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Executive Summary

Illinois Center for Nursing Licensed Practical Nurse Survey 2015

This report details the results of the 2015 Illinois Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) workforce survey. The survey was structured to capture data on the demographics, education, workplace settings, and state distribution of LPNs in Illinois. The survey was conducted during the 2015 LPN license renewal period from 11/7/2014 to 1/31/2015. This year in Illinois over 85% of LPNs completed their license renewal via the on-line platform. At the conclusion of the renewal process, there was a link to the survey along with an explanation of its purpose. The survey was voluntary and was completed by 6,613 LPNs representing 21.7% of the total LPN population in Illinois.

General Overview

Data on the characteristics, size, practice foci, educational pipeline and distribution of LPNs in the State of Illinois is essential to planning for provision of essential health care services to many groups of Illinois Citizens, particularly the elderly and home bound. This report contains data on the demographics of our current LPN workforce, the relative numbers of LPNs in each age group, their workplace and their plans for retirement; data which is essential for State workforce planning.

Age of the workforce

Similar to the RN workforce, LPNs are an aging group; 27% of the respondents are between the ages of 55-64 years. Taken together with the 65+ and 45-54 age groups, the data indicate that 59% of the LPN workforce falls into upper age ranges. Serious concerns about the capacity of this group to meet future population's health needs surface when one considers that, on the question related to retirement and plans to leave the workforce, one third of the group that responded plans to do so in one to five years. Interestingly half of the LPNs in the younger age group, 25 years and under (N=114) also plan on retiring in one to five years. It is not known what these younger LPNs are considering following retirement.

Diversity

The LPN group, particularly in comparison to the RN workforce, is a racially diverse group. Twenty five percent of respondents to the question on race placed themselves in the Black/African American category. The largest percent of this group was in the 35-44 year age range but the percent was high across all age groups (17.9-31.8%). Interestingly the Hispanic/Latina percent was highest (8%) in the younger age groups. The gender diversity is low and relatively even across age groups with slightly more males in the younger age groups. While there is a clear need to increase diversity in the nursing workforce, the LPN group demonstrates some promising trends.

Workplace Settings

Nursing homes/extended care/assisted living environments were the primary workplace settings for close to half of the respondents (48%). Another large group of LPNs (11%) practice in home

health. Of concern is that close to 30% of the LPNs who practice in nursing homes/extended care plan on retiring in one to five years. Demand projections for this workforce depend on the anticipated shift from nursing to home health care for the elderly but long term employment growth is expected to continue into 2030 (Spetz, Trupin, , Bates, & Coffman, 2015). Combining workplace setting, age and intent to retire data have clear implications for Illinois workforce planning groups, particularly the need to focus on the nursing home/ home health population, its growth, service needs and the demand/workforce capacity imbalance.

Distribution

Illinois LPNs are generally clustered in the dense Cook County (26.4%) population. The ratio of LPNs to population density is lowest in sparsely populated rural counties. Part of this distribution could be a result of the location of Community Colleges and Proprietary Schools that offer an LPN certification.

Summary

The LPN survey data indicate a workforce that is aging with a small younger- aged pipeline to replace retiring nurses. Discussion around workforce planning needs to occur given LPNs traditional roles in nursing homes/extended care and home care and the anticipated growth of the elderly population. An informed discussion on LPN demand/capacity must also consider the nursing competencies stipulated in new models of team based care. As we plan for the nursing workforce needed to meet health care demands created by population shifts and health care transformation, it would be helpful to have a better understanding of the drivers for choosing an LPN certification and how we might optimize each individual's interest in a nursing career.

Reference

Spetz, J., Trupin, L., Bates, T., & Coffman, J. M. (2015). Future Demand For Long-Term Care Workers Will Be Influenced By Demographic And Utilization Changes. *Health Affairs*, 34(6), 936-945