

New Mexico's Workforce Nursing Crisis Continues

Problem:

Nursing is the single largest profession in the entire U.S. health care workforce. Registered Nurses (R.N.s) perform a variety of patient care duties and are critical to the delivery of health care services across a wide variety of settings. You don't have a functioning hospital without R.N.s. Nurses deliver care in hospitals, ambulatory clinics, nursing homes, public health facilities, hospice programs, clinics and home health agencies to name a few. According to The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services - Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA Health Workforce Report 2017-2030), *nursing shortages largely reflect local conditions, such as the number of new graduates from nursing schools*. HRSA estimates that the national demand for registered nurses will grow by 28 percent from 2014 to 2030. The demand for nursing is affected by a number of factors within a state including population growth, aging of the state's population, expanded health insurance access such as Medicaid and overall economic conditions.

Covid 19 exacerbated the problem enormously. No state had enough nurses to handle the crisis. Now nurses in New Mexico and elsewhere are retiring or leaving the profession at record rates as you have heard from Dr. Ferguson at the BON. You see from the workforce report that only one county Bernalillo has met the benchmark for R.N.s. In order to meet the other 32 county benchmarks for R.N.s, we would need almost 5900 additional nurses. The number of online advertised job posting for R.N.s was over 9000 in May of this year.

We do know that of the 30,000 plus licensed R.N.s in New Mexico during the 2021 calendar year only 16,500 actually live and practice here. We don't know how many R.N.s practice here under a compact license. We don't know how many of those R.N.s are traveler nurses working in our hospitals.

What is the Solution?

Only one solution exists for increasing New Mexico nurses. We must educate our own.

The good news is that the \$15 million of ARPA money funded by the Legislature and supported by HED and the governor's office has been put to good use by 17 of our state's public schools of nursing. This funding which includes approximately \$11 million recurring money and \$4 million in one time only funding will be used to assist in the following:

- increase the number of students enrolling in nursing programs;
- hire new faculty;
- update equipment and facilities especially simulation labs and equipment;
- retain students;
- and expand recruitment activities.

In FY21, New Mexico schools of nursing graduated 1128 R.N.s. This new funding based upon schools of nursing projections would add 384 new graduates within the next two to three years. Though this is significant it will not even begin to meet our needs.

Without a plan and commitment from the State of New Mexico, schools of nursing on their own cannot address nursing workforce shortages. Every higher education institution is governed by a board of trustees or regents. These governing boards and administrations have their own strategic plans and priorities for their schools. We as a state must provide the direction and support to address this statewide crisis.

How do we get there?

- Develop a statewide plan with higher education institutions for addressing the nursing the workforce issues;
- Increase annual allocations to schools of nursing;
- Create an expendable trust fund for health care allowing schools of nursing to apply to increase their student slots; and
- Create a fund or access to other capital outlay funds to address expanded nursing facility needs.

Prepared by Linda Siegle, Government Relations

New Mexico Nurses Association

New Mexico Nurse Practitioner Council

New Mexico School Nurses

American College of Nurse Midwives, NM Chapter