

Hospital Staffing

Introduction

The Hospital Nurse Staffing Survey (HNSS) assesses the size and effects of the nursing shortage in hospitals, Texas' largest employer of nurses. During the spring of 2012, the TCNWS administered the HNSS to 603 Texas hospitals. These included for-profit, non-profit, public, and Texas Department of State Health Services-operated hospitals, as well as hospitals linked to academic institutions; military hospitals were not surveyed. The facilities surveyed were general acute care, psychiatric, special, and rehabilitation hospitals. 373 (61.9%) hospitals responded to the survey. The hospitals that completed 2012 the HNSS were representative of all Texas hospitals by region and bed size.

This report presents the relevant findings of this survey related to staffing practices at Texas hospitals. It also reviews changes in hospitals' numbers of occupied and vacant Registered Nurse (RN) positions at hospitals, the reasons for these changes, and how the country's recent economic recession has impacted staffing practices. Analyses are provided across Texas geographic regions.

Registered Nurses (RNs), Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs), and Nurse Aides (NAs)

Table 1. Average Number of Employees and Total Separations by Nurse Type

	Average Full-time Employees	Average Part-time Employees	Average Per Diem Employees	Total Separations
RNs	52,745	6,260	9,845	11,170
LVNs	4,740	459	909	1,472
NAs	13,027	1,612	2,222	4,394

Table 1 includes the sum of reporting hospitals' average full-time employees, average number of part-time employees, average number of per diem nurses, and the number of separations for the period January 1, 2011 through December 31, 2011. The average number of full-time and part-time employees and the total number of separations are used to calculate turnover rates.

Table 2 presents the number of occupied and vacant FTE positions in Texas by nurse type and the resulting position vacancy rate for each.

- RNs are the most numerous nurse type in Texas hospitals, but also have the highest position vacancy rate.
- Just 25.6% of hospitals reported zero RN vacancies, while 69.3% reported zero LVN vacancies and 46.2% reported zero NA vacancies.

Table 2. Number of Occupied and Vacant FTE Positions in Texas by Nurse Type

	n	Occupied FTE Positions	Total Vacant FTE Positions	Statewide Position Vacancy Rate	Number of Hospitals that Reported Zero Vacancies
RNs	351	56,032	4,923	8.1%	90
LVNs	316	5,094	282	5.2%	219
NAs	329	14,032	1,145	7.5%	152

Note: n=number of hospitals in Texas that reported positions for each nurse type.

For more information on nursing vacancies please see the 2012 HNSS Vacancy and Turnover Report or the 2012 HNSS Design and Methods Report.

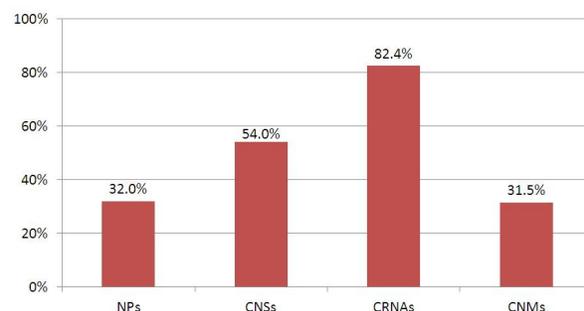
Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs)

Advance Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) are classified as one of four types: Nurse Practitioners (NPs), Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNSs), Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs), and Certified Nurse Midwives (CNMs).

Figure 1 shows the percentage of each type of APRN employed in hospitals.¹

- A vast majority of CRNAs work in hospitals because of their involvement in surgeries.
- NPs and CNMs were least likely to work in the hospital setting.

Figure 1. Percentage of APRNs Employed in Hospital Settings by APRN Type, 2011



Source: ¹ Center for Nursing Workforce Studies, "Nursing Workforce in Texas—2011 Demographics and Trends," http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/chs/cnws/2011_nursing_workforce.pdf

Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) (continued)

Table 3 presents the numbers of occupied and vacant FTE positions in Texas by APRN type and the resulting position vacancy rate for each.

- NPs are the most common advanced practice nurse type in Texas and are employed in the most number of Texas hospitals. Over two-thirds of hospitals employing NPs have zero NP vacancies.
- CNS positions have the highest vacancy rate in Texas among APRN types, with 15 reported vacancies out of 84 total (occupied and vacant) CNS positions. That represents a 17.9% vacancy rate for CNSs among reporting hospitals.
- Sixty-two hospitals reported 13 vacancies out of 376.5 total CRNA positions, a 3.5% vacancy rate. This is the lowest vacancy among the APRN types and 88.7% of hospitals have zero CRNA vacancies.
- The number of hospitals reporting CNM positions is relatively low, but still there is a vacancy rate of 15.8%.

Table 3. Number of Total and Vacant FTE Positions by APRN Type

	n	Occupied FTE Positions	Vacant FTE Positions	Texas Position Vacancy Rate	Number of Hospitals that Reported Zero Vacancies
NPs	98	581	83	12.5%	66
CNSs	28	69	15	17.9%	21
CRNAs	62	363.5	13	3.5%	55
CNMs	6	16	3	15.8%	4

Note: n=number of hospitals in Texas that reported FTE positions for each APRN type.

Table 4 includes the total number of average full-time APRN employees, average number of part-time APRN employees, average number of per diem APRN nurses and the total number of APRN separations for the period beginning January 1, 2011 and ending December 31, 2011. The average number of full-time and part-time employees and the total number of separations were used to calculate the median facility turnover rates for APRNs.

Table 4. Average Number of Employees and Total Separations by APRN Type

	n	Average Full-time Employees	Average Part-time Employees	Average Per Diem Employees	Total Separations
NPs	98	498	60	40	91
CNSs	28	84	4	4	10
CRNAs	62	299.5	35	34	43
CNMs	6	11	3	4	3

Note: n=number of hospitals in Texas that reported average number of employees and separations for each APRN type.

For more information on nursing vacancies please see the 2012 HNSS Vacancy and Turnover Report or the 2012 HNSS Design and Methods Report.

Contract, Agency, and Traveling Staff**Table 5. Number of Contract, Agency, or Traveling Nurses Employed by Nurse Type and Region (1/22/2012 through 1/28/2012)**

	Region 1 Panhandle	Region 2 North Texas	Region 3 East Texas	Region 4 Gulf Coast	Region 5 Central Texas	Region 6 South Texas	Region 7 Rio Grande Valley	Region 8 West Texas	Total
RNs	66.17	279.15	82.1	401.79	202.3	131.1	231	155.4	1549.01
LVNs	22.44	23.71	41.9	87	15.3	40	15	35	280.35
NAs	30.22	31.32	16.5	89.27	0	14	44	9.5	234.81
NPs	0	6	0	2	0	0	0	0	8
CNSs	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
CRNAs	6	4	5	7.5	6	4	0	5	97.5
CNMs	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Table 5 presents the number of contract, agency, and traveling FTEs employed during the week of 1/22/2012 to 1/28/2012, a peak time for hospitals in Texas.

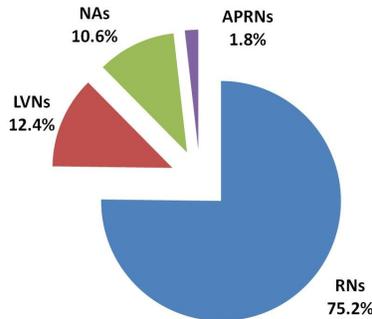
- Contract, agency, and traveling RNs, LVNs, and NAs are commonly used throughout Texas.

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Contract, Agency, and Traveling Staff (continued)

- NPs, CNSs, and CNMs are rarely employed as contract, agency, or traveling nurses.
- Regions 1 (Panhandle), 3 (East Texas), and 8 (West Texas) had comparable numbers of contract, agency, and traveling CRNAs to regions with more hospitals and greater populations. Region 7 (Rio Grande Valley) did not employ CRNAs as contract, agency, or traveling nurses during this time period.

Figure 2. Temporary Staffing Agency and Contract/Traveling Nurse Hours by Nurse Type



- During the week of January 22 to January 28, 2012, 185 responding hospitals reported filling 1,956.05 FTEs using contract/travelling nurses or temporary staffing agencies.
- Of these FTEs, 75.2% of the contract, agency, and traveling staff hours were worked by RNS followed by LVNs (12.4%), NAs (10.6%) and APRNs (1.8%) (Figure 2).
- Among APRNs FTEs, Certified Nurse Anesthetists comprised 77.3% of the FTEs used.

Note: RN= Registered Nurse, LVN= Licensed Vocational Nurse, NA= Nurse Aide, APRN= Advanced Practice Registered Nurse

Changes in Budgeted FTEs

In addition to providing employment numbers for the specified periods, hospitals also described changes in the past two years in their numbers of direct patient care RN FTEs, the reasons for these changes, and their hiring plans for the coming fiscal year.

Table 6. Number of Hospitals Reporting Changes in Budgeted Direct Patient Care RN FTEs by Region

	Region 1 Panhandle	Region 2 North Texas	Region 3 East Texas	Region 4 Gulf Coast	Region 5 Central Texas	Region 6 South Texas	Region 7 Rio Grande Valley	Region 8 West Texas	Total
Increased	14	58	12	39	24	24	6	16	193
Decreased	7	10	9	9	3	6	4	1	49
No Change	16	39	13	17	12	10	5	19	131

Table 6 shows the number of hospitals in each region and Texas as a whole reporting increased, decreased, or unchanged numbers of budgeted direct patient care RN FTEs.

- One hundred ninety-three (51.7%) responding hospitals reported an increase in budgeted RN FTEs compared to 180 reporting no change or a decrease.
- In Regions 2, 4, 5, and 6 (North Texas, Gulf Coast, Central Texas, and South Texas, respectively) a majority of hospitals reported increases in budgeted RN FTEs. Each of these regions contains one of Texas’ four largest cities.
- Regions 1, 3, 7, and 8 (Panhandle, East Texas, Rio Grande Valley, and West Texas) each had a majority of hospitals report either a decrease or no change in the number of RN FTEs budgeted.

Table 7 displays the number of hospitals reporting changes in budgeted RN FTEs by geographic designation.

- The majority of responding hospitals in metropolitan border counties (59.1%) reported an increased number of budgeted RN FTEs over the past two years.
- 59.4% of responding hospitals in metropolitan non-border counties reported increased budgeted RN FTEs.
- Half of non-metropolitan border hospital respondents reported no change in their number of budgeted RN FTEs, while 37.5% (3 of 8) reported an increase.
- Hospitals in non-metropolitan non-border counties most commonly reported no change in the number of budgeted RN FTEs (49.0%).

Table 7. Number of Hospitals Reporting Changes in Budgeted Direct Patient Care RN FTEs by Geographic Designation

	Metro Border	Metro Non-Border	Non-Metro Border	Non-Metro Non-Border
Increased	13	142	3	35
Decreased	3	29	1	16
No Change	6	68	4	53

Changes in Budgeted FTEs (Continued)

Reasons Hospitals Increased Budgeted RN FTEs

One hundred ninety-three hospitals reported having increased budgeted direct patient care RN FTEs in the past two years. These hospitals were then asked to indicate reasons why they had done so, revealing the following:

- One hundred thirty-eight hospitals (71.5%) reported that they had increased their number of budgeted RN FTEs due in response to the number of patients being treated.
- A majority (53.9%) of hospitals cited changes in average patient acuity (severity of treatment required) as a reason for requiring more RN FTEs.
- Over a third of hospitals (36.3%) indicated the need for more nurses because of the addition of new units or services.
- 21.8% of hospitals reported increasing the RN staffing budget because of the addition of new beds.
- Some hospitals (19.6%) budgeted new RNs as a means of improving the nurse/patient ratio of the hospital.
- 13.0% percent of hospitals cited other factors, most commonly the desire to transform LVN positions to RN positions.

Reasons Hospitals Decreased Budgeted RN FTEs

Forty-nine hospitals reported having decreased budgeted direct patient care RN FTEs in the past two years. These hospitals were asked to indicate reasons why they had done so, revealing the following:

- A majority of hospitals decreasing budgeted RN FTEs (55.1%) attributed the change to the closure or reduction of units or departments within the hospital.
- The second most common response (46.9%) was that hospitals decreased budgeted RN FTEs because of net revenue concerns.
- The inability to fill existing RN positions was cited as a reason for the decrease by 10.2% of hospitals.
- Just one hospital (2.0%) reported the ability to accomplish some "RN tasks" with nurse aides and LVNs.
- Finally, 26.5% of hospitals provided other responses, including a change in patient volume and the reclassification of patient beds away from acute care.

Additional RN FTEs to be Hired in the Next Fiscal Year

Table 8. Number of Additional FTEs Hospitals Plan to Budget Next Fiscal Year

	Region 1 Panhandle	Region 2 North Texas	Region 3 East Texas	Region 4 Gulf Coast	Region 5 Central Texas	Region 6 South Texas	Region 7 Rio Grande Valley	Region 8 West Texas	Total
RNs	57	533	382	469	855	1,813	86	86	4,281
LVNs	35	45	16	112	26	63	24	13	334
NAs	44	171	43	161	298	328	35	29	1,109
NPs	1	23	2	19	2	3	0	3	53
CNSs	0	15	0	7	0	1	0	0	23
CRNAs	1	3	9	5	0	2	0	0	20
CNMs	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	4	6
Total	138	792	452	773	1,181	2,210	145	135	5,826

Table 8 shows the number of FTEs that responding hospitals expect to budget in the next fiscal year, by nurse type and region.

- The 373 hospitals responding to this survey reported that they expect to add 5,826 nursing FTEs in the next fiscal year.
- Over half of the growth in Texas was expected to be in Region 5 (20.3%) and Region 6 (37.9%).
- 73.5% of the expected positions will be RNs while 1.8% will be APRNs. LVNs and NAs were expected to account for 24.8% of the new positions.

Changes in Hiring Practices of Newly Licensed RNs

- 58.2% of the 373 hospitals surveyed reported they believe the recent economic recession has had no effect on their nurse staffing and hiring practices in regards to newly licensed RNs.
- Thirty-seven (9.9%) hospitals reported that the recent economic recession has had a positive effect on their ability to hire newly licensed RNs. These hospitals cite as benefits a deeper applicant pool from which to hire, decreased turnover, and a greater level of interest in their vacant positions among rural hospitals.
- Fifty-six (15.0%) hospitals reported a negative effect on their hiring of newly licensed RNs. Many of these hospitals reported hiring freezes or new administrative requirements for adding positions, a decreased patient volume reducing need for new nurses, and a greater number of nurses seeking increased pay in urban areas through temporary or contract nursing posts.