

Vermont Health Workforce Assessment Survey

Long Term Care Nursing Study 2005

Prepared by: OFFICE OF NURSING WORKFORCE RESEARCH, PLANNING, AND DEVELOPMENT

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Why was this survey done?

One factor in assuring access to quality health care for all Vermonters is an ongoing and current knowledge of the state's health workforce resources. To this end, the Office of Nursing Workforce Research, Planning and Development conducted the Health Workforce Assessment Survey in February, 2005. The following is a report of this survey of 18 of 43 long term care facilities (42% response rate).

Who was surveyed?

In February, 2005 The Vermont Health Workforce Survey was sent to all 43 Vermont long term care facility nursing directors. A letter was sent to both the director of nursing and administrator to encourage participation in this important study. Follow-up postcards, letters, telephone calls and replacement surveys were used to obtain an adequate response rate.

What was learned?

Statewide Vacancy Rate¹ (Range)

RN	20% (0-100%)
Nurse Managers	10% (0-50%)
LPN	9% (0-100%)
Quality Assurance/ Educator	9% (0-100%)
LNA	7% (0-22%)
MDS Coordinator	6% (0 -33%)

Statewide Turnover Rate² (Range)

LNA	57% (13-208%)
RN	52% (0-120%)
Quality Assurance/Educator	45% (0-100%)
LPN	30% (0-100%)
MDS Coordinator	28%(0-100%)
Nurse Managers	26% (0-50%)

HARDEST POSITIONS TO FILL* (AVERAGE WEEKS TO FILL POSITION)

- RN evenings (21 weeks)
- RN nights (15 weeks)
- Nurse manager (12 weeks)
- RN days (12 weeks)

*50% or more reported vacancies in these positions during the past year.

More of the LTC nursing staff work fulltime compared to other settings. Despite this finding, 55% of the respondents reported using overtime to cover vacancies.

Assessing need for nursing positions:

56% of the respondents reported a need for RNs which was greater than the budgeted positions in their facility; whereas, 39% of the respondents reported there was a greater need for LNAs and LPNs. The need for RN with specialized skills was reported by only 22% of the respondents.

Use of financial recruitment incentives:

- 44% of responding LTC facilities reported starting salaries too low to have an impact on recruitment.
- None of the responding LTC facilities reported a pay differential for RN educational preparation.
- 6% of responding LTC facilities reported a pay differential for credentialed RNs.

Recruitment and retention of nurses age 50+

Efforts to recruit older nurses were reported by 33% of the respondents. Specific efforts to retain older nurses were reported by 56%.

IMPACT OF SHORTAGES:

	Never	Several times a year	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	Missing or n/a
Reduced number of staffed beds	78%	6%				17%
Delayed or diverted admissions	61%	28%				11%
Mandatory staff overtime	72%	17%				11%
Decreased patient satisfaction	50%	39%	6%			6%
Increased patient complaints	44%	39%	11%			6%
Decreased staff satisfaction	28%	28%	17%	11%	6%	11%
Curtailed plans for facility expansion	Yes 11%	No 89%				
Discontinued clinical programs	Yes 0%	No 94%				6%

MOST NEEDED AND UNAVAILABLE SPECIALIZED SKILLS*

1. Management
2. Acute care skills
3. RNs with LTC experience

*(*in 22% of agencies who reported needing nurses with specialized skills)*

Conclusions

Due to a limited response rate of 42% of Vermont’s nursing homes, the results of this survey may not accurately represent the entire Vermont nursing home industry. However, this information in combination with other statewide and national studies points to a concerning shortage of registered nurses. These RNs require education/experience which includes technical as well as leadership skills which are needed for the complexity of care in the rapidly changing environment of the nursing home.

Evidence of the challenges of limited budgets is seen in the number of respondents that indicated that they need more RNs than are currently budgeted. Also the lack of need expressed for nurses with specialized skills may reflect an inability to finance such a position (for example a wound specialist or a geriatric nurse practitioner).

The supply of LNAs and LPNs appears to have been sufficient

at the time of this study despite the challenges associated with turnover. The self reported impact of the nursing workforce shortage is mostly limited to the areas of staff satisfaction and patient complaints; however, decreased RN-to-patient ratios are known to affect quality of care.

In *Act Now For Your Tomorrow*, Final Report of National Commission on Nursing Workforce for LTC, (April 2005) the following recommendations were made: “Long Term Care Leaders must:

1. Generate interest in their profession
2. Address educational opportunities
3. Create new partnerships with education”

The results of this study confirm a nursing home RN shortage that would benefit from these recommendations.

Notes

¹**Vacancy rates were calculated as follows:**

$$\frac{\# \text{ FTE vacant}}{\text{Total FTEs employed} + \# \text{ vacant}} \times 100$$

from all responding institutions

²**Turnover rates were calculated as follows:**

$$\frac{\text{Total \# workers leaving institution between 2/15/04 – 2/15/05}}{\text{Total \# part-time} + \text{full-time workers employed as of 2/15/05}} \times 100$$