



Wisconsin Center  
for Nursing

A photograph of a smiling woman with short blonde hair, wearing blue scrubs and a stethoscope. She is holding a brown clipboard under her left arm. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# THE WISCONSIN NURSING WORKFORCE:

*Status and Recommendations*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Acknowledgements

Welcome to the Wisconsin Center for Nursing (WCN) report, *The Wisconsin Nursing Workforce: Status and Recommendations*. The cover of this crucial report depicts the current nursing workforce in Wisconsin: experienced, lacking in diversity and approaching retirement.

This report was accomplished with support from many individuals and partners. It is based on a review of state and national analyses, and workforce planning efforts. This report integrates findings from ongoing data analyses by WCN, made possible through mandated surveys and re-licensure fees administered as grant funding through the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, under Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 106.30. It also includes data from essential national workforce reports, such as from the U.S. Department of Health Services Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The report affirms the 2011 Institute of Medicine Report: *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* which recommends the use of reliable data for strategic healthcare workforce planning.

We are grateful to the Governor of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin legislators, and our partners at the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, without whose assistance, our work would not be possible. We are honored to be part of the Wisconsin Health Workforce Data Collaborative, an innovative model in Wisconsin to support dialogue and collaboration around the importance of establishing data infrastructure and the systematic collection of healthcare workforce data. We are also grateful to the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services, for making the nursing surveys accessible to thousands of nurses in our state, and the nurses of Wisconsin for their cooperation in responding to the surveys.

WCN deeply appreciates the work of our researchers and the significant contributions of their respective institutions, specifically the University of Wisconsin–Madison School of Nursing, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee College of Nursing, the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh College of Nursing, Marquette University College of Nursing. In addition, we would like to recognize the many high quality nursing education programs in our state, and their lead organization, the Administrators of Nursing Education in Wisconsin (ANEW). This principal organization provides vision and leadership to assure an adequate continuing supply of nurses through collaborative educational efforts between baccalaureate and associate degree nursing programs.

WCN also extends sincere appreciation to the Faye McBeath Foundation, a long standing partner that has provided support for our mission and the nursing profession since the inception of our organization. WCN appreciates the support of a multitude partners throughout the state. A complete listing of partner organizations is provided on page 4 of this report.

*The Wisconsin Nursing Workforce: Status and Recommendations* provides strategic recommendations, and is intended for use by educators, health systems, governmental agencies, workforce planners and policy-makers to inform and implement strategies to mitigate emerging nursing workforce challenges in Wisconsin. It provides judicious information on the status of the nursing workforce, and serves as a foundation to address projected nursing shortages which will impact the future of healthcare delivery in our state. On behalf of the WCN Board of Directors, we are proud to emulate Wisconsin's motto, "Forward," as we move ahead in planning for our future nursing workforce, and we are pleased to provide this report to the people of Wisconsin.



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# The Wisconsin Center for Nursing

*Leading Today for the Workforce of Tomorrow*

### Vision

Nurses in Wisconsin speak with one voice for nursing workforce issues.

### Mission

Assure an adequate, well-prepared and diverse nurse workforce for the people of Wisconsin.

### Core Values

- Leadership
- Inclusive Excellence
- Collaboration
- Impact

### Our Partners

- Administrators of Nursing Education of Wisconsin
- AARP Wisconsin
- Faye McBeath Foundation
- Great Lakes Chapter American Assembly of Men in Nursing
- Healthier Wisconsin Partnership Program – Medical College of Wisconsin
- Milwaukee Chapter National Black Nurses Association
- Nurses Foundation of Wisconsin
- Oscar Rennebohm Foundation
- Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative
- Southeast Wisconsin Chapter of National Association of Hispanic Nurses
- Wisconsin Associate Degree Nursing Educators & Administrators
- Wisconsin Association of Colleges & Schools of Nursing
- Wisconsin Association of Licensed Practical Nurses
- Wisconsin Association of School Nurses
- Wisconsin Area Health Education Centers
- Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health
- Wisconsin Department of Safety & Professional Services
- Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Labor Market Information
- Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Office of Economic Advisors
- Wisconsin Health Workforce Data Collaborative
- Wisconsin Hospital Association
- Wisconsin League for Nursing
- Wisconsin Nurses Association
- Wisconsin Nursing Coalition
- Wisconsin Organization of Nurse Executives
- Wisconsin Public Health Association
- Wisconsin State Board of Nursing

# Executive Summary

The nursing workforce is integrally related to the delivery of healthcare and, as a professional group, nurses are a critical asset and economic driver for Wisconsin. As the largest professional healthcare workforce in the state, the supply of nurses directly impacts the availability of most healthcare services and the health outcomes for Wisconsin's population. Projections indicate there is a pending nursing workforce crisis with the shortage of Registered Nurses (RNs) growing to nearly 20,000 nurses in Wisconsin by 2035. Simultaneously, there is a need to increase the educational preparation of nurses to meet evolving healthcare needs.

This crisis in the nursing workforce is being driven by a growing elderly population, rapidly aging nurse population, a continuing nurse educator shortage, and the looming impact of healthcare reform. These factors are increasing in the face of a rapidly aging population and a substantial increase in the demand for nurses in both healthcare and disease prevention sectors.

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD), Office of Economic Advisors predicts a gap in the state nursing workforce as high as 36.6% by the year 2035, based on sophisticated forecasting tools. The economic fallout of ignoring these factors can be significant. This report by the Wisconsin Center for Nursing (WCN) merges findings from the mandatory biennial Wisconsin nursing workforce surveys undertaken and disseminated collaboratively by DWD and WCN and the annual nursing education surveys conducted by WCN. The goal is to summarize available supply and demand data, describe the potential negative impact on the healthcare of Wisconsin residents and outline recommendations to mitigate this impact.

As the largest segment of the healthcare workforce, RNs serve in many, diverse roles and offer untapped potential for expanded roles which could improve access, customer satisfaction, cost effectiveness, and patient outcomes. This is particularly germane at a time

of rapid changes in healthcare delivery and a shift in focus to more health promotion and disease prevention models spurred by the implementation of the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA)*. Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs), over 36% of whom are employed in nursing homes, will continue to provide a critical foundation of care for the elderly across the state in both long term care and home-based services. This need will continue with a projected 133% increase in Wisconsin residents aged 85 and over by 2035.

With a shortfall of over 2000 physicians in the Wisconsin workforce by 2030, as projected in *100 New Physicians a Year: An Imperative for Wisconsin* (WHA, 2011), Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) will be called upon to provide an effective, well-prepared workforce to meet the primary care needs of Wisconsin residents which is the area of greatest physician shortage. An increased supply of nurse practitioners must be enrolled and graduated from Wisconsin nursing schools in the next several years.

In a time of national nursing shortage, it is important to note that 85.5% of Wisconsin nursing school graduates live and work in Wisconsin. This will allow state policymakers, employers and educators to address the Wisconsin nursing shortage with Wisconsin-crafted solutions. Recent Wisconsin RN surveys indicate that over 20% of the nursing workforce intends to leave direct patient care in the next 5-9 years, with a loss of another 59% of currently employed Wisconsin nurses in patient care in 10 or more years. Although an increase in nursing school enrollments and the recent economic downturn which delayed retirements for many older nurses have painted a temporarily optimistic picture of nursing workforce, extensive retirements are projected in 2015 and beyond. Immediately increasing the enrollment and graduation of a large number of new nurses who are capable and committed to Wisconsin is critical.

The loss of many of the most experienced nurses in the workforce in a short period of time will cause both workforce shortages and a significant loss of wisdom from the field at a time when nursing roles and skills are expanding to address a significant transformation



On average,  
Wisconsin RNs have  
**15 YEARS**  
of experience

in healthcare delivery. There is also a need for academic progression of nurses moving from Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) to the Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing (BSN), in an effort to ensure patient safety and meet the expanding roles of RNs. The landmark Institute of Medicine (IOM) Report, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, (IOM, 2011) calls for 80% of all RNs to be educated with a Bachelor's degree or higher by 2020. For Wisconsin, this translates to a current unmet demand for BSN completion programs for nearly 20,000 nurses if we are to meet this target.

The dearth of qualified nursing faculty is impeding the ability of many nursing schools to maintain and expand current enrollments at a time when nursing programs must attempt to dramatically increase enrollments. Dwindling resources for higher education in the state has impacted the ability of nursing schools to pay salaries adequate to compete for enough nursing faculty to teach the next generation of nurses. Scarce resources also have decreased the number of graduate students able to make the educational commitment to doctoral education, thus decreasing the profession's ability to educate the next generation of faculty.

A nursing workforce that is diverse, and reflective of the population it serves, contributes to improved patient satisfaction and health outcomes. The Wisconsin nursing workforce lacks diversity on all levels. A diverse and inclusive workforce is paramount to the success of a 21st century workforce, however underrepresented populations in Wisconsin's nursing workforce, lag behind both state and national averages. In 2012, the percentage of white nurses was 93.5%, with only 6.4% from racial/ethnic minorities, and only 6.9% males. LPNs in Wisconsin, although slightly more racially

diverse in members of traditionally underrepresented groups at 11.7%, are even less likely to be male, with only 4.4% reported in 2011. WCN established a Diversity Taskforce in 2012 to address the issues and provide recommendations for enhancing nursing diversity.

Data from DWD and WCN survey reports and other reliable sources have clearly identified the factors detailed in this report as key elements of a "perfect storm" that threatens the Wisconsin nursing workforce of the future and the health of Wisconsin's population. Additional state and private resources are desperately needed to expand nursing programs to meet the impending nursing workforce crisis in Wisconsin. In addition, schools and colleges of nursing will need the support of health employers to accommodate the learning needs of a larger student population. To accomplish this, there will need to be a dedicated commitment and significant investment to support the infrastructure necessary for increased educational capacity, including clinical space, faculty positions, and enhanced financial support both for the institutions and students.

Meaningful strategies to increase the number of nursing graduates in Wisconsin will require public-private collaborative partnerships for innovative solutions to meet the needs of rapidly changing population demographics. Healthcare systems will need to invest in programs to recruit a diverse nursing workforce, and retain new graduates using evidence-based, statewide residency programs. Nursing education must address new emphasis on preparing students competent in population health at individual, family, community and systems levels. In addition, state infrastructure for community and public health nursing must be restored as community-based care models emerge with the onset of the ACA.

Finally, interprofessional strategies and technology need to be leveraged to improve both educational and clinical outcomes in a time of scarce resources. Barriers to practice must be removed to allow nurses to practice to the full extent of the law and their education if the health of the population is to be protected. Given the shortage projections from a variety of sources that project an impact as early as 2015, it is clear that the time to act is now.

Increasing educational capacity and academic progression are key issues which require time to accomplish. Positive outcomes will require public-private partnerships and innovative collaboration. Dedicated efforts to advanced nursing and interprofessional education can assure the preparation of high-performance healthcare provider teams that are prepared to work together as new models

of care delivery emerge. It is important for nursing to advance in leadership positions for this redesign of care. As health reform refocuses care on underserved populations, health promotion and disease prevention strategies, and transitional care between community and healthcare facilities, nurse educators, clinicians and administrators will need to work together and with other disciplines and policy makers to align the nursing profession with individual and population health needs.

To summarize this report, the issues and resulting recommendations, along with their strategies, have been framed using the recommendation format adopted by the 2011 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, *The Future of Nursing; Leading Change, Advancing Health*.

<p><b>IOM Report Key Message:</b> Nurses should practice to the full extent of their education &amp; training.</p>	
<p><b>Wisconsin Issue #1: There is a shortage of Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) to meet current and future access and health needs in Wisconsin.</b></p>	
<p><b>Recommendation:</b></p>	<p><b>Strategies:</b></p>
<p>Increase the number of APRNs to a minimum of 10% of the Wisconsin nursing workforce to improve access to care.</p>	<p>a. Double the number of APRNs graduating in Wisconsin by 2020 increasing capacity at current programs and adding new APRN programs.</p> <p>b. Implement a statewide loan forgiveness program for nursing students preparing to practice as APRNs in underserved areas of Wisconsin.</p> <p>c. Secure state funding to support significant expansion of Wisconsin nursing school capacity to meet demand for 200 additional APRNs per year.</p>
<p><b>Wisconsin Issue #2: Barriers exist in Wisconsin that prevent Advanced Practice Registered Nurses from practicing to the full extent of their education and certification.</b></p>	
<p><b>Recommendation:</b></p>	<p><b>Strategies:</b></p>
<p>Remove barriers to practice for APRNs by collaborative work between the Wisconsin Nurses Association (WNA), the Wisconsin Board of Nursing, the Wisconsin Center for Nursing and legislators, employers and other stakeholders to assure an independent, contemporary, and full scope of APRN practice is implemented in Wisconsin.</p>	<p>a. Review and model successful efforts in other states to achieve full scope of practice for APRNs.</p> <p>b. Improve access through the use of models of care as utilized by healthcare systems, and interprofessional teams that support contemporary use of APRNs.</p> <p>c. Support full scope of practice by APRNs through the implementation of medical staff bylaws, rules and regulation by healthcare systems and hospital boards.</p>

**IOM Report Key Message:**

Nurses should achieve higher levels of education & training through an improved education system that promotes seamless academic progression toward 80% of workforce with BSNs and double the number of nurses at the doctoral level by 2020.

**Wisconsin Issue #3: There is a need to expand educational capacity to meet the projected demand for 7,500 new graduates annually by 2020, based upon forecasting models from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Office of Economic Advisors.**

<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>
<p>Allocate additional resources to universities and colleges to maximize program capacity and infrastructure to decrease wait lists and double capacity by 2020.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Secure state funding to support significant expansion of Wisconsin nursing school capacity to meet demand for at least 3,000 additional BSN graduates per year.</li><li>b. Implement innovative programs, partnerships and strategies to remove barriers to access for education including funding and increased employer support.</li><li>c. Evaluate the expanded use of evidence-based clinical simulation as a teaching method to the fullest extent possible in both educational and practice settings. Administrators of Nursing Education in Wisconsin (ANEW) to recommend and disseminate standards related to use of simulation in educational programs in undergraduate education.</li><li>d. Investigate possibility of BSN completion programs in Wisconsin Technical College System.</li><li>e. Improve retention and graduation rates of nursing students, including students from underrepresented populations, through the implementation of comprehensive strategies by Wisconsin nursing education programs.</li><li>f. Implement academic-practice partnerships to establish dedicated educational units (DEUs) for nursing in practice settings that expedite clinical practicums.</li><li>g. Expand early student recruitment efforts to the nursing professions with middle and high school students through a variety of programs (e.g., summer nursing immersion experiences, such as the Discover Nursing program).</li><li>h. Create partnerships with high school based Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) programs to connect high school students to RN programs.</li><li>i. Collaborate with university STEM Programs (Science, Technology, Engineering &amp; Math) to create curriculum related to nursing as a career option.</li><li>j. Explore opportunities to partner with Project Lead the Way to promote recruitment of high- achieving students to the nursing profession.</li></ul>

**Wisconsin Issue #4: Currently 53.5% of nurses working in Wisconsin have a BSN, or higher degree. Wisconsin will need to increase the educational capacity of BSN completion programs to support seamless academic progression options to meet the goal of 80% BSN by 2020.**

Recommendations:	Strategies:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triple the number of ADN nurses completing a BSN or higher degree annually by 2020.</li> <li>• Remove identified barriers to academic progression which include: funding, access and time constraints.</li> <li>• Assist ADN graduates from underrepresented populations to achieve BSN or higher education.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Implement dual track enrollment between technical colleges and 4-year institutions to facilitate students' ability to attain a BSN or higher degree.</li> <li>b. Seek state funding for the expansion of capacity for face-to-face and online BSN completion programs.</li> <li>c. Expand the shared curriculum and shared competencies models and accelerated curriculum options.</li> <li>d. Evaluate and implement innovative push-pull models, with established partnerships between ADN and BSN programs to facilitate students furthering their education, including specific models to identify and support students from underrepresented populations.</li> <li>e. Develop a one credit professional course offered during the ADN program to include content on career pathways in nursing and academic requirements.</li> <li>f. Assess educational status of nursing staff by healthcare systems by 2014, develop and implement plans by December 2015, and monitor achievement of progress annually.</li> <li>g. Foster innovative strategic regional partnerships between schools and healthcare systems to advance nursing education opportunities, including increased tuition support and "time to study" (flex time) options.</li> <li>h. Seek private dollars from foundations, corporations and individuals for scholarships for undergraduate and graduate education to accelerate academic progression.</li> <li>i. Continue seamless academic progression and support for LPNs to achieve ADN or BSN degree completion.</li> </ol>

**Wisconsin Issue #5: Currently, 0.6% of Wisconsin nurses hold a doctoral degree in nursing. To assure an adequate faculty supply, along with increasing diversity, Wisconsin will need to double the number of nurses with doctoral degrees by 2020.**

Recommendation:	Strategies:
<p>Remove salary inequities for nurse faculty to provide market competition between practice and education to recruit/retain faculty and researchers.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Explore and expand creative public-private funding models to support additional nurse faculty positions to increase student enrollment.</li> <li>b. Increase dual faculty positions between two educational institutions, or an educational program and a clinical agency.</li> <li>c. Actively recruit faculty from underrepresented groups.</li> <li>d. Expand and enhance loan forgiveness and traineeship programs for nursing faculty.</li> </ol>

**Wisconsin Issue #6: Turnover among new graduates is higher than turnover of experienced RNs. Retention of new graduates is essential to assure an adequate workforce, improve patient safety, and decrease healthcare costs.**

Recommendation:	Strategies:
<p>Implement best practice strategies for nurse residency programs in healthcare systems and other venues to decrease turnover and ease transition to practice, in an effort to retain and recruit new graduates.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Implement nurse residency programs for all new RN graduates and across all venues of practice.</li> <li>b. Establish a standardized mechanism to monitor new graduate turnover.</li> <li>c. Expand foundation support for nurse residency programs.</li> </ol>

**IOM Report Key Message:**

Nurses should be full partners with MDs and other health professionals in redesigning healthcare in the United States.

**Wisconsin Issue #7: There is a need to redesign the healthcare delivery system, and assure interprofessional coordination of care.**

Recommendations:	Strategies:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Position nurses on major healthcare boards, executive teams and other major leadership positions across all systems.</li><li>• Implement interprofessional educational models between healthcare providers and other appropriate disciplines in educational institutions.</li><li>• Develop and implement interprofessional models of care delivery and communication across all healthcare systems and practice venues.</li></ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Expand the participation of nurses on key healthcare boards and executive teams.</li><li>b. Solicit input from nursing staff in redesign activities.</li><li>c. Expand leadership development, educational programs, and mentoring strategies for nurses by employers and nursing organizations.</li><li>d. Increase number of jointly-offered interprofessional classes through interdepartmental collaboration in educational settings.</li><li>e. Utilize academic practice linkages to develop collaborative models for interprofessional teams in healthcare systems and the community.</li><li>f. Expand utilization of transitional care models, community-based care and care coordination at the individual, community and systems levels using population-based health approaches, by educational institutions and across healthcare systems.</li></ol>

**IOM Report Key Message:**

Effective workforce planning & policy-making require better data collection and an improved information infrastructure.

**Wisconsin Issue #8: There is a significant need to enhance nursing and other healthcare workforce data collection and workforce planning.**

Recommendations:	Strategies:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain mandatory nursing surveys and analyses on a biennial basis for RNs and LPNs with re-licensure, to assure monitoring of workforce trends.</li><li>• Continue to utilize the national minimum data sets for surveys with national and state benchmarking comparisons.</li><li>• Expand efforts for the collection of workforce data for other healthcare professions in collaboration with the nursing profession.</li></ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Continue mandatory LPN and RN nursing surveys and analysis biennially to assure updated Wisconsin data for benchmarking with national trends and information on nursing workforce trends.</li><li>b. Utilize national minimum data sets for nursing surveys and national and state benchmarking comparisons.</li><li>c. Partner with Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Office of Economic Advisors on updates to demand projections and modeling to establish and monitor annual nursing workforce targets.</li><li>d. Develop demand surveys in partnership with hospitals, long term care and other settings.</li><li>e. Monitor vacancy rates and project workforce needs, including recruitment and retention, for all healthcare professions through an established process.</li></ol>

**IOM Report Diversity:**

Diversity is an overarching recommendation within the IOM report. Diversity provides the key foundation for the composition of the nursing workforce of the future to align with population demographics and strive for inclusive excellence at regional, state and national levels.

**Wisconsin Issue #9: The nursing workforce in Wisconsin does not mirror the diversity in the state population. Currently the RN nursing workforce is only 6.9% male and only 6.4% in racial/ethnic minorities.**

Recommendations:	Strategies:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emphasize diversity as a workforce priority and system-wide approach from the top down in each organization, to recruit and retain students, staff and nursing leaders from underrepresented groups.</li><li>• Ensure funding and monitoring of progress through collaboration by academic and practice partners across all settings, including accrediting bodies, private and public funders.</li></ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Provide a variety of support mechanisms for underrepresented populations in both academic and practice settings including mentoring, coaching, student/employee resources, social networks for assimilation and interdisciplinary collaboration.</li><li>b. Prepare nursing staff and students to attain higher levels of cultural competency.</li><li>c. Develop a standardized system with agreed upon benchmarks for tracking data on underrepresented populations in nursing programs &amp; health systems throughout the state.</li><li>d. Increase funding for nursing scholarships and loan forgiveness programs for traditionally underrepresented populations.</li><li>e. Implement recruitment strategies to achieve 20% males by 2020 benchmark, as recommended by the American Assembly of Men in Nursing.</li></ol>

The recruitment, preparation and retention of an increasingly sophisticated nursing workforce are the keys to a healthy Wisconsin population today, and for decades to come. The health of our state depends on it. Wisconsin policymakers, employers, educators and funders must take collaborative action now to invest in its nursing workforce in order to preserve the delivery of safe, high quality and culturally relevant care for the people of our state.



## Wisconsin Center for Nursing

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*Printed versions of this report have been made possible through a generous contribution from the Faye McBeath Foundation. Requests for single copies can be made at [info@wicenterfornursing.org](mailto:info@wicenterfornursing.org).*