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## **Nursing Workforce Data Collection**

### Issue

Nurses are the largest group of health care professionals in Wisconsin. Wherever there is a health care setting you will find a nurse providing care. Nurses are the backbone of the health care delivery systems and are present 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, and 365 days a year. Nursework is providing care directly to patients or groups, managing and/or coordinating care, supervising the care provided by a team of nurses or other health care providers, administering the nursing care delivered within an organization or preparing the nursing workforce of the future through education. Our current nursing workforce consists of graduates from Associate, Diploma, Baccalaureate, Masters, and Doctorate Degree programs.

The average age of Wisconsin's nursing workforce is 47.6 years. Nine percent of the workforce is under the age of 30 years. Forty-four percent are 50 years and older. There is very little other data about Wisconsin's nursing workforce. Attempts have been made to obtain more information from the individual nurse related to her or his work position, work setting, hours worked, retirement plans, gender, race, ethnicity and educational preparation. This information is important to meeting the future health needs of Wisconsin's citizens. The last attempt in trying to collect information from each nurse to determine supply data was from November 2005 – May 2006. This non-mandatory, well publicized, actively supported RN Workforce Survey yielded a disappointing 22% response rate. Thus continuing the problem of having insufficient information about Wisconsin's nursing workforce.

What is extremely troubling is that there is a significant nursing shortage on the horizon. We know this by the mere fact that the number of nurses eligible for retirement will start to rise beginning in 2010. We also know that the number of elderly citizens is increasing which directly translates into an increased demand for nursing care.

Wisconsin has a serious problem in that it is lacking a coordinated and systematic method of collecting and analyzing nursing workforce data. It is important for Wisconsin's citizens to have the right nurse, delivering the right care in the right setting in order to achieve safe, cost-effective and efficient health care. Not knowing where nurse's work, how often they work, the kind of work they do and plans for retiring/leaving the workforce places Wisconsin in a vulnerable position leading to a public health crisis and expensive and inefficient care. It is important to support a statewide nursing center that has the authority and the financial support to promote and implement strategies for sustaining an appropriate supply of nurses for Wisconsin.

## **Solution**

The Wisconsin Nurses Association supports a comprehensive plan that includes sustained funding of the Wisconsin Center for Nursing that will coordinate:

1. Data collection and analysis of a required and regularly scheduled RN and LPN Workforce Survey.
2. Recruitment and retention of an adequate and culturally diverse professional nursing workforce that mirrors Wisconsin's patient population.
3. Initiatives that promote increasing the number of nurse educators and nursing education programs.
4. Support advancement of nursing education and research.

For more information contact the Wisconsin Nurses Association: 1-608-221-0383 or [info@wisconsinnurses.org](mailto:info@wisconsinnurses.org)