

FACT SHEET

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The Facts: Arizona's RN Shortage

The Healthcare Institute at the Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association (AzHHA) founded HealthWorks™, the Arizona Healthcare Workforce Data Center, to study the health professions in Arizona. The initial study, The Arizona RN Shortage: 2007 Results, sounds an alarm for the future of healthcare in our state.

The Arizona RN Shortage: 2007 Results reveals that Arizona will need approximately 49,000 additional RNs by 2017 to keep pace with the state's population growth as well as to replace retiring registered nurses (RNs) and those lost to normal attrition.

- Arizona will need an additional 20,000 RNs to keep pace with its population growth and close the gap between Arizona's current average ratio of 681 RNs per 100,000 residents and the U.S. average ratio of 825 RNs per 100,000 residents.
- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Arizona is the second fastest growing state in the nation.
- More than one-third of Arizona's current RNs are older than 55, therefore 10,000 RNs will be needed to replace these retiring RNs.
- There is an annual RN attrition rate of approximately 3.5 percent, which means 19,000 RNs will be needed to fill this void.
- Twelve of the state's 15 counties fall below the national average of RNs per 100,000 population. The three counties that exceed the national average still face critical shortages of RNs. Those counties include:
 - Coconino;
 - Pima; and
 - Yavapai.

Insufficient capacity in Arizona's nursing education programs delay qualified and accepted applicants from entering nursing education programs and keep our state from graduating adequate numbers of RNs.

- Arizona's nursing programs would need to graduate an additional 2,235 students per year just to keep pace with the state's population growth, according to the Data Center report.

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- A shortage of faculty in Arizona's nursing education programs limits the capacity of the programs to graduate adequate numbers of RNs. There were 41 vacancies for full-time Arizona nursing faculty in 2006, a 13 percent increase in vacancies from the previous year. In addition, there were 38 vacancies for part-time nursing faculty in 2006, which represents a 600 percent increase in vacancies from 2005 according to *Annual Reports from Nursing Education Programs, 2007*, Arizona State Board of Nursing.
- Due to lack of capacity, more than one-third of nursing education program applicants are wait listed each year by Arizona nursing education programs, even though these students have met all course prerequisites according to *Annual Reports from Nursing Education Programs, 2007*, Arizona State Board of Nursing.

Arizona's hospital community as well as state legislators and elected officials have launched a number of major initiatives to address the critical shortage of healthcare workers. While these have been successful, they are not enough to meet the needs of Arizona's growing population.

- On Jan. 14, Governor Janet Napolitano signed an Executive Order to establish a 21st Century Healthcare Workforce Plan for Arizona. It directs the Arizona Department of Commerce to lead a public-private effort to develop a healthcare workforce plan. On Oct. 15, the governor will receive a preliminary report including a recommended framework and timeline for the development of a comprehensive workforce plan.
- Arizona's hospitals are contributing significant funds to healthcare education. AzHHA conducted surveys in 2006 and 2007 that found that the state's hospitals contributed more than \$57 million to Arizona education programs in the form of tuition reimbursement, loan forgiveness programs and in-kind giving (e.g., providing space for nursing education programs, sponsoring faculty salaries and tuition reimbursement).
- In 2005, Senator Carolyn Allen (R-Scottsdale) and Governor Janet Napolitano supported Senate Bill (SB) 1517, also known as Arizona's Partnership for Nursing Education (APNE). This legislation appropriated a total of \$20 million over five years to double the capacity of Arizona's college and university nursing education programs by increasing the number of nurse education faculty. The call to double nursing education program capacity actually began in 2002, when the Arizona State Legislature passed SB 1260 which required the state's community colleges and public universities to double their nursing program enrollments in five years (2007).
- There was a 108 percent increase in graduates from RN education programs between 2002 (1,133) and 2007 (2,364), thereby doubling the graduates from all RN nursing education programs in the five years allotted by SB 1260.
- Based on APNE funding received thus far, Arizona's college nursing education programs expect to hire 63 additional nursing faculty members and graduate more than 1,000 additional nursing students per year by 2010. Arizona's three university programs have hired 61 additional nursing faculty members in the last three years.

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The Data Center recently released its first study, which represents the first time that information specific to Arizona's RN shortage has been available.

- RN supply data were collected from 5,896 RNs who were renewing their Arizona licenses in May 2007.
- The number of RNs surveyed represents approximately 11 percent of all active RNs living in Arizona.

The nationwide shortage of healthcare professionals has been well documented, but in the past, there has been no current data available on the supply of and demand for healthcare professionals in our state.

- The Data Center is a collaborative effort that includes the Arizona Department of Commerce, Arizona Department of Health Services, Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System, AzHHA, Arizona State Board of Nursing, Arizona State Board of Pharmacy, Arizona State University's Center for Health Information and Research (CHIR), BHHS Legacy Foundation*, Maricopa Workforce Connections, Office of Governor Janet Napolitano and St. Luke's Health Initiatives.
- The Data Center will serve as a repository of supply and demand data for healthcare professionals in Arizona.

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**The BHHS Legacy Foundation is an Arizona charitable organization whose philanthropic mission is to enhance the quality of life and health of those it serves.*