



South Dakota Consortium Identifies and Prepares for State's Nursing Needs

Colleagues in Caring: Regional Collaboratives for Nursing Work Force Development (Phase 2)

SUMMARY

From 1996 to 2002, the [South Dakota Board of Nursing](#), Sioux Falls, S.D., led a South Dakota consortium that included nurses, nurse educators and nurse employers that established a system to collect and analyze state nursing workforce data and report on nurse supply-and-demand trends.

The project was part of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's (RWJF) national program *Colleagues in Caring: Regional Collaboratives for Nursing Work Force Development*.

Key Results

- The consortium created what the project director called a new "trust level" among members of the nursing community.
- The Board of Nursing played an active role in advocating for legislation through its executive branch authority. It helped design and champion three nursing workforce bills that the state legislature passed in 2002.
- The consortium developed a workforce data collection and analysis system and regularly reported supply-and-demand trends. The data helped focus attention on the state's nursing shortage and generated support for the 2002 legislation.
- The South Dakota Center for Nursing, which stemmed from the *Colleagues in Caring* project, continues the project's data collection, analysis and reporting functions and serves as a focal point for statewide nursing workforce development efforts.
- In 2001, the consortium developed and disseminated a document that sets out the essential nursing competencies at different nursing levels, including licensed practical nurse and the associate, bachelor's and masters' degree levels.

Funding

RWJF funded the project with two grants totaling \$349,741 between July 1996 and December 2002.

THE PROBLEM

Geographically large and sparsely populated, South Dakota has a number of counties that lack access to good health care. While the state's nursing corps had made significant contributions to addressing these problems, leaders recognized that the profession faced challenges:

- The state's nursing education system lacked an up-to-date plan to facilitate student advancement from one nursing level to the next.
- The nursing skills produced by the state's 11 nursing schools did not always match workplace requirements.
- There was no database to permit the forecasting of future employer demand for nurses.

To address these issues, 10 nursing associations and 30 health care and educational institutions formed the South Dakota Consortium and sought funding from the *Colleagues in Caring* program.

THE PROJECT

Under the first three-year RWJF grant of \$199,741 (ID# 029461), the consortium hired a part-time director and four part-time regional coordinators and organized task forces to address specific areas. In addition to nurses, educators, employers and government health workers, the 40-member consortium included two state legislators—a Democrat from the House Health Committee and a Republican from the Senate Health committee.

Workforce data collection was a main activity. The consortium initiated a series of surveys to assess nursing care needs. A survey mailed to more than 1,000 South Dakota employers of nurses asked about current staffing levels and future staffing intentions. Another survey assessed factors that encourage and discourage nurses from returning to school for more education. To assess the state's current workforce, the consortium analyzed re-licensing data obtained from nurses every two years by the state Board of Nursing. Also, the four regional coordinators held some 60 discussion groups with nurses across the state.

Under the second three-year RWJF grant of \$150,000 (ID# 036977), the consortium continued to conduct surveys but increased its focus on policy changes. Members worked to streamline the education system to give nurses greater access to educational and career advancement opportunities. The lead agency, the Board of Nursing, played an active role in advocating for legislation to strengthen the capacity of the state's education system. through its executive branch authority. The state's growing nursing shortage spurred interest among policymakers in workforce development efforts.

RESULTS

The following were among key project results reported to RWJF:

- **The consortium created what the project director called a new "trust level" among members of the nursing community.** Suspicions and tensions between different groups of nurses, different levels of nursing schools and health care interests in different geographic areas of the state disappeared as the result of face-to-face meetings, according to Margaret L. Hegge, Ed.D., RN, the project director.
- **The Board of Nursing played an active role in advocating for legislation through its executive branch authority.** It helped design and champion three nursing workforce bills that the state legislature passed in 2002. One bill added 94 new student slots to the associate degree nursing program at the University of South Dakota and created a new 32-slot nursing baccalaureate "accelerator" program at South Dakota State University. (The "accelerator" program allows a non-nursing college graduate to become a registered nurse (RN) with one year of additional study.) The second bill created an incentive program to reward selected nurses who remain in nursing in the state for at least three years after graduating from a baccalaureate program. The third increased the state's nurse re-licensing fee by \$10 every two years to fund the South Dakota Center for Nursing, a new entity within the Board of Nursing.
- **The consortium developed a workforce data collection and analysis system and regularly reported supply-and-demand trends.** The data helped focus attention on the state's nursing shortage and generated support for the 2002 legislation. For example, initial results found 250 registered nurse (RN) vacancies and identified work areas with increasing RN demand, including public health, home health and case management. The data system, which the new South Dakota Center for Nursing continues, relies on Board of Nursing re-licensing information, nursing schools reports and the employer survey, which is now conducted every two years by the state Department of Health.
- **The South Dakota Center for Nursing, which stemmed from the *Colleagues in Caring* project, continues the project's data collection, analysis and reporting functions and serves as a focal point for statewide nursing workforce development efforts.** The center currently consists of a part-time director and secretary in the Board of Nursing office in Sioux Falls.
- **In 2001, the consortium developed and disseminated a document that sets out the essential nursing competencies at different nursing levels, including licensed practical nurse (LPN) and the associate, bachelor's and masters' degree levels.** The document was designed to help prospective nursing students choose a school appropriate to their interests and give employers more certainty about what they can expect when hiring a particular type of nurse. The state's 11 nursing schools endorsed the document.

- **The project encouraged the implementation of educational mobility plans.** The South Dakota State University nursing baccalaureate program and the University of South Dakota associate degree program entered into an agreement guaranteeing transfer credit for course work completed in the previous five years. The effect is to ensure that associate degree RNs can move up to a baccalaureate program without being required to repeat courses. Associate degree programs at private schools made similar agreements.

Communications

Project participants produced numerous reports assessing the current nursing workforce and projecting future nurse demand. The staff disseminated the material to health care groups, state officials and the news media.

In addition to the competencies document, the consortium generated more than a dozen white papers examining various sectors of the care delivery system-such as hospital, long-term and community health-and the implications for nursing practice, education and regulation.

The project developed a website (which is no longer active) and posted some reports and publications. Staff also wrote articles about the project for South Dakota nursing publications and made presentations to nursing groups in the state.

AFTERWARD

A new, smaller consortium of health interests is working with the South Dakota Center for Nursing to refine the data system and keep the database up-to-date. In addition to approximately \$60,000 a year in re-licensure fee revenue, the center is receiving \$10,000 a year from each of the state's three large hospital chains, which provided the same level of support to the *Colleagues in Caring* project in its second three-year phase. Hegge, the former *Colleagues in Caring* project director, is the center's director.

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APPENDIX

Other Contributors of Cash Support to the South Dakota Colleagues in Caring Project

(Current as of the end date of the program; provided by the program's management; not verified by RWJF.)

Phase One

Anonymous Donation, \$500
Canton-Inwood Hospitals, \$60
Critical Care Nurses, South Dakota Chapter, \$120
Dakota Hospital, \$150
South Dakota Association of Orthopedic Nurses, \$60
South Dakota Board of Nursing, \$37,140
South Dakota Nurse Executives, \$5,000
South Dakota State University, \$17,000

Phase Two

Augustana College of Nursing, \$750
Avera Health System, \$30,000
Dakota Telecommunications Group (McLeod), \$3,000
Dakota Wesleyan University, \$250
Lake Area Technical Institute, LPN Program, \$1,000
Oglala Lakota College of Nursing, \$100
Presentation College, \$400
Rapid City Regional Hospital, \$30,000
Sioux Valley Hospitals and Health Systems, \$30,000
South Dakota Board of Nursing, \$18,000
South Dakota Licensed Practical Nurses Association, \$100
South Dakota Nurses Association, \$2,800
South Dakota Organization of Nurse Executives, \$3,000
South Dakota State University, \$10,000

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Grantee Websites

The project developed a website (no longer active) that included reports, publications and survey findings of the South Dakota *Colleagues in Caring* project and the South Dakota Center for Nursing. The website was developed with support from the South Dakota Board of Nursing, Avera Health, Sioux Valley Hospitals and Health Systems, and Rapid City Regional Hospital System. Sioux Falls, SD: South Dakota Center for Nursing.

Presentations and Testimony

Margaret Hegge, "Nursing Shortage: Condition Critical," National Health Policy Forum Congressional Briefing, June 1, 2002, Washington.