, and to ensure they get the necessary assistance in near real-time.

In a 2023 survey by Stericycle, respondents identified the following top 3 risks to worker safety in at-home settings:

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**Generally unhygienic conditions – 57%**

**Entering and working in the residence alone – 57%**

**In-home violence, such as hostile animals – 54%**

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Home healthcare providers also reported that at-home care results in substantial risks to their own overall physical and mental health and well-being, with 63% of home healthcare providers experiencing negative feelings.<sup>5</sup>

### High-risk endeavor

Just going to work is a high-risk endeavor for most home healthcare and hospice workers. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Healthcare workers accounted for 73 percent of all nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses due to violence in 2018.

According to the Online Journal of Issues in Nursing, healthcare workers are four times more likely to take time off work for workplace violence-related injuries than for other injuries as 75% of the workplace assaults reported annually occurred in the healthcare and social services settings.<sup>6</sup>

Survey responses estimate that their organization loses more than **\$350 million each year** to workplace injuries.

– Stericycle Global Data, 2022

### Staffing and patient challenges

Staffing is now seen as the number one challenge in healthcare by both healthcare providers and administrators.

Staffing issues are not only caused by worker burnout, but high costs, supply chain issues, the increasing aging population needing more care and a competitive labor market. CNN has reported that there is a major concern in the U.S. around healthcare worker shortages and safety has a large influence on whether they want to stay in the field because there just aren't enough healthcare workers.<sup>7</sup>

Quality of patient care is a major byproduct of this trend, but also affecting how patients are acting – and in a more negative way. More than 25% of patients have been turned away due to staffing shortages.<sup>8</sup>

In turn, patients are also denying recommended care, being more confrontational and behaving negatively overall. As a result, almost two-thirds (63%) of home healthcare providers are concerned that they will be injured at work from a patient or another issue at the home.<sup>9</sup>





# Rethinking and updating safety policies and procedures for home healthcare, hospice and social services workers

## Traditional workplace safety solutions do not work for a mobile workforce



According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, “The home healthcare and social services industries experience the highest rates of injuries caused by workplace violence and are 5 times as likely to suffer a workplace violence injury than workers overall.”

OSHA’s Healthcare Guidelines<sup>10</sup> acknowledge the elevated risk of workplace violence faced by home healthcare and social services workers and recommend specific steps be taken to protect them, including the provision of GPS tracking and alarm systems.

Safety policies, procedures and equipment must address the unique needs of home healthcare, hospice and social services workers.



## Home healthcare, hospice and social services workers need different safety tools

While proper training in safety procedures remains vital, providing home healthcare, hospice and social services workers with the right tools to request and receive help in an emergency is critical to avoid negative outcomes. AlertGPS’ safety wearable devices and mobile safety apps, combined with its mass communication and alerting platform, provide the quickest way to locate, communicate and get help to mobile workers, protecting them from common hazards and threatening behaviors.

## Targeted safety solutions for a mobile workforce

The cell phone, for many companies, has become the de facto safety solution. Unfortunately, just having a cell phone doesn’t actually make you any safer.





## When speed matters

It is easy to assume that a home healthcare worker who is experiencing a threat, violence or crisis may instantly launch into the “fight-or-flight” response.

Unfortunately, many workers simply freeze. In that frozen moment, they fumble for their phone; they forget the password that unlocks it; they forget their current location; and they may even forget the English language if it’s not their native tongue.

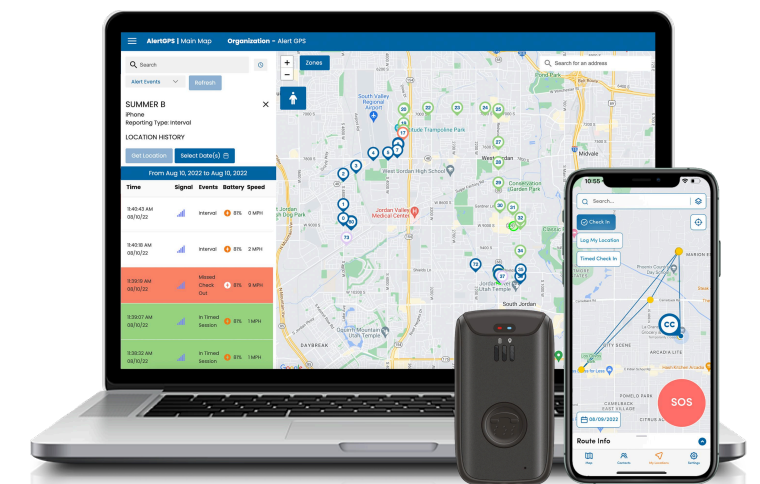
When time matters, being able to quickly isolate the precise location of a worker and accurately share critical data with emergency response personnel could mean the difference between life and death.

## AlertGPS safety solutions are tailored to the needs of home healthcare, hospice, and social services workers

AlertGPS safety solutions allow workers to quickly and discreetly issue calls for help to trained response personnel who can take appropriate action. In emergency situations, AlertGPS provides response personnel with instant information on the worker’s name, location, their employer and other information, as requested.

## When critical data matters

AlertGPS safety wearables and mobile safety apps are responsive to the worker’s unique environmental risks. For example, an alert can be issued in near real-time when a mobile worker approaches a known hazardous area or the home of a registered sex offender, or a notification can be sent to the employer when a worker fails to check out when expected or when a fall is detected.


















A home healthcare worker who receives safety alerts and notifications has an opportunity to mitigate and/or eliminate the risk and severity of an incident.





## The AlertGPS solution sets us apart:

- SOS One-touch SOS** with 2-way voice
-  **24/7 Response Center** with nationwide emergency dispatch
-  **Location positioning** with GPS, Wi-Fi + cell and BLE for indoor coverage
-  **Advanced privacy options**
-  **24/7 Companion:** Safety concierge services
-  **Customizable smart zones and threats zones**
-  **Registered sex offenders/predator alerts**
-  **Timed sessions** with missed check-out alerts
-  **Check in button** to report time and location
-  **Fall detection** with automatic SOS call
-  **AlertGPS Mobile safety apps** (iOS and Android)
-  **Extended battery life**
-  **Purpose-built ActiveHalo device**
-  **OSHA compliance reporting**
-  **Secure IoT platform:** SOC2 and HIPAA compliant
-  **AT&T Nationwide network**



### Critical data transmitted in near real-time enhances situational awareness across the organization

Critical information received about a worker's location and environment allows both emergency response and employers to quickly locate the worker and dispatch help and provides a process to correct exposure to a similar hazard in the future. The AlertGPS solution captures the safety steps taken during an incident and facilitates both compliance reporting and incident analysis to mitigate future risks.

### The Aware360 difference

Aware360 is a leading innovator in connected enterprise safety technology. Our AlertGPS solution offer the quickest way to locate, communicate and get help to home healthcare, hospice and social services workers.

Our safety wearable devices and mobile safety apps, combined with our mass communication and alerting platform, proactively monitor and enable rapid communications and emergency response to workers who are injured or threatened.

At the touch of a button, a worker can quickly trigger a 2-way emergency call to our 24/7 Response Center, trained to dispatch help anywhere in the US.





## Citations

<sup>1</sup> United States Census Bureau, 2020 Census: 1 in 6 People in the United States Were 65 and Over, 2023

<sup>2</sup> Stericycle Global Data, 2022

<sup>3</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics

<sup>4</sup> Fortune Business Insights, U.S. Home Healthcare Services Market, 2022

<sup>5</sup> Stericycle Global Data, 2022

<sup>6</sup> <https://ojin.nursingworld.org/table-of-contents/volume-27-2022/number-3-september-2022/articles-on-previously-published-topics/are-healthcareprofessionals-optimistic-about-workplace-violence/>

<sup>7</sup> CNN, Concern grows around US health-care workforce shortage: 'We don't have enough doctors', 2023

<sup>8</sup> Bloomberg, The Health-Care Staffing Crisis Is Bad and Getting Worse, 2023

<sup>9</sup> Stericycle Global Data, 2022

<sup>10</sup> Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence for Healthcare and Social Service Workers (OSHA, 2015)