

Why Wisconsin Needs a Center for Nursing

The Problem: Wisconsin does not have a coordinated, systematic method for collecting, and analyzing nurse workforce data. Without data, Wisconsin is unable to create a state wide plan *to assure an adequate, well-prepared and diverse nurse workforce to meet the needs of the citizens of Wisconsin.*

- The recent shortage of registered nurses in the US is well documented and has existed since 1998. This longest shortage in the past fifty years is due to multiple factors including 1) fewer young people entering the profession, 2) an aging nurse population; and 3) an aging population with increasing need for nursing services; and 4) too few nurse educators to enroll the prospective students with interest.
- The average age of RNs in Wisconsin is 47.6. The current nurse workforce in Wisconsin does not reflect the racial, ethnic and gender make-up of the state's population. However, the extent of the disparity is unknown due to the lack of data collection.
- The demand for nurses in all aspects of healthcare continues to increase. It is essential there be qualified registered professional and other licensed nurses to meet the needs of patients. Safe, high quality patient care is jeopardized without an adequate supply of qualified nurses throughout Wisconsin.

The Solution: A Wisconsin Center for Nursing will oversee the collection, analysis and dissemination of data that will determine the current demand for and the current and projected supply of nurses in the workforce. WCN will develop a statewide plan to address and gaps and assure that the nurse workforce will meet the demands. **State policy makers must designate a regular source of state funding to support a Wisconsin Center for Nursing.**

Wisconsin Center for Nursing will maximize the collection and use of nursing data:

- Establish/maintain a database on nursing supply, demand, turnover rates and projections.
- Use statistical methods to analyze and seek resolution of regional and specialty shortages.
- Monitor and evaluate trends in the nursing program applicant pool.
- Establish a statewide plan to address the shortage and distribution of supply.
- Develop recruitment /retention strategies across the continuum of care.

The Wisconsin Center for Nursing is about more than just workforce data.

Wisconsin Center for Nursing will provide a coordinated voice for nursing on workforce issues:

- Coordinate communication between organizations that represent nurses, health care providers, state agencies, businesses, consumers, educators and legislators.
- Promote nursing careers through educational and scholarship programs.
- Facilitate partnerships to promote diversity, career mobility, and leadership development in the nursing profession.
- Promote strategies to ensure a safe, healthy and respectful workplace environment for nurses.
- Explore, establish and enhance loan repayment and scholarship programs to benefit nurses who remain in Wisconsin after graduation.
- Establish grants and other programs to provide financial incentives to encourage and assist with nursing education, internships and residency programs.
- Evaluate capacity for expansion of nursing programs, including increased supply of nurse educators, learning laboratories, clinical education sites and other resources to support nursing education.
- Educate the public regarding the expanding roles of nurses and emerging career opportunities in nursing practice, education, and research.
- Develop/implement other activities needed to alleviate or prevent the nursing shortage in Wisconsin.

Next steps:

- The Wisconsin Center for Nursing must be designated by the legislature as the central resource center for nursing workforce data in Wisconsin.
- Legislation should be created to link the collection of nurse workforce (RN and LPN) data to nurse licensure renewal by Dept of Regulation and Licensing.
- The Wisconsin Center for Nursing must be designated as the organization to collaborate with the Department of Workforce Development to create/implement a methodology to determine employer demand for nurses and key indicators of retention (turnover, vacancy rate).

Potential funding sources:

- **Option 1: Fund the WCN from Nurse License Fees.**
 - Nursing licensing fees currently generate approximately \$5.7M in licensing fees biennially; a small portion of these fees (\$350,000 annually) could be allocated to the WCN.

OR

 - Increase nursing licensing fees by \$10/biennium and designate the revenue to the Wisconsin Center for Nursing.
- **Option 2: Fund the WCN by allocating a specific amount (\$350,000 annually) from the state budget to support core Wisconsin Center for Nursing operations (\$700,000/biennially).**

Timeline

**Immediate action is necessary.
The budget process is underway and
2007 RN License Renewal begins in November**

