Summary of the VTPM Healthcare Hiring Needs Assessment

Overview

The healthcare industry currently holds 13% of Vermont's jobs with healthcare employment in the first half of 2021 up 1% from 2020 but 4% lower than pre-pandemic numbers in 2019. Since the start of the pandemic, the industry has faced workforce challenges which include difficulty in hiring and retaining frontline workers, fluctuation in the demand for services and the supply of available delivery, staff illness, and exhaustion. In 2021 Vermont Healthcare providers were invited by the Vermont Talent Pipeline initiative to collaborate on a talent pipeline to support the hiring needs of frontline nursing roles. The data collected in the 2021 Nursing Hiring Needs Assessment serves to inform education providers, policymakers, and the labor force about high-demand career opportunities. 43 healthcare providers across all regions of Vermont were engaged in the assessment.

Methodology

The Healthcare collaborative forecasted the hiring of new and replacement jobs for high-demand nursing jobs within the period of September 2021-Semptember 2022. Participants in this forecast included 17 hospitals, 8 Visiting Nurse Organizations, 17 Long-term Care Facilities, and 1 Outpatient Clinic. In addition to the forecast, the collaborative ranked the importance of education and industry-recognized credentials for seven critical roles which included: Licensed Nurse Assistant, Mental Health Technician, Certified Medical Assistant, Licensed Practical Nurse, Registered Nurse, Registered Nurse, Clinical Nurse Educator, and Nurse Practitioner. As there is a high anticipated demand for Registered Nurses (RN), an RN specialization needs assessment was completed by 34 employers who identified the nine RN specializations of highest demand in order as Acute Care, Clinical Care, Emergency Room, Hospice, Operating Room, Psychiatric/Behavioral Health, Geriatric Care, Clinical Educator, and Oncology.

Survey Highlights

The survey forecasted 6244 vacancies within the seven critical roles of the nursing pathway. Of these vacancies, 30% are new roles and 70% are replacement positions. 24% of the vacancies are LNAs, and 42% are RNs with 47% of specialized RNs needed in Acute care.

Healthcare Nursing Job Forecast and New Jobs VS OLD Jobs

2% of total jobs are for Nurse Practitioners with 37% of these being new positions and 63% being replacement jobs. 1% of total jobs are Clinical Nurse Educators with 40% being new and 60% being replacement. 42% of total jobs are RNs with 25% being new and 75% being replacement. 9% of total jobs are LPNs with 38% being new and 62% being replacement. 8% of total jobs are for Medical Assistants with 24% being new and 76% being replacement. 14% of total jobs are Psychiatric Technicians with 41% being new and 59% being replacement. 24% of total jobs are for LNAs with 28% being new and 72% being replacement.

Healthcare Provider's General Remarks
Acute care volume has increased due to the pandemic which is leading providers to create permanent new positions to meet financial sustainability goals for the ongoing high demand. These positions lack applicants and are competing applicants for travelers who have been filling the demanded role and driving wages up. Travelers are leaving permanent Vermont-based positions to work as in-state travelers. It is estimated that in 2021 Vermont healthcare providers will have spent an excess of $100 million on travelers and the percentage of providers' overall budget spent on travelers is expected to increase.

Observations about the Critical Roles
Wages for LNA positions have risen since 2020 with as much as 20% more paid for entry-level positions. LNA roles are not generally viewed by either applicants or providers as long-term positions but instead as a "step in a career ladder". This provides an opportunity for upskilling. Psychiatric Technicians represent 14% of the total forecast. This role is only hired by hospitals and 875 jobs are forecast over the next two years across 17 hospitals. Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) are not widely used in hospitals but the role is recognized as an important step toward RN licensure. RNs are the most demanded roles in the nursing career path with 42% of the total forecast. 22% of RN roles forecast are for replacement positions for RNs who have been retained by upskilling through promotions and internal transfers. RNs and LNAs which have the highest demands also have the highest number of forecasted replacement positions. Clinical Nurse Educators provide support for the shortage of nursing faculty in higher education. Clinical educators are beneficial to RN higher education programs and in 2019, Vermont's four programs graduated 293 RN students. While the forecast of this role is "modest", investments in clinical education can provide a boost to RN program expansion and "professional development for internal staff assignment flexibility". Nurse Practitioners is the most frequent advancement path for RNs and the replacement demand for this role is lower than other roles in the nursing pathway.

Relative Changes in Demand
A VTPM needs assessment that forecasted hiring demand from 2018 to 2020 was compared to the 2021 Needs Assessment to measure the change in demand. The comparative data shows that demand for LNAs and LPNs has continued to increase. Demand for RNs was much higher than all other positions in both assessments however there has been relatively little change in this demand. Demand for NPs has decreased as supply has increased.

Regional Distribution of Vacancies
Central Vermont comprises 29% of the total vacancies, Northeastern Vermont comprises 12%, Northwestern Vermont holds 38%, and Southern Vermont has 21%.

RN Specializtion Demand
Acute care RNs are the most demanded specialization with 47%. Clinical Care roles have 18% of total demand, ER has 9%, Hospice holds 6%, OR has 5%, Psychiatric and Behavioral Health has 5%, Geriatric Care has 4%, and both Clinical Educator and Oncology roles have 3% of demand.

Other Important Information
43% of organizations answered yes to providing clinical educators for the purpose of developing a hiring pipeline. 73% of organizations pay for MSN training and 74% are interested in hosting apprenticeships to help working LNAs and LPNs become RNs. 52% of organizations provide Licensed NA training in-house.

Report of Reference
Vermont Talent Pipeline Management, "VTPM Healthcare Hiring Needs Assessment Summary (2021-23)", VTPM (2021).