

The Texas Nursing Shortage: Condition Critical

More Graduates Needed to Close the Gap!

The Problem

The Texas Legislature invested \$49.7 million in special funding for nursing education in 2009, and **the money was a sound investment**. First-year enrollment in nursing schools grew 15.8 percent from academic year 2009 to 2010, and total enrollment in nursing schools increased 12 percent for the same period. Graduates increased 10.8 percent.

Yet Texas still has a serious shortage of registered nurses.

According to projections from the Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies, demand for full-time registered nurses in Texas exceeds supply by 22,000. Without major increases in funding for nurse education, this gap will widen to 70,000 by 2020 as the state's rapidly growing population ages and requires more acute care, and as older nurses retire or reduce the hours they work.

- The average age of RNs working in Texas as of September 2010 was **46**. The average age of faculty members at Texas nursing schools was **54**.
- Texas could lose more than **40 percent** of its working nurses in the next 10 years due to retirements.
- Texas nursing schools still turned away **11,217 qualified applicants** in 2010, primarily due to a lack of faculty.

The statewide average hospital vacancy rate for registered nurses was 6.2 percent in 2010, down from 9.2 percent in 2008. National researchers attribute the decrease in the vacancy rate to the economy; during a recession, nurse participation in the labor market increases. When the economy improves and nurse participation in the workforce returns to normal levels, Texas will again face a severe shortage of nurses.



What Does This Mean for Texans?

Registered nurses are essential to quality patient care. The Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies projects that 12.8 percent of RNs working today could retire now, and an additional 29.3 percent will retire in the next three to 12 years. Educating a registered nurse takes two to four years. **We must get nursing students into the education pipeline now.**

The Solution

Previous funding provided by the Texas Legislature has produced measurable results. Lawmakers should **continue the commitment** to increase the annual production of RN graduates to help close the supply/demand gap. Specifically, the Legislature should support funding in Article III of the state budget (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board) for the Professional Nursing Shortage Reduction Fund and financial aid for nursing students. This funding will:

- **Increase capacity.** Nursing schools cite the lack of faculty as the biggest barrier to enrolling more students.
- **Improve efficiency.** State dollars should continue to be used to create incentives for nursing schools to admit and graduate more registered nursing students within a reasonable time.
- **Hold schools accountable.** The Texas Legislature has built accountability into these higher education funding allocations so that dollars actually produce more nursing graduates. Schools with records of producing year-over-year increases in the number of graduates or achieving high graduation rates should continue to be given upfront funding to build on their proven successes.
- **Assist nursing students.** Financial aid and other incentives should be available to nursing students to encourage enrollment and graduation.

The Legislature should affirm its commitment to institutions of higher education by restoring adequate support for nursing.

Bottom Line

The Texas Nursing Workforce Shortage Coalition – a diverse partnership of health care organizations, business groups and education leaders – believes that the Texas Legislature should continue funding nursing education to increase the number of RN graduates. **Specifically, lawmakers should support the \$36 million appropriated for nursing education in the Senate's version of the budget.**

You can help!

- **Tell** your legislators to support the Senate's appropriation of \$36 million for nursing education to increase the number of nursing graduates.
- **Contact** your local Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Council and other business organizations to gain their support for this critical initiative.
- **Support** the nursing profession and encourage people to pursue a nursing career.

For more information visit www.TexasNeedsNurses.org

Texas Nursing Workforce Shortage Coalition Members

As of May 13, 2011, members of the Texas Nursing Workforce Shortage Coalition include:

Arlington Chamber of Commerce
Assessment Technologies Institute, LLC
Austin Chamber of Commerce
Baptist Health System - San Antonio
Baylor Health Care System
BioMed SA (San Antonio)
Black Nurses Association of Greater Houston
Bryan-College Station Chamber of Commerce
Centennial Medical Center
Children's Hospital Association of Texas
Children's Medical Center Dallas
CHRISTUS Health
CHRISTUS Santa Rosa Health Care
CHRISTUS Spohn Health System
CHRISTUS Spohn Hospital Corpus Christi-Memorial
CHRISTUS Spohn Hospital Corpus Christi-Shoreline
CHRISTUS St. Catherine Hospital
Citizens Medical Center
Community Hospital Corporation
Compliance Review Services, Inc.
Dallas-Fort Worth Hospital Council
Dallas Regional Chamber
Epiphany Community Health Outreach Services
European Medical Staffing Ltd.
Faith Community Hospital
Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce
Gateway to Care
Genesis Physicians Group
Good Samaritan Foundation of Texas
Good Shepherd Medical Center, Longview
Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce
Greater Houston Partnership
Greater New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce, Inc.
Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce
Greater Waco Chamber
Hamilton General Hospital
Harris County Healthcare Alliance
Harris County Hospital District
HCA – Hospital Corporation of America
 HCA Central / West Texas Division (St. David's Partnership Austin & El Paso)
 HCA Gulf Coast Division (Houston)
 HCA North Texas Division (Dallas)
 HCA San Antonio Division (HCA/Methodist Partnership)
HCCA International
Health Industry Council of Dallas/Fort Worth
Health Sense Home Care, Inc.
Hendrick Health System
Hospital Members of the Health Industry Steering Committee of Central Texas
Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas
InLight Risk Management, LLC
IntraCare Medical Center Hospital
IntraCare North Hospital
JPS Health Network
Kerr Economic Development Foundation
Lake Pointe Medical Center
Lamb Healthcare Center
Las Palmas Medical Center
Lubbock Chamber of Commerce
Lynn County Hospital District
Matagorda Episcopal Health Outreach Program
Medical Center Health System
Medical Center of Arlington
Medical Center of Lewisville
Medical Center of McKinney

Medical Center of Plano
Memorial Hermann Healthcare System
Methodist Charlton Medical Center
Methodist Dallas Medical Center
Methodist Healthcare – San Antonio
Methodist Healthcare Ministries
Methodist Mansfield Medical Center
Mother Frances Hospital – Jacksonville
Mother Frances Hospital – Tyler
Mount Pleasant/Titus County Chamber of Commerce
National Association of Hispanic Nurses Houston Chapter
North Hills Hospital
Northwest Texas Healthcare System, Inc.
One Voice
Palo Pinto General Hospital
Parkland Health & Hospital System
Peterson Regional Medical Center
Richardson Regional Medical Center
Scott and White Center for Healthcare Policy
Seton Family of Hospitals
Shannon Medical Center
Shifa Clinic (A Division of Houston Shifa Services Foundation)
Southwestern Adventist University
St. David's HealthCare
St. Joseph Health System
St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital
Teaching Hospitals of Texas
Tenet Healthcare Corporation
Texas and New Mexico Hospice Organization
Texas Association of Business
Texas Association of Community Colleges
Texas Association of Deans and Directors of Professional Nursing Programs
Texas Health Care Association
Texas Health Presbyterian WNJ
Texas Health Resources
Texas Healthcare Trustees
Texas Hospital Association
Texas Medical Association
Texas Medical Center
Texas Nurses Association
Texas Organization of Nurse Executives
Texas Organization of Rural & Community Hospitals
Texas Podiatric Medical Association
Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children
Texoma Medical Center
The Methodist Hospital System
Trinity Mother Frances Hospitals and Clinics:
 The Louis and Peaches Owen Heart Hospital
 Mother Frances Hospital-Tyler
 Mother Frances Hospital-Jacksonville
 Mother Frances Hospital-Winnsboro
 Trinity Mother Frances Rehabilitation Hospital
 (affiliated with HealthSouth Tyler ContinueCARE Hospital)
 Trinity Clinic
University Health System
University Medical Center of El Paso
Vocational Nursing Institute, Inc.

Organizations submitting letters of support or passing resolutions include:

Abilene Chamber of Commerce
Harris County Commissioners Court
Houston Northwest Chamber of Commerce
Laredo Chamber of Commerce
Tyler Area Chamber of Commerce