

Licensed Practical Nurses in Vermont

Summary Of Board Of Nursing Relicensure Survey March 2008

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Background

The Office of Nursing Workforce Research, Planning and Development prepared this report to provide Vermonters with useful information on the status of Vermont's nursing workforce. The information provided here are the results of a survey that was included in re-licensure materials sent out by the Vermont Board of Nursing in November 2007. Completion of the survey was not mandatory. The survey was returned by 1,048 LPNs (51% response rate) who indicated that they worked in Vermont in an LPN position. The study was supported by the Vermont Board of Nursing and Vermont Agency of Human Services.

Demographics:

- 94% of Vermont's LPNs are female and 4% are male
- 95% are Caucasian
- 74% are age 40+ (mean age – 47.9 years)

Employment Setting:

- Long term care: 33%
- Hospitals: 17%
- Ambulatory/outpatient: 14%
- Home health: 3%
- Independent practice: 6%
- Assisted living 6%
- Other settings: 21%

(Other settings include mental health, community health centers, correctional facilities, public health, schools).

Primary Job Responsibilities

- 72% reported direct patient care as their primary activity
- 10% reported responsibilities as a nurse manager/head nurse
- Other primary responsibilities reported included teaching/instruction, quality assurance, public health, and nursing administration

Job Satisfaction

- 89% reported satisfaction with the LPN position.
- 74% stated that they were unlikely to leave their current LPN position in the next 12 months.
- Of the 22% who said that they were likely to leave their current position, only 3% said that they would be likely to leave nursing altogether.

Several themes, illustrated with quotes from respondents, provide insight into the reasons why LPNs are likely to leave their current position:

• Salary/Pay Issues

“poor benefits”

“need more pay to recruit; employer should pay for license renewal.”

“poor pay for same work as RNs”

• Return to School

“If there were programs for experienced LPNs to get RN, I would do it”

“Have been in a distance learning program to achieve ADN.”

- **Management Practices**

“Lack of managerial support for LPN’s.”

“Employer imposes rules that feel like barriers to patient care.”

- **Job Stress**

“All staff are drained, set up for failure.”

“Short staffed, little support.”

“Too much paperwork, documentation, and emphasis on productivity—not right.”

Education

Thirteen percent of those who responded stated that they are enrolled in a formal nursing education program:

- 10% (140) are enrolled in an associate degree program
- 2% (19) are enrolled in a diploma program
- 1% (14) are enrolled in a baccalaureate program

Forty-seven percent of respondents reported that they had not participated in continuing education programs over the last 12 months.

Discussion

Vermont’s LPN workforce is a valued segment of healthcare providers. Because of the efforts of Vermont Technical College, the number of LPN graduates has increased over the ten years by 63%. Comparing demographics of the VT LPNs to the

national LPN statistics, similarities are seen in gender (4% male), and work in nursing home settings (33%). Differences were found in mean age (48 years in VT and 43 years nationally) and racial diversity (95% Caucasian in VT and 69% nationally). Work in the hospital setting was considerably different (17% in VT compared to 37% nationally)¹. Employment in hospitals is noted to have “plummeted” between 1984 and 2005 by 47% while the total number of LPNs in the country grew by 18%². At roughly the same time, a significant downward trend in RN staffing and an upward trend in LPN and CNA staffing was seen in nursing homes³. Acknowledging the extremely important role that LPNs play in the care of geriatric patients is critical and encouragement of those LPNs to continue their education at rates greater than 13% may be a key nurse workforce solution for the future.

References:

- ¹ Seago, J.S., Spetz, J., Chapman, S., Dyer, W., & Grumbach, K. (2004). *National Center for Health Workforce Analysis: Supply, demand, and use of licensed practical nurses*. Retrieved June 2, 2008 from http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/healthworkforce/reports/lpn/LPN1_5.htm.
- ² Lafer, G. and Moss, H. (2007) *The LPN: A Practical Way to Alleviate the Nursing Shortage*. Retrieved June 2, 2008 from <http://www.afscme.org/publications/14100.cfm?print=1>.
- ³ Feng, Z, Grabowski, DC, Intrator, O, Zinn, J, and Mor, V. (2008) Medicaid payment rates, case-mix reimbursement, and nursing home staffing –1996–2004. *Medical Care*, 46(1):33-40.