



*Nurses: Vital for  
Wisconsin's Health*

**Board of Directors**

Ann Cook, RN, PhD  
President

Suzanne Schuler, RN, MSN  
Immediate Past-President

Pamela Maxson-Cooper, RN, MS  
Treasurer

**Secretary**

Eileen Collins, LPN  
Marilyn Frenn, RN, PhD  
Carol Graham, RN, MS  
Melanie Gray, RN, BSN  
Mary Gulbrandsen, RN, MSN  
Debra Jenks, BSN, MSN, PhD  
Judy Klaver, RN, MSN  
Sally Lundeen, RN, PhD  
Mary Ellen Murray, RN, PhD  
Barbara Pinckenstein, RN, MSN  
Sandy Stearns, RN, MSN  
Jean Surguy, RN, BSN, MA  
Teri Vega-Stromberg, MSN, RN

**Staff**

Judith M. Hansen, MS, BSN, RN  
Executive Director

**October 22, 2010**

**To: The Legislative Council Study Committee on Health Care Access  
Representative Fred Kessler, Chair & Senator Luther Olsen, Vice-Chair**

**From: Judith M. Hansen, MS, BSN, RN  
Executive Director – Wisconsin Center for Nursing**

**RE: Nursing Workforce Shortages in Wisconsin**

The Wisconsin Center for Nursing (WCN) is a not-for-profit organization established in 2005 to provide a unified voice on nursing workforce issues in Wisconsin. WCN has as its mission the assurance of a sufficient, competent, and diverse nurse workforce to meet the needs of the citizens of Wisconsin. Wisconsin is one of 34 states having nursing workforce centers to assist in collecting, analyzing and disseminating data to address nursing workforce issues.

In fall of 2009, WI Statute, Chapter 106.30 was enacted, granting the approval of part of licensure renewal fees to support this work. The pathway for this important legislation was attributed to collaborative efforts with the WI Department of Workforce Development, the WI Department of Regulation & Licensing, and tireless support from Senator Judy Robson and DWD Secretary Roberta Gassman.

The legislation authorizes a state nursing center, WCN, to monitor and validate trends in nursing and nursing education, analyze pathways to nursing education (especially for under-represented populations), and facilitate partnerships between the nursing community, health care providers, nursing educators, community leaders, consumers, and legislators. WCN will coordinate activities, in collaboration with other partners, such as the WI Nurses Association and the WI Hospital Association, to achieve policy consensus, promote nursing workforce diversity, and enhance nursing career mobility and leadership development.

During the January-March, 2010 license renewal period, a survey of all registered nurses in the state was accomplished, resulting in the history-making collection of data from 77,553 respondents. The WI Department of Workforce Development received the data and began consultation with members of the WI Health Workforce Data Collaborative. This Collaborative is comprised of key leaders from nursing and healthcare organizations, as well as the various systems for nursing education in the state.

A first 'At a Glance' document, the *Wisconsin 2010 RN Survey Summary* has been published and is being provided for you today. It can also be found as a downloadable document at <http://worknet.wisconsin.gov/RNsummary> and <http://www.wisconsincenterfornursing.org>. Significant initial findings from the document include the following:

- Wisconsin RNs are predominantly white females, well-educated and older than the population as a whole.
- The median age for RNs is 45-49, while the rest of the state workforce is 40-44. Additionally, 46% of RNs are 50 years or older.
- Slightly less than 50% of RNs work in hospitals; other settings include ambulatory care, home health, nursing homes, community/public health and academic education.
- 50% of hospital nurses are 55 or older.
- Although 42.9% of nurses hold a BSN, only 8.6% have completed a Master's Degree in Nursing. A very small percentage of Wisconsin nurses hold a PhD in nursing, only 0.4%.
- 63.4% of nurses who provide direct patient care selected the category of '10 or more years' as to when they planned to leave the workforce.

These basic data alone provide important information about trends in the nursing workforce in Wisconsin. Our nursing workforce is advancing in age, and although it may be true they are working longer now because of today's economic climate, large waves in retirement are clearly in the near future. Minorities are hugely under-represented in our workforce at only 5.2%, making culturally competent care more difficult to provide for underserved populations.

From an educational perspective, the nurses in our state need to advance to practice within the full scope of professional nursing. Less than half of Wisconsin's nurses hold Bachelor of Science degrees. In order to meet population health needs, the Institute of Medicine (2010) report, *The Future of Nursing*, calls for: (a) doubling the number of doctoral prepared nurses, (b) providing access to high quality, cost-effective care provided by Advanced Practice Nurses with fewer constraints on their practice, and (c) nurses without a bachelor's degree to start course work toward a BSN within 5 years of graduation. Wisconsin has much work to do!

This is only the beginning of this important work. Next on the horizon in this vital work is a deeper analysis of the RN Survey data, culminating in a comprehensive report to the legislature to further delineate critical information for specific regions of the state, and facilitate the development of strategies to address the unique nursing workforce needs to serve the populations of both rural and urban regions of Wisconsin. Other strategic initiatives the WCN is preparing to launch are a statewide survey of LPNs in 2011, and also a survey of nursing education programs to provide an accurate picture of the educational capacity for "growing our own" nurses in Wisconsin. Further, as the workforce surveys continue each year with licensure renewals, we will be able to track changes and monitor trends in the workforce and in doing so, anticipate how to best address their impact.

In summary, let me encapsulate what this means for health care access. Nurses comprise the largest segment of health care providers. They are both highly trusted and capable to provide and manage care throughout the continuum of an individual's lifespan. A carefully planned for, and balanced nursing workforce will assure that we have the right types of nurses, the right number of them, and that they are in the right places to best achieve positive health outcomes for all populations in Wisconsin. We know the WCN can effectively lead this critical endeavor, and would respectfully recommend to the committee that we serve as the contact point for this vital information, so as to assist you in your efforts to improve health care access for our most vulnerable and at risk populations.

The WCN is grateful for the collaboration of its many partners at the state, local, and regional levels. We are committed to creating a vision for the future of nursing in our state. This vision will lead to the development of a diverse nurse workforce, which is sufficient in number, appropriately educated, effectively utilized and adequately supported to provide safe and quality evidence-based care to improve health care access, and ultimately the health outcomes of all Wisconsin residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony to the Committee.

#### Technical Notes:

The data reported in this publication reflects a survey mandated under Chapter 106.30 Wis. Stats for all Wisconsin registered nurses (RNs). The survey was conducted as an element in the biannual license renewal requirement from January 6, 2010 and March 1, 2010. The mandate was communicated to registered nurses through numerous venues and organizations as well as employers.

Two forms of the survey were used, an on-line internet version and a mail-in paper version. The data summarized in this report includes all paper responses received prior to March 17, 2010. The two versions are substantially the same, though the paper survey contains missing responses while the on-line version required responses to all questions. The dataset includes 77,553 responses, of which 3,111 are from the paper survey. (See the Additional Information Section for contact information to receive additional technical background and information on accessing the dataset for specific analyses.)

The survey instrument was constructed and processed by Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development in consultation with the Wisconsin Health Workforce Data Collaborative. The survey reflects multiple surveys of the registered nurse community and contains all data elements of the National Nursing Workforce Minimum Dataset: Supply.

The survey was administered by the Wisconsin Department of Regulation and Licensing.

This project is funded in part by the Healthier Wisconsin Partnership Program, a component of the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin endowment at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

#### Additional Information

To receive additional copies of this publication visit the DWD Website, WORKnet at <http://worknet.wisconsin.gov/RNsummary>

For additional survey information, email Nelise Grundvig at [anelise.grundvig@dwd.wisconsin.gov](mailto:anelise.grundvig@dwd.wisconsin.gov)

Send mail requests to:

Nelise Grundvig

Attn: Nurses Survey

Labor Market Information Section

Department of Workforce Development

201 E. Washington Ave

P.O. Box 7944

Madison WI, 53707



Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development  
Division of Employment and Training  
Bureau of Workforce Training  
Labor Market Information

Wisconsin Center  
for Nursing



## WISCONSIN 2010

# RN SURVEY SUMMARY



## General Information

Survey Response*	Total Valid Survey Respondents n = 77,553	% of Applicable Respondents
<b>Gender (n = 77,515)</b>		
Female	72,271	93.2%
Male	5,244	6.8%
<b>Age Distribution (n = 77,442)</b>		
< 25	2,059	2.7%
25-29	6,855	8.9%
30-34	7,028	9.1%
35-39	7,692	9.9%
40-44	7,738	10.0%
45-49	10,522	13.6%
50-54	12,072	15.6%
55-59	11,492	14.8%
60-64	6,891	8.9%
65-69	3,214	4.2%
70-74	1,335	1.7%
75 and older	544	0.7%
<b>Race/Ethnicity (n = 77,014)</b>		
White	72,909	94.7%
Black/African American	1,642	2.1%
Hispanic	951	1.2%
Other	1,512	2.0%
<b>Advanced Practice Nurses (n = 77,553)</b>		
Educationally prepared advanced practice nurse with masters degree	5,110	6.6%
Master's degree working as an APN	3,802	4.9%
Advanced Practice Nurse Prescriber**	2,252	2.9%
<b>Highest level of education - all degrees (n = 77,385)</b>		
PhD	731	0.9%
Master	9,303	12.0%
Bachelor	34,376	44.4%
Associate	24,922	32.2%
Nursing Diploma	8,053	10.4%
<b>Highest level of nursing education (n = 76,738)</b>		
PhD	286	0.4%
Master	6,614	8.6%
Bachelor	32,887	42.9%
Associate	27,777	36.2%
Nursing Diploma	9,174	12.0%

Information reflects self-reported data and valid responses only.

\*3,386 APNs as of 10/10. Source: Department of Regulation and Licensing.

For more information visit: <http://worknet.wisconsin.gov/RNsummary>

## Registered Nurses in Focus

WORKFORCE INFORMATION	Total Valid Survey Respondents	% of Applicable Respondents
<b>Wisconsin RN Workforce</b>		
Working in healthcare	68,497	98.0%
Working in healthcare in Wisconsin	61,094	87.4%
<b>Age 55 years and over by work setting (26.1%)</b>		
Avg. Age (yrs) ≥ 55 yrs		
Academic Education	51	689 42.8%
Ambulatory Care	47	2,821 28.6%
Home Health	48	1,018 33.9%
Hospital	42	6,403 19.0%
Nursing Home/Extended Care	47	2,394 32.0%
Public/Community Health	50	1,276 38.52%
Other	48	3,356 33.8%
<b>CHARACTERISTICS of RN's in the WISCONSIN LABOR MARKET</b>		
Primary place of work	61,542	
Academic Education	1,406	2.3%
Ambulatory Care	8,977	14.6%
Home Health	2,588	4.2%
Hospital	30,731	49.9%
Nursing Home/Extended Care	6,927	11.3%
Public/Community Health	2,896	4.7%
Other	8,017	13.0%
<b>DIRECT PATIENT CARE PROVIDERS in WISCONSIN</b>		
Compensation of direct patient care (DPC) providers	53,102	
Hourly	43,988	82.8%
Salary	8,160	15.4%
Unpaid	671	1.3%
<b>Hourly DPC providers by hours worked (n = 43,988)</b>		
< 20 hrs	3,297	7.5%
20 - 35 hrs	17,160	39.0%
36 - 40 hrs	17,039	38.7%
41 - 48 hrs	3,123	7.1%
49 and more hours	3,369	7.7%
<b>Hourly DPC providers 40+ hours/week by workplace (n = 6,179)</b>		
Ambulatory Care	795	12.3%
Home Health	404	6.2%
Hospital	3,839	59.3%
Nursing Home/Extended Care	767	11.8%
Public/Community Health	184	2.8%
Other	490	7.6%
<b>Plans to leave DPC (n = 50,767)</b>		
< 2 years	2,382	4.7%
2 - 4 years	6,691	13.2%
5 - 9 years	9,528	18.8%
10 or more years	32,166	63.4%