



New Jersey Collaborative Tackles Nursing Shortage

Addressing nursing workforce development issues through a statewide coalition

SUMMARY

From 1996 to 2002, [Rutgers University College of Nursing](#), Piscataway, N.J., led a collaborative group of New Jersey nurses, nursing educators, nurse employers and health care policymakers that developed a nursing workforce data collection and supply-and-demand forecasting system that helped identify the state's growing nursing shortage and lead to establishment of a permanent state nursing workforce center.

This project was part of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's (RWJF) national program *Colleagues in Caring: Regional Collaboratives for Nursing Work Force Development*—a national program RWJF initiated in 1994 to address nursing education and workforce issues at the regional level.

The New Jersey project was one of 23 *Colleagues in Caring* sites across the country.

Key Results

- The collaborative developed the New Jersey Nursing Demand Forecasting Model that is able to produce county-by-county forecasts of demand for registered nurses (RNs) and licensed practical nurses (LPNs).
- The collaborative and its work led to passage of legislation creating the [New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing](#) at Rutgers University.
- The collaborative developed a competency-based nursing practice model for the state. A 527-bed hospital agreed to implement the model on a pilot basis starting in 2003.
- The collaborative helped update a state articulation model originally developed in 1992.

Funding

RWJF supported the project with three grants totaling \$398,854 between July 1996 and August 2002.

THE PROBLEM

The implementation of managed care, the downsizing of hospitals and other changes in the health care system required nurses to acquire new skills and to play new roles. New Jersey, however, had no forum where nursing care stakeholders could come together to address these issues. The state also had no dependable means of collecting nursing workforce data and projecting nurse supply-and-demand trends.

In 1995, in response to these and other challenges, the dean of the Rutgers College of Nursing called a meeting of New Jersey nursing organizations, service providers and policymakers to forge a collaborative approach to the state's nursing workforce needs. The result was a proposal to the *Colleagues in Caring* program to establish the New Jersey Collaborative for Nursing Work Force Development.

THE PROJECT

Under the first three-year RWJF grant (ID# 029459), the collaborative hired staff, formed a steering committee and organized five work groups, each co-chaired by representatives of both nursing education and nursing practice. Data collection and analysis were the major focus. The collaborative:

- Partnered with local groups to conduct 16 focus groups of nurse employers in three areas of the state. The sessions explored the role of nurses and their educational preparation.
- Analyzed hospital nursing workforce data obtained through the New Jersey Organization of Nurse Executives and conducted a nurse survey in cooperation with the state Board of Nursing. The collaborative also surveyed nursing school personnel to assess the educational system's capacity and surveyed consumers on their perception of nurses.
- Investigated and discarded several established workforce modeling tools and worked with experts on the Rutgers University faculty to develop the collaborative's own model for forecasting nurse demand.

The collaborative also explored and promoted strategies to:

- Reduce credit transfer restrictions, prerequisite requirements and other educational barriers that make it harder for nurses to move from one educational level to the next. (Increasing educational mobility is known as "articulation.")
- Redefine nursing roles according to prescribed levels of competency, experience and education in order to give nurses a clear career ladder.

Under the second three-year RWJF grant of \$150,000 (ID# 036975), the collaborative pursued these same efforts. Additionally, in response to New Jersey's growing nursing

shortage—which was among the nation's most severe—the collaborative initiated nurse recruitment and retention efforts. The collaborative received a supplemental, \$50,000 grant from RWJF (ID# 042896) to support these activities as well as a, \$99,026 grant from the Helene Fuld Health Trust specifically for the articulation work.

RESULTS

Key project results reported to RWJF included:

- **The collaborative developed the New Jersey Nursing Demand Forecasting Model that is able to produce county-by-county forecasts of demand for registered nurses (RNs) and licensed practical nurses (LPNs).** For the year 2006, the model forecast a demand for 74,550 RNs. Supply data, however, showed the number of nursing graduates declining and indicated that by 2006 the state would have 60,000 RNs—a shortage of 14,000 or 18 percent. (A shortage of 10 percent or greater is generally considered serious.) Collaborative leaders used these findings to promote legislation establishing a permanent nursing workforce development agency for the state.
- **The collaborative and its work led to passage of legislation creating the New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing at Rutgers University.** Through close ties with the New Jersey State Nurses Association, the collaborative was able to gain the ear of a state legislator who championed the efforts to establish this center. The center, which is located on the university's Newark campus, is charged with continuing the collaborative's data analysis and workforce planning functions. The statute, enacted in December 2002, established the position of executive director and a 17-member governing board appointed from specified stakeholder groups by the governor and legislative leadership.
- **The collaborative developed a competency-based nursing practice model for the state.** A 527-bed hospital agreed to implement the model on a pilot basis starting in 2003.
- **The collaborative helped update a state articulation model originally developed in 1992.** The model, which all nursing programs in the state agreed to follow, sets standards such as the maximum number of credit hours that can be required for a nursing degree.

AFTERWARD

The legislature appropriated no funds for the new Collaborating Center for Nursing, but in January 2003 Rutgers received a, \$712,213 grant from RWJF (ID# 045611) to support the center's first two years of operation. Also, the state Department of Human Services provided \$100,000 for the center's Web development, staff salaries and travel. Geri Dickson, PhD., RN, the center's executive director and formerly project director of the

Colleagues in Caring collaborative, plans to sustain the center by seeking state research grants and raising an endowment from private sources.

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Program area: Human Capital

APPENDIX

Other Contributors of Cash Support to the New Jersey 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

Fairleigh Dickinson University, \$15,000
Health Professionals and Allied Health Workers, \$1,000
Home Health Assembly of New Jersey, \$1,000
Medtronic Corporation, \$1,000
New Jersey Association of Baccalaureate and Higher Degree Programs in Nursing, \$3,000
New Jersey Association of Diploma Schools of Professional Nursing, \$1,000
New Jersey Association of Insurance Plans, \$5,000
New Jersey Council of Associate Degree Programs, \$2,000
New Jersey Hospital Association - Members, \$60,000
Nursing Spectrum, \$14,749
Organization of Nurse Executives of New Jersey, \$2,000
Seton Hall University College of Nursing, \$1,000
Sigma Theta Tau - Alpha Tau Chapter, \$1,000
Steering Committee members, \$1,000
University Health System - Members, \$83,333
VNA of Central Jersey Health Group, \$1,000

Phase Two

Association of BSN and Higher Degree Programs, \$1,000
Association of Diploma Schools of Professional Nursing, \$1,500
Atlantic Health System, \$12,000
CentraState Hospital and Medical Center, \$1,000
Chilton Memorial Hospital, \$1,000
Council of Associate Degree Programs, \$1,000
Englewood Hospital and Medical Center, \$4,000
Fairleigh Dickinson University, \$1,000
Hackensack University Medical Center, \$3,000
Helene Fuld Health Trust, \$99,026
Hunterdon Hospital and Medical Center, \$3,000
Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center, \$8,000
New Jersey Hospital Association, \$3,500
NJHA Forum, \$1,769
Robert Wood Johnson Medical Center, \$9,000
Rutgers College of Nursing, \$675
St. Barnabas Health Care System, \$6,000
St. Francis Medical Center - Trenton, \$1,000
University Health System, \$3,000
VNA of Central Jersey, \$2,000

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(Current as of date of the report; as provided by the grantee organization; not verified by RWJF; items not available from RWJF.)

Articles

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Dickson GL. "Nursing on the Other Side of the Millennium." *Nursing Spectrum* (New Jersey), 11A(16): 1–2, 1999.

Dickson GL and Sturges D. "Colleagues in Caring: A Template for Change." *Nursing Spectrum* (New Jersey), September 6, 1997.

Reports

Cadmus E, Dickson GL, Tuella C and Rice B. *New Jersey Colleagues in Caring: An Integrated Competency-Based Nursing Practice Model*. Newark, NJ: New Jersey Colleagues in Caring, 2001.

Grantee Websites

www.njccn.org. Includes data reports, policy papers and a schedule of upcoming events related to nursing in the New Jersey. Newark, NJ: New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing, 2003.

Presentations and Testimony

Geri L. Dickson, "Sharing a Vision: The Collaboration of Nurse Activists," at the Third Annual International Academic Conference on Collaboration, 1998, Canberra, Australia.

Geri L. Dickson, "Identifying the Gap between Supply and Demand of the Nursing Workforce for Today and Tomorrow," at the Second National Health Policy and Health Services Research Conference, 2000, New York.

Geri L. Dickson, "Forestalling a Nursing Shortage: Collaborating to Develop a Workforce Forecasting Model," at the Fourth Annual International Academic Collaborative Conference, 2000, Washington.

Geri L. Dickson, "An Emerging Public Health Crisis: A Nursing Shortage," at the Critical Care Physicians 23rd Annual Educational Symposium, 2001, New Brunswick, NJ.