



## **Wisconsin Registered Nurse Survey 2010:**

### **Executive Summary**

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WCN also extends sincere appreciation to the Faye McBeath Foundation, a long-standing partner that has provided support since the inception of our organization.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge and express our gratitude to the many schools and organizations that will utilize this information to advance nursing education and practice to assure a sufficient, competent and diverse nursing workforce for the people of Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Center for Nursing looks forward to continued collaborative relationships to insure a bright future for nursing in our state.

Thank you,

Barbara Pinekenstein, RN, MSN  
WCN Board President

## Executive Summary

In January, 2010, 77,553 registered nurses completed a mandatory survey in order to renew their RN licenses in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Center for Nursing (WCN) under a mandate from the Wisconsin State Legislature, has analyzed this data in detail, resulting in this report, *2010 Wisconsin Registered Nurse Survey*.

### Section I: Introduction

The report begins with an explanation of the data management procedures. (Table 1.1). The total survey respondents number 77,553. We eliminated 6,097 RNs who live out of state and do not work in Wisconsin which leaves the number of RNs who live or work in Wisconsin at 71,456. Out of this number, 65,931 are valid responses after cleaning procedures outlined in the Introduction.

### Section II: State Data Key Findings

- The 57,673 RNs who work in Wisconsin are mostly white (95.5%), female (93.4%), and only speak English (95.2%).
- Most nurses who want to work are working (96%).
- 95% of RNs educated in Wisconsin stay in Wisconsin
- Half of all the nurses are employed in hospitals as their primary employer.

#### Recommendations:

1. Strengthen the focus on increasing diversity in nursing education programs.
2. An investment in nursing education by state policy makers would help alleviate the impending shortage in Wisconsin.
3. Explore the factors that motivate nurses to remain in the workforce.

### Section III: DHS Regional Data Key Findings

- A lack of diversity and lack of proficiency in language other than English exists across the state and across all regions.
- Registered Nurses across all regions have, on average, 15 years of experience as nurses and have spent a little over 70% of their careers providing direct patient care.
- The mean income for RNs is \$56,787 across the state and ranges from \$54,767 in the Northern Region to \$60,795 in the Southern Region. If divided by specialty, the highest paid RNs are nurse anesthetists (\$142,859) and the lowest paid are Community Health and Public Health Nurses which average \$47,443.
- Educational preparation for nursing practice shows some regional variation. The number of Associate degree prepared nurses is highest in the Northern region (39.9%) and lowest in the Southeastern Region (27.8%). Exactly the opposite is true with regard to the number of baccalaureate prepared nurses which is highest in the Southeastern Region (41.7%) and lowest in the Northern Region (29.4%).
- The distribution of nurses with advanced degrees is higher in the Southern and Southeastern regions with the lower numbers in the Western and Northern regions.

- Nurses were asked about future plans and their answers indicate that between 2010 and 2012, over 2,000 RNs will leave positions where they provide direct patient care. Almost 5,000 indicate they plan to decrease their hours spent providing direct patient care.
- Within nine years, over 15,000 nurses, or 33% of the RN workforce holding direct patient care positions will leave the workforce with retirement as the major reason for leaving. The second reason is job stress and third is physical demands of the job.

Recommendations:

1. Employers should utilize the experienced nursing workforce to provide mentoring required by new graduates.
2. Investing in nursing education programs at the state level will be critical to recruitment of nursing students to offset the number of nurses planning retirement in the near future.
3. Flexibility in course offerings in educational programs and flexibility in scheduling from employers is needed to support RNs achieving continuing education.
4. Current nursing education programs need to increase enrollments in their programs if feasible
5. Regions need to review the RN workforce in their areas and develop plans to address the impending shortages for their particular area

#### **Section IV: Intergenerational Workforce Key Findings**

- Across all groups, nurses gave “being personally rewarding” as the highest rating for why they chose nursing as a profession; employment was rated second and pay was third. Collegial relationships were identified by the fewest number of nurses in all groups.
- When analyzing why nurses work outside Wisconsin, Generation X, Baby boomers and the Silent Generation indicate family/personal reasons. For nurses in the Millennial group, the top factor was employment opportunities
- For RNs who work more than one job, pay was the top reason for the Millennial, Generation X, and Baby Boomer generations; the Silent Generation indicated that the reason was that the second job was personally rewarding
- The majority of nurses reporting intent to leave nursing came from the Baby Boomer and Silent Generation and indicated retirement as the reason. The Millennial group rated returning to school, relocation of self or spouse/partner and job stress. RNs from the Generation X group rated job stress and pay as the top reasons followed by relocation of self or spouse/partner.

Recommendations:

1. Strategies to retain nurses in direct patient care roles need to address motivational factors for generational groups.

#### **Section V: Advance Practice Nurses Key Findings**

- Data that differ from the total RN population include a higher proficiency in a second language (7.9% vs. 4.5%), and a slightly lower rate of employment (91.6% vs. 96%).
- 64% report that they are working as an RN providing direct patient care.

- 28.9% of APNs report they are currently not working in a role that requires them to be an APN.
- A total of 450 (out of 3,979) report that they are employed as nurse educators. An additional 1,624 report they would consider employment as a nurse educator within the next two years.

Recommendations:

1. Future surveys must be designed to capture complete data on all Wisconsin APNs.
2. Preliminary data on the supply of APNs in Wisconsin should be used to begin to investigate whether there are sufficient APNs particularly in primary care areas to meet the demand for health care throughout the state.

### **Section VI: Workplace Injuries Key Findings**

- 5.6% (3,681) reported that in the last five years, they had an injury that prevented them from working. Almost half of that number reported that the injury required accommodation under the American Disabilities Act.
- The median number of weeks that patient care duties were reduced was 2.0 and the median number of hours was 20 hours/week.

Recommendations:

1. Further work is needed to explore the impact of the rate of injury on the RN workforce.

### **Section VII: Emergency Preparedness Key Findings**

- Less than 50% of the nurses completing the survey reported having completed any formal education or training in this area.
- Of those who received formal training, 90% reported that the training came through their employer.
- Less than 25% of the nurses completing the survey have participated in an emergency preparedness exercise in the past two years.

Recommendations:

1. Continued assessment is necessary to determine the readiness of the RN workforce to support emergency preparedness in the state.
2. A comprehensive plan needs to be developed for expanding education and training of the RN workforce related to emergency preparedness.

Following the release of this report, WCN will use this and other data to make overall recommendations to the state legislature regarding the future need for nurses in Wisconsin.