

Pennsylvania's Nurses are More than Just a Number

September 2022

Pennsylvania is experiencing a nursing shortage crisis

Simply put, there are not enough nurses. This national challenge existed even prior to the pandemic and Pennsylvania's health care workforce has not been spared.

Why?

- An aging and retiring health care workforce
- Too few graduates of nursing
- Too few nurse educators and nursing schools
- Bedside nurses seeking advanced practice opportunities
- Increasing numbers of patients seeking care

COVID-19 has created an increased demand for health care services due to surges, new variants, and the treatment of conditions that have been delayed.

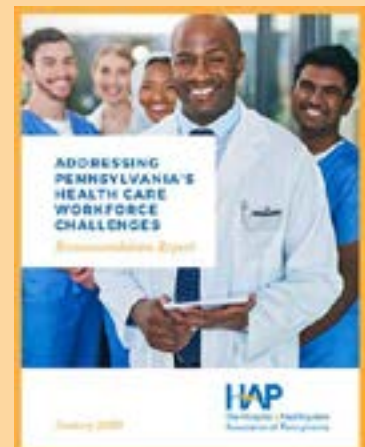
Mandated nurse staffing ratios do not create more nurses

Rigid nurse-to-patient ratios would intensify the challenges hospitals are facing filling open nursing positions. HAP's survey of Pennsylvania hospitals (conducted during December 2021 and updated during February 2022 with additional responses) found already high vacancy rates, including:

- 45 percent for nursing support
- 32 percent for clinical nurse specialists
- 30 percent for certified registered nurse practitioners
- 27 percent for registered nurse staff providing direct patient care
- 22 percent for certified registered nurse anesthetists



Learn more about the statewide and national nursing workforce shortage and possible solutions from "[Addressing Pennsylvania's Health Care Workforce Challenges](#)," a report from HAP's Health Care Talent Task Force.



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There are better ways to support nurses and the health care workforce

Nurses deserve our support and have been working under grueling circumstances. They need help. To make meaningful, lasting improvements, HAP recommends proposals that focus on supporting, teaching, attracting, retaining, and valuing professional nurses.

HAP supported recently adopted measures that:

- Allow international nurse graduates to sit for the Pennsylvania registered nurse exam and expand recognition of international medical graduate degrees and credentials
- Ease licensing requirements for veterans and their spouses to transition to health care careers
- Deliver \$50 million in student loan relief for eligible nurses
- Supporting community college students who pursue health care careers and investing in clinical education to increase the number of nurses
- Fully operationalizing already authorized participation in interstate health professional compacts
- Improving the process for licensing health care practitioners
- Establishing a statewide program to promote health careers to K-12 students, minority, re-entry, and non-traditional populations

Pennsylvania can continue to strengthen and support the nursing workforce through policies aimed at:

- Preventing health care workplace violence
- Expanding student loan forgiveness for nurses
- Building on COVID-era innovations that allow health care practitioners to focus more on patient care

