

Chapter 5: Key Trends

Highlight of Data in NJ

Environmental Scan

- Value-based payment models have resulted in consolidation of hospitals into larger systems. This has resulted in changes in care models and roles for nurses and other healthcare professionals.
- There is a greater focus being places on the continuum of care with emphasis on post-acute and home services.
- There is an aging population in the state with a population that is more racially and ethnically diverse.
- In certain counties health rankings show disparities in health and socioeconomic indicators. For example, southern counties showed poorest health outcomes.
- Hospital employment has had slower growth rates while employments in ambulatory health and nursing and residential care facilities have nearly doubled 1990-2016. (N.J. Dept. of Labor and Workforce Development, 2016).

Supply

- The number of qualified applicants for RN programs has been steadily increasing. However, this number may be inflated due to the lack of unique identifiers. The number of enrollees and graduates have remained stable.
- Enrollment and graduation rates have decreased by 20% and 30% respectively for LPNs.
- There has been a 50% increase in RN to BSN graduations over four years.
- No significant changes in diversity in the RN population. This needs to have an intentional focus.
- First pre-licensure education continues to be at the Associate Degree level. (39%)
- The average age of RNs, LPNs, and APNs is 48.
- Compared to 2014-2015 data, the number of nurses not employed as an RN has more than doubled from previous year. Half of those responding identified being retired and the other half did not want to disclose reasons. These data needs to be tracked over times.
- Faculty vacancies (full-time) are trending upward, which is of concern (53% are over the age of 56, with an average age of 58). Reasons were not collected, however it is likely that retirements are starting to increase in baccalaureate and higher education programs.
- The main employer of RNs continues to be hospital settings, however this trend continues to decrease year after year in New Jersey.

- APNs are primarily practicing in ambulatory settings, whereas LPNs primarily practice in nursing homes and home health environments.

Demand

- Top 5 RN postings setting aside generic nurse postings include the following:
 - Nurse Managers
 - Intensive Care
 - Operating Room Nurses
 - Case Managers
 - Home Health
- These data are consistent with the prior year. Based on review of data from meetings with CNOs, a state wide Operating Room course was developed and implemented through Rutgers School of Nursing, Professional Development in 2017 to meet this gap.
- NJ has a lower than average level of demand for RN positions and an average level of demand for APNs and LPNs as compared to other states.

Summary

- Health care is shifting out of hospitals and acute care settings to community-based settings.
- Although the data continues to show there are enough nurses, the issues of distribution and specialization continue to be of concern and need to be tracked and trended.
- Educators need to realign curriculum and experience in post-acute and community care to prepare nurses for healthcare changes. Data continues to show hospitals as primary education sites, however, this is expected to change over time as the population ages out.
- Diversity of students needs to be addressed to mirror population data.
- Continuing focus on the RN to BSN completion is needed to meet recommendations of 80% BSN as identified in *IOM Future of Nursing: Leading Change Advancing Health*.
- The projection for APNs over the next 10 years shows significant growth based on demand data. These roles can help fill the gap in primary care.
- Faculty vacancies in baccalaureate and higher education programs are trending upward, which needs to be addressed.

Next Steps

In addition to tracking and trending data, the NJCCN recommends and directs interventions to help address gaps in the workforce. The NJCCN is strategically focusing on the following areas for 2018:

- LPN practices
- Access to care for consumers re: APNs
- Acute Care Nurse Residency standards
- School Nurse Practices
- Home Health Aide Trends