



Healthcare Association
of New York State

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STUDY: NEW YORK'S NURSING SHORTAGE WORSENERD IN 2007

Staggering 80% of Reporting Hospitals Indicate Nursing Shortages; Investments in Nursing Education Essential to Increasing Nurse Supply, Ensuring Quality Patient Care

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York's nursing shortage is worsening and remains more severe than the national average, as hospitals continue to face serious challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified professionals, a study by the Healthcare Association of New York State (HANY) has found.

HANY's recent Workforce Advocacy Survey of more than 125 hospitals across New York, released today, in recognition of National Nurses Week, discovered that the statewide vacancy rate for registered nurses (RNs) increased to 8.8% in 2007—a steep increase from 6.38% in 2006. In addition, New York's 2007 nurse vacancy rate is higher than the national rate of 8.5% and continues a trend of several years. In total, a staggering 80% of survey respondents noted RN shortages.

“The health care system in New York State and across this country cannot and will not survive without a commitment to increasing the number of professionals who administer life-saving care,” HANY's President Daniel Sisto said. “The workforce shortage is not going away. In fact, statistics show us that it will almost certainly get alarmingly worse. We need policymakers to take effective action that opens the door to increased resources, training, and education so that more nurses and health care professionals can join the workforce.”

The health care needs of “baby boomers” are growing. New York State's population age 65 and older increased by 25% between 1980 and 2000. The population over age 80 is expected to double by 2020. According to the state Department of Labor, the total number of jobs needed in health care is expected to grow 18% by 2012—more than twice the rate of growth of all other occupations. The federal Bureau of Health Professions projects a shortage of New York nurses of nearly 37,000 by 2015.

The Solution: Increase Nurse Supply by Investing in Nursing School Capacity

A major factor behind the shortage is nursing schools' inability to admit qualified applicants due to capacity limitations. In fact, despite the ongoing shortage of nurses, New York's nursing schools are forced to turn away nearly 4,000 applicants each year due to a lack of faculty, facilities, or resources.

Hospitals recognize this problem and eighty-two percent (82%) of respondents noted they have been actively working with educational programs in their communities to meet the demand through either financial support or a contribution of staff time, clinical space, or supplies.

“The nursing profession has been aggressive in marketing the profession and attracting potential students who seek a challenging and rewarding career. That success has brought a significant number of potential candidates seeking entry. Ironically, now educational programs are unable to accept these highly qualified individuals,” said **Claire Murray, Executive Director of New York Organization of Nurse Executives (NYONE)**. “The current and future shortage projections cannot be reversed without an increase in the capacity of educational programs. New Yorkers’ health depends on the outcome.”

To address these pipeline issues, HANYS and NYONE are advocating for passage of legislation (S.4994-B, Maziarz/A.8645-A, John) that would improve recruitment and retention of nursing faculty and clinical staff. This legislation would authorize funding to schools of nursing, other educational institutions, and health care providers to ensure adequate faculty, administrative, and capital resources to prepare future generations of entry and advanced level nurses.

“Survey results clearly show that our nursing shortage problem is getting worse, not better,” said **Senator George Maziarz (R-C, Newfane)**. “The demands are far outpacing current numbers, and we need to take swift action to bring more qualified nurses into the workforce. That begins with making sure the teaching and training infrastructure can accommodate our real needs.”

“It is well known that New York is facing a severe nursing shortage,” said **Assemblymember Susan John (D-Rochester)**. “This shortage is being felt as a hardship today, but will turn into an acute crisis in health care tomorrow if we do not take action. My legislation will help address this situation by creating the ‘New York State Nursing Correction Act.’ This legislation helps get at the root of the issue by making funds available for nursing education. This funding will specifically be targeted to create and expand the number of faculty, programs, clinical simulation labs, partnerships to use expert clinicians, and financial assistance to prepare nurses for an academic career. The end result will allow more people who choose nursing as a career to receive the education they need.”

In addition to nursing shortages, several other allied health professions are experiencing significant vacancy and turnover rates. Respondents reported shortages in every other health professional area that was included in the survey. These included licensed practical nurses; patient care technicians/certified nurse aides; nurse practitioners; pharmacists; radiologic technologists and technicians; clinical laboratory technologists, technicians, and cytotechnologists; physical therapists; dietitians and nutritionists; and coders.

HANYS, the only statewide hospital and continuing care association in New York State, represents more than 550 non-profit and public hospitals, nursing homes, home care agencies, and other health care organizations.