

**Safe Staffing**  
*means*  
**Safe Patients**

# Does Ohio have a nursing shortage?

Ohio hospitals need the best and brightest individuals to enter the field of health care. Our patients deserve it. However severe workforce shortages are threatening hospitals' fundamental promise of being open at full capacity to care for their communities. Data from Ohio's hospitals show significant vacancy rates in certain health care professions, with registered nurses (RNs) topping the list in most of the state. The demand for RNs and other health care workers will continue to rise with the growing health care needs of the 78 million "baby boomers" who will begin to retire in 2010.

The Department of Health and Human Services estimates that by 2020, our nation will need 2.8 million nurses – 800,000 more than the projected supply. This year, the Department of Labor ranked registered nurses as the occupation with the highest projected growth rate. Some hospitals have already been forced to reduce access to care, including reducing the number of inpatient beds available, postponing or canceling elective surgeries, and having ambulances bypass their overflowing emergency departments – because they don't have an adequate number and mix of personnel to provide care to patients.

Without decisive intervention, these trends can have a serious impact on hospitals' ability to provide quality care.

## The Hard Facts of the Nursing Shortage

National Center for Health Workforce Analysis Workforce of Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) predicts that Ohio will have a significant shortage of registered nurses reaching a shortfall of almost 32,000 registered nurses by the year 2020 (a 29 percent shortage). The following chart provides further details about HRSA's projections.

Year	FTE Supply	FTE Demand	Excess or Shortage (Supply less Demand) (Shortage)	Percent Overage or Shortage
2000	86,912	88,957	(2,045)	-2%
2005	89,288	94,204	(4,916)	-5%
2010	88,947	99,405	(10,458)	-11%
2015	85,541	105,593	(20,052)	-19%
2020	79,716	111,693	(31,977)	-29%

The Bureau of Labor Statistics singled out nursing as the occupation likely to swell the most —estimating the nation will employ 623,000 more registered nurses (RNs) in 2012 than in 2002, a 27 percent increase. Fur-

thermore, seven of the 10 fastest growing occupations stem from health care: medical assistants, physician assistants, social and human service assistants, home health aides, medical records and health information technicians, physical therapist aides and physical therapist assistants (Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), U. S. Department of Labor, February, 2004).

Although the predictions continue to point to significant nursing shortages in the future, current statistics indicate an improving picture for Ohio. This improvement is because of the dedication of Ohio hospitals to resolve the problem before it harms their communities. In 2003, the number of vacancies dropped in Ohio's hospitals while turnover remained constant from 2002. In 2002 the statewide average hospital vacancy rate for registered nurses was 10.8% and in 2003 was 5.14%. (Management Science Associates (MSA), 2003).

In 2002, organization-wide turnover dropped from a high of 19% in 2001 to about 15% in 2002. Turnover of registered nurses dropped from 18% in 2001 to 12% in 2002 and turnover remained the same in 2003.

Ohio hospital jobs increased from 208,513 in 1992 to 227,791 in 2002 and the projections outline an even sharper upturn over the next 10 years. While other employers may export jobs or reduce their workforce during economic downturns, hospital jobs remain local and vital. Unlike other industries and services, the economy does not drive the number of people who need health care.

Nearly 40 percent of current Ohio nurses who plan to leave the profession within the next 10 years, most due to retirement. Add in the increasing demands of aging baby boomers, and an immediate and urgent need exists to increase in the school enrollment numbers for vital health care positions.

## What's being done to assure an adequate Ohio healthcare workforce?

Hospitals are stepping up to the plate to help attract students into nursing careers and retain current nurses in the workforce. Many individual hospitals also employ innovative approaches to recruit and retain quality associates. A list of a few of those "Best Practices" are attached and can be found on the OHA Website at [www.ohanet.org/workforce/](http://www.ohanet.org/workforce/).

OHA Workforce Committee, chaired by Mike Stephens, CEO of Greene Memorial, provides valuable feedback to direct OHA's workforce efforts. The OHA Workforce Committee has continued to work toward achieving the OHA strategic objective: *"Ohio hospitals attract and retain talented and dedicated employees and medical staff"*

FutureThink, an initiative created by the Ohio Organization for Nurse Executives and Ohio Hospital Association, continues its active role in designing a future of clinical health care that combines technology, preventive care and an inspired workforce to maintain excellence in Ohio's health care. Information on the FutureThink initiative, as well as updates on pilot projects being developed across the state can be found at [www.FutureThink.org](http://www.FutureThink.org).

The State of Ohio Health Care Workforce Advisory Council, convened by the Ohio Department of Aging and funded by the Governor's Workforce Policy Board, aims to solve statewide health care workforce shortages. OHA joins over 35 other statewide public and private organizations to discuss possible policy solutions to the current and future shortages of health care providers.

The state's regional hospital associations in Akron, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dayton, and Toledo have put together highly effective, local efforts to address their unique workforce needs. They have developed local partnerships with institutions of higher education to increase the pipeline for schools preparing nurses. The Greater Dayton Hospital Association and Greater Cincinnati Health Council have partnered with their FutureThink pilot projects to develop solutions for regional educational approaches and aligning service with education. The Akron Regional Hospital Association has created a comprehensive booklet to share the opportunities in health care careers with high school guidance counselors and students throughout Ohio.

The Ohio Board of Nursing has developed Nursing Rewards, a new statewide public education campaign encouraging nursing as a career. The campaign features a comprehensive Web site, television Public Service Announcements, billboards, and radio and paper ads in an effort to educate the public on the benefits of careers in nursing. The campaign also seeks to increase public awareness of nursing as a fulfilling and challenging career for both men and women. OHA sponsored the campaign in conjunction with the Ohio Health Care Association, the Association of Ohio Philanthropic Homes and Housing for the Aging, the Ohio Council for Home Care and the Ohio League for Nursing. For more information on this campaign, or on a career in nursing, visit [www.NursingRewards.org](http://www.NursingRewards.org).