Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation
Division of Professional Regulation

BRUCE RAUNER
Governor

BRYAN A. SCHNEIDER
Secretary

JESSICA A. BAER
Director
Division of Professional Regulation

Executive Summary

Illinois Center for Nursing Registered Nurse Workforce Survey 2016

The purpose of this report is to detail the results from the 2016 Illinois Registered Nurse (RN) workforce survey. The survey was structured to capture data on the demographics, education, state distribution, and practice foci of RNs in Illinois. The survey was conducted during the 2016 Illinois RN licensure renewal period, from 3/14/16 to 5/31/16. In Illinois, over 90% of individual RNs completed licensure renewal via an on-line platform. When individuals concluded the renewal process, there was a link to the survey along with an explanation of its purpose. The voluntary survey was completed by 41,194 RNs, representing 23.3% of the total RN population in Illinois. The full report, and past nursing reports, are available on the IDFPR/Illinois Center for Nursing website at http://nursing.illinois.gov/ResearchData.asp

General overview: Data on the characteristics, supply and distribution of RNs in the State of Illinois is essential to expanding access to care and planning for provision of essential primary and other health care services. This report contains data on the demographics of the current RN workforce, the relative numbers of RNs in each age group, their cultural diversity, and educational preparation. Based on these findings, issues and concerns for the nursing workforce into the near future are identified.

Aging workforce: The report presents important information about the aging of the RN workforce. In 2016, 50.18% respondents are over the age of 55 years, which is approximately an 8% increase in this cohort of Illinois RNs since 2014. The relatively rapid increase in RNs in older age categories has significant implications for workforce planning. In addition, one third of the respondents indicated intent to retire within the next five years. This combination of aging workforce and retirement plans predict the potential of an impending nursing shortage within the next five years.

Education post-licensure: Responses to questions regarding registered nurses' intent to seek higher degrees revealed two major barriers. Respondents who are not pursuing a degree post-licensure

indicated that the greatest barrier was cost, specifically cost of tuition, followed by family obligations. In the 2014 survey, 40% respondents said cost of tuition was the greatest barrier; in 2016 that number rose to 52%. As schools move to requiring the Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree as a minimum credential for advanced practice nursing education, the increased cost of these degrees should be considered.

Decreased diversity: In contrast to the increase in cultural and racial diversity in the state of Illinois, data indicated a decrease in the cultural diversity of the RN workforce in the younger cohorts in several groups For instance, 4% of Black/African American respondents reported being younger than 35 years, compared to the 29% in those over 65 years. In contrast, those identifying as Hispanic/Latino, 15% are younger than age 36 years, while only 6% are over age 55 years. White females with initial licensure in the U.S. constitute a substantial majority (approximately 80%); however, indications of changing demographics are observable across age categories.

Specialty foci: The respondents reported employment in these top five nursing specialties: acute care, critical care, emergency, surgical, and geriatrics. The data also demonstrated the distribution of nurses in specialties by age cohorts, revealing significantly fewer younger nurses in specialties such as psychiatric mental-health, school, home health, gerontology, and community health nursing. These trends stand in contrast to the Illinois report, *The Workforce Implications of New Health Care Models,* which forecasts a significant increase in ambulatory services, as well as a concomitant need for RNs to practice in community based models of care.

Summary: Collectively, the 2016 Illinois Registered Nurse (RN) workforce survey is a useful resource as health care planners project the human health care capital that will be needed in Illinois. The information will allow ICN to address questions such as, what is the current RN supply and will it be adequate to meet the health care needs of Illinois citizens? Health care workforce planners can help determine and guide educational preparation as to what types of RN (e.g. specialty) will be in greatest demand, as well as the types of specialties and skills required of future models of care.