

Long Term Care Nursing Study 2007

Vermont Health Workforce Assessment Survey

Prepared by:

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Why was this survey done?

One factor in ensuring 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 (ONW) Research, Planning and Development conducted the Health Workforce Assessment Survey in February/March, 2007. The following is a report of this survey of 18 of 42 long term care facilities (43% response rate).

Who was surveyed?

The Vermont Health Workforce Survey was sent to all 42 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 Rate (Range)

RN9% (0-50%)
MDS Coordinator5% (0-50%)
LNA4% (0-13%)
Nurse Managers2% (0-20%)
LPN3% (0-17%)
Quality Assurance	0%

Statewide Turnover Rate (Range)

LNA	40% (12-175%)
RN	28% (0-250%)
LPN16% (0-80%)
MDS Coordinator	10% (0-100%)
Nurse Managers8% (0-50%)
Quality Assurance	0%

More of the LTC nursing staff work full time compared to other settings (76% or more).

Assessing need for nursing positions:

28% of the respondents reported a need for RNs that was greater than the budgeted positions in their facility; whereas, 17% of the respondents reported there was a greater need for LPNs and 28% for LNAs. The need for RNs with specialized skills was reported by only 6% of the respondents.

Hardest positions to fill*

(Average weeks to fill position)

RN nights (11 weeks)

LNA nights (11 weeks)

RN evenings (8 weeks)

Nurse manager (7 weeks)

RN days (5 weeks)

* in LTC facilities reporting vacancies in these positions

Impact of Shortages

	Never	Several times a year	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	Missing or n/a
Reduced number of staffed beds	89%	6%				6%
Delayed or diverted admissions	78%	22%				
Mandatory staff overtime	78%		11%			11%
Decreased patient satisfaction	44%	28%	6%			22%
Increased patient complaints	44%	33%	6%			17%
Decreased staff satisfaction	22%	44%	17%		6%	11%
Curtailed plans for facility expansion	Yes 6% No 83%					11%
Discontinued clinical programs	Yes 6% No 83%					11%

Use of financial recruitment incentives:

- 61% of responding LTC facilities reported starting salaries were adequate to have an impact on recruitment.
- None of the responding LTC facilities reported a pay differential for RN educational preparation or credentialed nurses.

Recruitment and retention of nurses age 50+

Efforts to recruit older nurses were reported by 11% of the respondents. Specific efforts to retain older nurses were reported by 50%.

Conclusions

This biannual survey is limited by a response rate of 42% of Vermont's nursing homes; therefore, results may not accurately represent all the nursing homes in Vermont. However, the response rate has been consistent with 2005 and therefore these years can be compared. In those responding, an improvement can be noted in all areas of vacancy rates, with the RN rate dropping to 9% from 19% in 2005. Fewer weeks are noted to fill all nursing positions, and a drop in turnover rates was noted in all positions. The supply of LNAs and LPNs appears to have been sufficient at the time of this study despite some high turnovers reported.

Recommendations

Vermont's long term care facilities have worked very hard to improve recruitment and retention their nursing staff. One example of this work is the Gold Star Employer program. The ONW has worked in collaboration with the Vermont Health Care Association to support and administer this program with following goals:

- Build a culture within Vermont's nursing home profession that acknowledges the importance and value of employees, particularly direct care workers.
- Establish a process for recognizing individual nursing homes that adopt and utilize practices that demonstrate that employees are valued.
- Improve staffing quality and retention of nursing home employees.

Twenty long term care facilities submitted applications to participate in the Gold Star Employer Program in June 2007. Continued work is needed, but so is celebration of the progress that has been made.

Needed and Unavailable Specialized Skills*

Nurse Manager with LTC experience
(*reported by one facility)