

Hospital Nursing Study 2009

Vermont Health Workforce Assessment Survey

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Why was this survey done?

One factor in assuring access to quality health care for all Vermonters is an ongoing understanding 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, 2009. The following is a report of the results from 13 of 16 hospitals (81% response rate).

Who was surveyed?

In February 2009, the Vermont Health Workforce Survey was sent to hospital nurse executives. This executive was asked to participate in the data collection with assistance from human resources and other department heads.

What was learned?

Average Vacancy Rate (Range)

Nurse Anesthetist	10% (0-50%)
Registered Nurse	5% (0-21%)
Nurse Managers6% (0-25%)
Licensed Practical Nurse2% (0-14%)
Licensed Nursing Assistant	1% (0-8%)
Nurse Practitioner/Physician Assistant.	0%
Clinical Nurse Specialist.	0%
Cerified Nurse Midwife.	0%

Recruitment incentives:

- 77% of hospitals reported an adequate impact of salaries on recruitment.
- 31% of hospitals reported a pay differential for RN educational preparation (ADN vs. BSN).
- 8% of hospitals reported a pay differential for credentialed RNs (e.g. RNC).

Traveling nurses were used by nine hospitals for an average cost of \$1.04 million. This is half the 2005 average.

Most Needed RN Specialties and # Weeks Needed to Fill Position*

**Mean weeks needed to fill position by hospitals recruiting these positions.*

1. NICU or PICU (41 weeks)
2. Operating room (21 weeks)
3. Critical/intensive care. (16 weeks)
4. Psychiatric (10 weeks)
5. Medical/surgical (9 weeks)
6. Emergency room (9 weeks)
7. Pediatric (5 weeks)
8. Obstetrics (6 weeks)

A need for RNs with specialized skills was identified by 54% of the hospitals.

Impact of Shortages

	Never	Several times a year	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	Missing or n/a
Curtailed plans for acquiring new technology	85%	8%				8%
Reduced number of staffed beds	69%	8%	8%	8%		8%
Emergency department overcrowding	62%	8%	8%	15%		8%
Diverted emergency department patients	85%		8%			8%
Delayed or diverted admissions	23%	62%	15%			
Reduced service hours	85%	8%				8%
Increased wait times to surgery	85%					15%
Cancelled surgeries	85%					15%
Delayed hospital discharges	85%	15%				
Shortened lengths of stay	92%		8%			
Mandatory staff overtime	85%		8%	8%		
Decreased patient satisfaction	46%	31%	8%		8%	8%
Increased patient complaints	46%	23%	8%		8%	15%
Decreased staff satisfaction	31%	38%	23%			8%
Curtailed plans for facility expansion	Yes 8%	No 85%				8%
Discontinued clinical programs		No 92%				8%

Retaining an Aging Nurse Workforce

The following steps were reportedly taken to assure that nurses age 50 years and older can be retained in the workforce:

- Teams provided with self-scheduling options
- Job sharing to reduce hours
- Modifications to work duties such as telephoning “patient call-backs”
- Being careful with patient assignment (i.e. physical location of patient assignment on the floor, and “heavy” care required)
- Use of lifting equipment

Conclusions

As predicted by Buerhaus, Auerbach and Staiger (2007) hospital RN vacancy rates have declined along with economic conditions. These authors caution that “changes in unemployment rates affecting RN spouses (which hospitals cannot control) and changes in the earnings of RNs (which hospital can control) are likely to play an important role in determining overall employment levels in the nurse labor market”. Older nurses are particularly more likely to stay in their current positions in this economy (Thrall, 2009).

Other regions of the country (West and Midwest) are reporting similarly low vacancy rates for RNs and lack of positions for new graduates (Darce, 2009; Schertz, 2009). However, on March 6, 2009 the US Bureau of Labor Statistics found that the healthcare sector is continuing to grow despite the poor economy (AACN, 2009).

The results of the 2009 RN Board of Nursing Relicensure Survey should be referenced along with this report to get a comprehensive look at supply and demand for nurses in the State of Vermont in the year 2009.

AACN (2009). *Nursing Shortage Fact Sheet*. Retrieved from www.aach.nche.edu/Media/shortageresource.htm

Buerhaus, P. I., Auerbach, D. I., & Staiger, D. O. (2007). Recent trends in the registered nurse labor market in the US: Short-run swings on top of long-term trends. *Nursing Economics*, 25(2), 59-68.

Darce, K. (2009, May 8). Recession temporarily eases nursing shortage. *San Diego Union Tribune*.

Schertz, A. (2009). Nursing shortage will ease in 2009. *BizTimes Milwaukee*. Retrieved from www.biztimes.com/news/2009/1/23/nursing-shortage-will-ease-in-2009

Thrall, T. (2009). The return of the RNs. *H&HN*, April, 22-24.