



WASHINGTON STATE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR NURSING

**Ensuring a Future
Nursing Workforce**

CNEWS • COUNCIL FOR NURSING EDUCATION IN WASHINGTON STATE
NWONE • NORTHWEST ORGANIZATION OF NURSE EXECUTIVES
WLN • WASHINGTON LEAGUE FOR NURSING
WSNA • WASHINGTON STATE NURSES ASSOCIATION
NCQAC • WASHINGTON STATE NURSING QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMISSION



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Ensuring a Future Nursing Workforce

Introduction

There is a growing public and professional awareness that current and projected shortages of Registered Nurses directly impact access to and quality of health care. National studies and state-level demographics indicate that by 2010, the problem will escalate due to a decrease in the size of the overall total workforce and increasing demand for health care services. There is now strong evidence that both current and future nursing shortages are unlike those of the past. New solutions, and more importantly, new partnerships are needed. In 2002 a national coalition of 60 nursing organizations introduced a strategic plan, Nursing's Agenda for the Future, to address the complex, interrelated factors contributing to growing national shortages in the nursing workforce.

The Washington Nursing Leadership Council (WNL), formerly known as the Washington Tri-Council for Nursing, has taken steps consistent with that national plan to proactively ensure that the nursing workforce in this state is positioned to promote and ensure quality healthcare for all the people of Washington State. The leaders of the WNL identified five salient, interactive factors that contribute to current and projected shortages in the Washington nursing workforce: image, education, workplace environment, reliable data and policy. The *Washington State Strategic Plan for Nursing* was developed to address these factors. The plan offers a

systematic approach through which all healthcare stakeholders can collaboratively commit to positive action steps that address the five factors.

The *Washington State Strategic Plan for Nursing* outlines goals and strategies for addressing the current nursing shortage and the future status of nursing within Washington. It provides a vision and serves as a guide for the identification of cooperative solutions to the nursing shortage and for future efforts by all stakeholders that will ensure access to quality healthcare in the state of Washington.

Basic Assumptions

Several assumptions are basic to the goals and strategies the WNLC delineated in the *Washington State Strategic Plan for Nursing*:

- The nursing shortage is a looming public health crisis that has the potential to erode access to and quality of health care.
- Nurses have a professional responsibility to the public.
- Nurses are critical to meeting the increasing healthcare needs of vulnerable populations.
- The economic viability of the state is critically linked to the availability of healthcare services which are in turn adversely affected by a nursing shortage.
- The nursing workforce cannot be sustained in the present work environment.
- Strategies are needed for attracting qualified nursing candidates from an increasingly diverse population and for retaining qualified nurses.
- Nurses have a responsibility to impact needed changes in healthcare delivery systems and models of care.
- Nurses function as partners in an interdisciplinary healthcare delivery system.
- Nurses are open to partnerships that promote and enhance quality healthcare for all people.

Stakeholder Partnerships

As representatives of a multifaceted profession WNLC members are committed to directing the implementation of the Washington State Strategic Plan for Nursing (WSSPN) and embrace the accountability implicit in that responsibility. The WSSPN sets forth essential goals and strategies proposed by WNLC for proactively resolving current and predicted nursing workforce problems. These goals and strategies are predicated on partnerships with and support from all healthcare stakeholders. The WNLC recognizes and adopts the following critical elements of stakeholder partnerships:

- professional autonomy and integrity
- shared knowledge and best practice expertise
- commitment to changes in healthcare delivery models
- commitment to implementation and ongoing evaluation
- exchange of mutual in-kind supports and resources
- cooperative funding and fiscal management

The WNLC is committed to partnerships that yield measurable, positive healthcare outcomes for all the people of Washington State.

Goals and Strategies

**Goal #1:
Attain and maintain
an image of
nursing as a
desirable
profession and
valued career for
women and men
who reflect the
diversity of society.**

Strategies:

- A. Develop a statewide public relations and recruitment plan for nursing that conveys an image of nursing which reflects the diversity of society in Washington.
- B. Effectively communicate the positive impact of nurses on the quality of care and health outcomes.
- C. Advance an image of nursing as a top career choice with life-long potential in an influential, challenging and highly rewarding profession, that is valued and respected for its unique knowledge and expertise, and that makes a difference in people's lives.
- D. Obtain funding to support an increase in enrollments of under-represented groups in schools of nursing and to increase the diversity of nursing faculty.

**Goal #2:
Prepare a
sufficient supply
of appropriately
educated nurses
to meet the
healthcare needs
of Washington
State residents by
2007 and beyond.**

Strategies:

- A. Reach a consensus among practitioners, educators and employers on the current and future competencies required for novice to expert practice.
- B. Develop an education system for the future based on the projected health care needs of the people of Washington State.
- C. Secure state funding for nursing student FTEs (full time equivalent students) that reflects the true cost of providing nursing education in order to adequately support programs and increase faculty salaries.
- D. Increase available slots for nursing students in educational institutions statewide.
- E. Identify education models that utilize technology and partnerships to conserve limited nursing resources and convey knowledge and skills in the most effective manner.
- F. Increase the number of nurse educators and improve faculty salaries.
- G. Develop innovative programs to meet the educational needs of diverse students.

Goal #3:

**Goal #3:
Create workplace
environments that
attract and retain
qualified nurses.**

Strategies:

- A. Devise models of innovative compensation packages designed to recruit and retain registered nurses throughout their career.
- B. Develop dynamic, satisfying work environments that appropriately utilize nurses specialized skills and knowledge, and ensure that nurses have sufficient time to care for and interact directly with patients and their families to achieve positive healthcare outcomes.
- C. Create work environments that promote health and safety for staff and patients; that support appropriate staffing, collaboration, mentoring and professional growth; and that include quality systems for patient care and education of nurses.

- D. Evaluate and redesign the physical environment of the workplace and staff scheduling systems to recognize and accommodate the special needs of an aging workforce.
- E. Establish work environments that support interdisciplinary collaboration and enhance professional, respectful relationships between physicians and nurses.
- F. Implement care delivery and staffing models that are research based and outcome focused.
- G. Assure appropriate use of advanced practice nurses in the design of care delivery models.
- H. Achieve an effective voice for nurses in decision-making at all levels of practice from direct care to executive management.

**Goal #4:
Assure ongoing
collection and
analysis of reliable
data on supply,
demand,
distribution and
workplace
conditions of
nurses.**

Strategies:

- A. Support the establishment of common data elements to forecast the supply and demand of nurses in Washington State.
- B. Create a database that validates the cost effectiveness of nursing services.
- C. Develop a “pipeline model” that forecasts the required number of new entries into a nursing career over the next 20 years.
- D. Collect, analyze and report on Washington State nursing workforce data including but not limited to: full and part time nurses, licensed but not actively employed nurses, ethnic backgrounds, faculty vacancies and salaries, and numbers of openings for nursing student enrollments.

**Goal #5:
Establish a
Washington
Center for Nursing
to oversee the
implementation
and ongoing
evaluation of the
Washington State
Strategic Plan for
Nursing.**

Strategies:

- A. Create a resource center to assist and inform the community regarding the nursing workforce and to identify other agencies/groups addressing nursing workforce shortage issues.
- B. Provide consultation, technical assistance, data and information related to nursing resources and needs within and outside Washington.
- C. Oversee task forces work and ongoing data collection/analysis related to each of the goals and strategies specified in the Washington State Strategic Plan for Nursing.
- D. Coordinate and advance Washington's research agenda, including seeking competitive funding support for specific research endeavors and/or model programs to enhance the available nursing resources.
- E. Facilitate partnerships between the nursing community and stakeholders to implement the Washington State Strategic Plan for Nursing.

