



Mississippi Consortium Identifies and Prepares for State's Nursing Needs

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

SUMMARY

The [Mississippi Office of Nursing Workforce](#), a tax-exempt charitable organization under the auspices of the state Board of Nursing, created a model that forecasts annual vacancy rates for nurses in different care settings across the state.

From 1996 to 2002, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) supported the work through *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.

Key Results

The Office of Nursing Workforce accomplished the following results as reported to RWJF:

- Developed a statewide nursing manpower forecasting model and instituted an annual data collection, analysis and reporting process.
- Developed the Mississippi Competency Model, which defines different nursing roles and the core competencies within each role.

Funding

RWJF provided two grants totaling \$350,000 to support the project from July 1996 to June 2002.

THE PROBLEM

In 1984, about 25 Mississippi nursing groups founded the Nursing Organization Liaison Committee as a mechanism for collaborative action on professional issues.

In the mid-1990s, in response to nursing workforce concerns that included a continuing nursing shortage in the state's rural areas, the committee took two steps. It sought state

legislation to create a permanent organization to address nursing workforce issues and at the same time applied for *Colleagues in Caring* funding to support workforce data collection and planning activities.

In 1996, the legislature authorized creation of the Office of Nursing Workforce as a tax-exempt charitable organization under the auspices of the state Board of Nursing. The board contracted the Mississippi Hospital Association Health, Education and Research Foundation to be the new entity's fiscal agent, responsible for administering \$100,000 in state startup money and any other funding, private or public.

THE PROJECT

Combined with the state funds, the RWJF grants supported initiatives that the new office undertook in collaboration with the Nursing Organization Liaison Committee and other groups representing nurse educators, nurse employers and state health care regulators.

The main focus of the office (renamed the Office of Nursing Workforce in 2001) was developing a model to forecast the state's nursing workforce needs. Aided by consultants and collaborating Mississippi groups, the office staff followed a prototype model developed earlier by the California *Colleagues in Caring* consortium (see the [Program Results Report](#) on ID#s 029445 and 036961).

For data input, project personnel designed an employer survey that the Mississippi Department of Health distributed to acute care hospitals, long-term care facilities and home health agencies. The survey asked employers to provide the current number of budgeted full-time equivalent nursing positions and vacancies in their facilities and the number of positions that the facilities intended to have in the coming two years.

The survey covered registered nurses (RNs), licensed practical nurses (LPNs) and ancillary personnel. For supply data, the office used information that the state Board of Nursing collected from nurses in the regular relicensing process. The office also surveyed nursing education programs on anticipated enrollment changes.

In addition to the data work, the office supported various activities aimed at improving nursing education, including identifying appropriate skills and roles for nurses at each of four education levels: LPN; RN with an associate's degree; RN with a bachelor's degree and RN with a master's degree.

RESULTS

The Office of Nursing Workforce reported the following two major results during the RWJF-grant period:

- **The office and its collaborators developed a statewide nursing manpower forecasting model and instituted an annual data collection, analysis and reporting process.** The process provides a detailed breakdown of current and projected vacancy rates according to nursing level and care setting. For example, the 1999 report found that hospitals intended by 2001 to increase significantly their number of RNs with baccalaureate and master's degrees (by 5.4% and 10.4% respectively) while employment of RNs with a two-year associate's degree would go up by only 1.7 percent. The forecast results, which are disseminated to legislators and state health care planners, assist planning and provide evidence to back up funding requests for nursing workforce development initiatives. Also, the office tracks vacancy rates across Mississippi's nine public health districts, providing data on nursing workforce needs in different parts of the state. For example, the office reported that the 2002 hospital RN vacancy rate ranged from 1.8 percent in the state's southeast corner to 20 percent in the northwest.
- **The office and its collaborators developed the Mississippi Competency Model, which defines different nursing roles and the core competencies within each role.** The model helped to unify nursing education in the state and encouraged nursing schools to eliminate barriers that restrict nurses' advancement from one educational level to another. A survey of Mississippi nursing program administrators indicated that the model was a successful guide in shaping curriculum.

Communications

The Office of Nursing Workforce disseminates a detailed analysis of its data results in the annual *Mississippi State Health Plan*, a publication that reaches individuals responsible for state health care policy and planning. Also, office personnel made presentations to numerous Mississippi health-related groups and to two national meetings of *Colleagues in Caring* program participants. In 2003 the office developed a [website](#) that includes data reports, the competency model and other nursing workforce information. The office and its activities received coverage in Mississippi health care publications and general circulation newspapers, including the *Clarion-Ledger* in Jackson and the *Vicksburg Post*. (See the [Bibliography](#) for details about products of the grants.)

AFTERWARD

The Office of Nursing Workforce continues to receive and process nursing workforce data returns annually from some 300 sources, and also has expanded into other activities. Through the Mississippi Development Authority, it received a federal grant to develop a high school nurse mentorship program and another to help reduce the state's nursing

school dropout rate. Also, the office developed—and plans to market—a survey tool to assess the workforce environment in hospitals. In both 2002 and 2003 the state legislature provided \$100,000 in additional state funds to support the office.

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Program area: Human Capital

APPENDIX

Other Cash and In-Kind Contributors to the Mississippi Office of Nursing Workforce During the RWJF Grant Period

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

Community College Network
Deans and Directors of Schools of Nursing Council
Eliza Pillars RN State Association
Hinds Community College
Mississippi Association of Student Nurses
Mississippi Board of Nursing
Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning
Mississippi Department of Economic and Community Development
Mississippi Department of Health
Mississippi Hospital Health, Education and Research Foundation
Mississippi Nurses Association
Mississippi Organization of Associate Degree Nurses
Mississippi Organization of Nurse Executives
Nursing Organization Liaison Committee
State of Mississippi

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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.)

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Hewlett PO. "Conceptualizing Nursing Work-Force Redevelopment." *Journal of Nursing Administration*, 29(10): 8–10, 29, 1999.

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Reports

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Presentations and Testimony

Peggy Hewlett, "Influencing Nursing Policy, Planning and Practice through Coalition Building," at the American Nurses Association National Convention, June 1998, San Diego.

Grantee Websites

www.monw.org. Provides data on Mississippi's nursing workforce and additional information related to nursing in the state. Jackson, MS: Mississippi Office of Nursing Workforce, 2003.