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**Contact: Lauren Parran
(908) 301-0366 office
(908) 310-5139 cell**

Report Urges Government Action to Avert a Health Care Crisis by Preventing a Nursing Shortage

Newark, NJ, *[date of issuance]* – A serious, statewide public health problem is looming and immediate action is required by government, according to research issued today by the New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing (NJCCN). The center’s report, “Preventing New Jersey’s Impending Health Care Crisis,” warns that one-half of patients who require professional nursing care in the year 2020 may be denied care as a result of a shortage of registered nurses that will leave 50% of the state’s essential positions unfilled.

NJCCN, a non-profit organization, located in Rutgers University – Newark campus and funded jointly by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the State of New Jersey, asserts that the nursing shortage will result from a rising demand for health care that includes the aging of the “Baby Boom” generation, the increased use of technology as well as consumer demand, coupled with a limited capacity of New Jersey’s nursing schools to educate new nurses.

Despite the relative success of some recent campaigns to entice more candidates into the field of nursing and shifts in the job market that are making nursing a more desirable career choice, NJCCN reports that a myriad of complex issues related to the education and retention of nurses must be addressed now to avert a crisis in the future.

The NJCCN report, which was delivered to Governor Jon Corzine and state legislators, suggests the following action steps:

- Expand state support of nursing schools.
- Provide educational incentives and salary subsidies that encourage nurses to secure advanced degrees required to qualify for and be successful in nursing faculty positions.
- Offer grants via health care employers for working nurses who enroll in master’s or doctoral programs to become nursing faculty.
- Offer incentives to health care employers who implement work-study programs and other flexible work options for employees who seek training as registered nurses.
- Provide incentive grants to health facilities that seek, receive and maintain accreditation for excellence in nursing from the American Nurses Credentialing Center Magnet Recognition Program®.

- Continue supporting NJCCN so that it can meet its state-mandated mission to collect, analyze, and report objective information about nursing workforce issues.

“The existence of a professional nurse shortage in both our state and the entire nation is not a new finding. However, we believe that our findings concerning the scope of the problem and our state’s capacity to educate and retain nurses underscore the need for immediate action,” said Geri L. Dickson, PhD, RN, Executive Director of the New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing. “The need for proactive steps to expand and enhance the education of nurses in our state is essential.”

“The successful expansion of our nursing workforce will be a long and time-consuming process, so we must begin our work right now,” she added. “If we fail to act, one of every two New Jerseyans may find that nursing care is not available to them when needed in the next decade.”

The NJCCN report also suggests ways to fund its recommendations that would not add to the state’s general operating budget. In addition to its report, NJCCN is engaged in other initiatives intended to ensure the availability of high-quality nursing services, foster excellence in the field of nursing and improve patient outcomes. On April 27-28, the center hosted a successful national conference in Jersey City for public and private sector professionals who operate or are seeking to establish nursing workforce centers in their states.

The New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing (www.njccn.org) was established through a public/ private partnership between the State of New Jersey and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The center is a future-oriented research and development organization that gathers and disseminates objective information and provides strategic recommendations regarding the allocation of state resources to the field of nursing. The center is guided by a 17-member board appointed by the Governor and State legislative leaders. The board’s membership is comprised of nurses who represent an array of diverse health care organizations, as well as health care consumers.

NJCCN Board members are available for interviews upon request.

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