



National League  
for Nursing

September 8, 2004

## Pennsylvania Releases Report on Nursing Education Programs

A recent report from the Pennsylvania Department of Health indicates that although nursing school enrollments in the Commonwealth are skyrocketing – increasing from less than 12,000 in 1999 to more than 18,000 in 2003 – almost a third of students in registered nurse programs are dropping out. Half of those leave because they fail to meet academic standards.

The SHIP Report on the Status of Nursing Education Programs in Pennsylvania is based on the data provided in the 2003 Nursing Education Program Annual Reports submitted to the State Board of Nursing by 125 nursing education programs in Pennsylvania. (SHIP stands for State Health Improvement Partnership.) It provides information such as student enrollment status, the number of faculty, the number of graduates, student attrition, and clinical practice placement capacity of professional and practical nursing education programs.

The Department of Health is collaborating with the Pennsylvania Department of State's Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs to identify the nature and scope of data available through the State Board of Nursing and to determine its usefulness in addressing the nursing workforce shortage

issue. Though the nurse shortage is both national and international in scope, Pennsylvania's nurse workforce has some unique aspects. Nursing schools in the Commonwealth have historically trained not only the bulk of Pennsylvania's nurses, but also have exported nurses to other states.

Major findings for Pennsylvania nursing education programs include:

- The number of students enrolled in RN programs increased by 59 percent from 9,859 to 15,651 between 1999 and 2003.
- The number of students enrolled in LPN programs increased by 63 percent from 1,704 to 2,772 between 1999 and 2003.
- The number of faculty employed in nursing education programs increased from 1,445 to 1,961 in RN programs and from 240 to 544 in LPN programs between 1999 and 2003.
- Since 1999, the number of newly hired, part-time nursing education faculty has significantly exceeded those hired as full-time with the exception of RN-diploma programs.
- In 2003, the number of newly hired, part-time faculty was four times higher than the number of newly hired full-time faculty

In this issue . . .

PENNSYLVANIA RELEASES REPORT ON NURSING EDUCATION PROGRAMS . . . . .	1
CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND HOSPITALS PARTNER TO INCREASE NURSING WORKFORCE . . . . .	2

## Pennsylvania Releases Report (cont'd)

in RN-baccalaureate degree (BS), RN-associate degree (AD), and LPN programs.

- The percentages of part-time faculty with required degrees were significantly lower than those of full-time faculty with required degrees.
- Between 2002 and 2003, the number of nursing school graduates increased with the exception of RN-BS programs, which showed a slight decrease.
- RN-BS programs maintained the lowest attrition rates between the years 2000 and 2003.
- Seventy percent of RN-BS and 68 percent of RN-AD programs indicated difficulty in obtaining clinical sites for student experience, while 28 percent of RN-DIP programs and 52 percent of LPN programs indicated difficulty.

According to the report, racial and ethnic minorities are under-represented among Pennsylvania nurses. Although 9 percent of the Commonwealth's adults are African-American, only 3 percent of its registered nurses and 7 percent of its licensed practical nurses

are black. Hispanics constitute 2.5 percent of the adult population, but only about 1 percent of its nurses. The report recommends that Pennsylvania schools and employers try harder to get the nurse work force to reflect these demographics. It also suggests that they recruit more men, who comprise less than 5 percent of nurses.

The report states that even if all of the current students graduate, Pennsylvania still will not be able to fill all of its nursing vacancies. Schools need to be more selective about whom they admit and do more to retain students once they are admitted. The report also advocates that nurses become lifelong learners. This recommendation might ultimately compel Pennsylvania to require continuing education as a condition of licensure.

In addition to the current report, the Department of Health previously released reports on surveys of registered nurses and licensed practical nurses. All reports are available online at the SHIP link on the department's website at [www.health.state.pa.us](http://www.health.state.pa.us).

## California Community Colleges and Hospitals Partner to Increase Nursing Workforce

Enrollment in California community colleges has increased continually over the last five years, due in large part to a growing interest in nursing programs. According to some estimates, nurses produced by community college nursing degree programs account for 70 percent of the nursing work force in California. To meet the demand, hospitals are working with community colleges to expand their nursing degree programs.

California hospitals gave a combined \$50 million in 2003 to help train nurses at community colleges through student scholarships, faculty hiring, and classroom expansions. The nursing shortage and crowding in degree-level nursing programs are compounded by a lack

of qualified instructors. According to the San Diego Union-Tribune, many nurse educators are getting older and retiring, and school officials say they are not being replaced because younger nurses "find campus life less lucrative" than other work.

Because of the salary discrepancy between academe and a clinical setting, California schools are having problems filling empty staff positions. This situation has resulted in qualified students being turned away from degree programs. Some California colleges have been able to fill empty staff positions by taking innovative approaches to recruitment, such as hiring working nurses to teach part-time on weekends or evenings.