



Utah Nursing Shortage Report

Background

Nurses make up 50% of the worldwide global healthcare workforce. However, recently there's been a concerning shortage of available nurses. Over the next ten years, it's predicted that the world will need 13 million new nurses to slow the growing shortage. Hospitals in the United States face a shortage of nurses, resulting in the closure of units, delayed surgeries, and rationed care. To increase productivity and reduce costs, emergency care settings have reduced the ratio of licensed to non-licensed staff, leaving nurses to work with fewer resources in various healthcare settings. Many experts believe we are beginning to experience a new wave of shortages that will be more critical than in the past. Hospitals and other healthcare practice sites will need more professionals to care for patients and will compete for those scarce resources.

National vs. Utah Statistics

In April 2022, Dr. David Auerbach and colleagues published a nursing workforce analysis in Health Affairs, which found that the total supply of registered nurses decreased by more than 100,000 from 2020 to 2021, the most significant drop observed over the past four decades. The U.S. may face a shortage of up to 450,000 registered nurses by 2025, according to a May 2022 report from consulting firm McKinsey. Utah also faces a massive shortage, with nearly 3,000 job openings for registered nurses. In addition, almost one in five Utah nurses is approaching retirement age, making the future of health care in the state potentially challenging.

Contributing Factors to Nursing Shortage

Amplified by the pandemic, insufficient staffing is raising the stress level of nurses, impacting job satisfaction, and driving many nurses to leave the profession. In March 2022, the American Nurses Foundation and the American Nurses Association released the results of its COVID-19 Impact Assessment Survey, which found that 52% of nurses are considering leaving their current position due

primarily to insufficient staffing, work negatively affecting health and well-being, and inability to deliver quality care. In addition, 60% of emergency care nurses report feeling burnt out, and 75% report feeling stressed, frustrated, and exhausted. In September 2021, the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses reported survey findings showing that 66% of emergency care nurses have considered leaving nursing after their experiences during the pandemic.

Impact of Nursing Shortage

Hospital closures can have ripple effects, destabilizing entire communities and negatively impacting their long-term financial outcome and population growth. Studies have shown that people who live in areas with limited access to healthcare are more likely to be unemployed and have lower incomes. They are more likely to miss work due to illness, which can lead to job loss. Closing a local hospital can place a further financial burden on residents because they may have to travel further to get care and pay higher out-of-pocket costs. There is also evidence that the lack of access to health care can lead to a decline in productivity. People who are sick or injured and not being adequately treated are less likely to be able to return to work quickly, which can lead to a decrease in economic output.

Many scientific studies indicate a connection between adequate registered nurse staffing levels and safe patient care. In March 2011, Dr. Jack Needleman and colleagues published findings in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, which indicated that insufficient nurse staffing was related to higher patient mortality rates. These researchers analyzed the records of nearly 198,000 admitted patients and 177,000 eight-hour nursing shifts across 43 patient-care units at large academic health centers. The data show that the mortality risk for patients was about 6% higher in units that were understaffed compared to fully staffed departments.