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Executive Summary

Illinois Nursing Workforce Center Licensed Practical Nurse Survey 2019

General Overview: This report details the results of the 2019 Illinois Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) workforce survey. The survey was structured to capture data on the demographics of the current LPN workforce, including their cultural diversity, relative numbers of LPNs in each age group, educational preparation, and workplace settings. Participation in the survey was voluntary and was conducted during the 2019 LPN license renewal period from 11/13/2018 to 1/31/2019. In 2019, over 88% of Illinois LPNs completed their license renewal via the on-line platform. The survey was completed by 3,662 LPNs representing approximately 13% of the 28,109 total LPNs licensed in Illinois. 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. These data are essential for State LPN workforce planning.

Age of the Workforce: Similar to the RN workforce, LPNs are an aging group; 45% of the respondents are 55 years of age or older. When combined with the 45-54 years old age groups, the data indicate that 68% of the LPN workforce falls into upper age ranges, which is slightly more than the LPNs who participated in the 2017. Serious concerns about the capacity of this group to meet future population's health needs surface as 23% of respondents plan to retire in one to five years.

Diversity: The LPN group, particularly in comparison to the RN workforce, is a racial and ethnically diverse group. Twenty-six percent of respondents to the question on race placed themselves in the Black/African American category. Three age ranges of Black/African American LPNs (35-44, 45-54 and 55-64 years of age) were 23-26% of respondents, which speaks to some consistency in the diversity of this group. Interestingly the Hispanic/Latina percent was highest in the younger years, showing approximately 23% are less than 34 years of age. The gender diversity is low with approximately 7% males, though 36% of this group are under 44 years of age. 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 (50%). Another large group of LPNs practice in the ambulatory care setting (14%) and 9% practice in the home health setting. 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; HRSA, 2018). 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.

Summary: The LPN survey data indicates a workforce that is aging with a diminishing LPN pipeline to replace these nurses. It is well known that aging of the U.S. population poses particular demands on health care services, one sector being long-term care needs. Recent reports on long term care raise concerns about the quality of these services (Harrington, Wiener, Ross, & Musumeci, 2017). There is an urgent need for work force planning to meet future healthcare needs. LPNs traditional roles in nursing homes/extended care/assisted living environments and home care with the anticipated growth of the elderly population will increase the demand for LPNs. As we plan for the future LPN nursing workforce demands created by both population shifts and health care transformations, it would be helpful to have a better understanding of the drivers for choosing an LPN license and how we might optimize each individual's interest in a nursing career.