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Executive Summary
Illinois Nursing Workforce Center Licensed Practical Nurse Survey 2021

General Overview

This report details the results of the 2021 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 2021 LPN license renewal period from 11/08/2020 to 2/01/2021. The survey was completed by 5,022 LPNs representing approximately 18% of the 27,674 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 LPN workforce planning.

Diversity

The Illinois LPN workforce is a racially and ethnically diverse group, especially in comparison to the RN workforce. Twenty-seven percent of respondents to the question on race placed themselves in the Black/African American category. The two age ranges of Black/African American LPNs with the highest percent African American/Black LPNs are age 45-54 years (29%) and 55-64 years (24%) of age. The Hispanic/Latinx percent was highest in the younger years, with approximately 28% between 35-44 years of age. The gender diversity is slightly less than national average 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 continues to demonstrate some promising trends.

Age of the Workforce

Similar to the RN workforce, LPNs are an aging group; 42% of the respondents are 55 years of age or older. When combined with the 45-54 years old age groups, the data indicate that 66% of the LPN workforce falls into upper age ranges, which is like the 2019 survey results. Serious concerns about the capacity of this group to meet future population's health needs surface as 38% of respondents plan to retire in the next ten years.

Workplace Settings

Nursing homes/long-term care settings were the primary workplace settings for approximately 36% of the respondents. Another large group of LPNs practice in the ambulatory care/outpatient clinic setting (15%), assisted living facilities (11%) and (10%) practice in the home health setting. Demand projections for this workforce depend on the anticipated shift from nursing home/long-term care to home health care for the elderly but long-term

employment growth is expected to continue into 2030 (1) (2).   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 (3) . 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.