

Center for Health Workforce Planning

Issue Brief: The Role of Data Collection in Projecting Iowa's Nursing Assistive Personnel Workforce

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the following occupations will experience the greatest job growth through 2010: registered nurses, certified nursing aides (CNAs), orderlies and attendants, home health aides (HHAs), medical assistants, and personal and home care aides. Planning a workforce that includes competent, diverse HHA and CNA personnel is timely. The Bureau of Labor statistics projects that HHAs and CNAs will show large numerical and percent increases in employment through 2010. In 2002, the Center for Health Workforce Studies surveyed all U.S. states and the District of Columbia to assess healthcare workforce shortages. A majority of respondents reported shortages of HHAs and CNAs.

Current, comprehensive data is required to make accurate projections. The complexity of the health workforce poses challenges to systematic data collection. Identified barriers to projecting workforce demand for HHAs and CNAs related to data collection and analysis include:

- Lack of information and consensus about the dynamics of shortages.
- Lack of comparable data related to types of workers and work settings collected by national and state agencies.
- Lack of information about certified workers.
- Lack of supply and demand data at the local and regional levels.
- Infrequent reporting.
- Delayed public access to data.
- Lengthy data collection and verification processes.
- Bias related to self-reporting by health facilities.

Gaps in data collection have been documented regarding the number of HHAs and CNAs who are actively employed, working in nursing homes, home health agencies or other settings, simultaneously employed in two or more work settings and enrolled in training programs. Gaps in data collection of training programs include: number of applicants, number of enrolled students, attrition, and graduates who do not apply for certification. Organizations have different needs for data and use data for different purposes, including:



- Recruitment and retention of students in CNA/HHA training programs and career ladder programs.
- Recruitment and retention of CNAs and HHAs as direct care workers in nursing facilities and home health agencies.
- Understanding the impact of current and projected supply and demand on client care related to quality, access, reimbursement, utilization and cost.

Two primary sources of data about nursing assistive personnel are the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals, Nursing Assistant Registry (NAR) and the Iowa CareGivers Association (ICA). The NAR includes information about nursing assistant certification status and employment. In 2003/2004 the NAR will be restructured to improve and expand data collection, and expedite entry of qualified CNAs into the health workforce. The Iowa CareGivers Association (ICA) is Iowa's first independent statewide association devoted to identifying the needs of direct care workers. In addition to fostering partnerships with workers, providers, consumers, advocates, policy makers, labor and educators, ICA carries out data collection about direct care workers and their employers. Research to date includes: CNA Recruitment and Retention Pilot Project, Iowa CNA wages and benefits survey, long term care facility administrators survey, CNA mentors and mentees survey, and Iowa CNA expired certification study.

Actions Recommended by the Center for Health Workforce Planning in 2003/2004

1. Support existing data collection initiatives in Iowa.
2. Address gaps in data collection identified at the national and state level.
3. Develop a strategic plan for systematic data collection about nursing assistive personnel in Iowa.
4. Invest in databases that support health workforce projections.
5. Promote data sharing and sourcing among public and private agencies.
6. Explore new regional data collection and cost sharing initiatives.
7. Utilize data to develop policies that:
 - Improve the quality of client care in all settings.
 - Increase access to appropriate levels of care.
 - Predict workforce demand for nursing assistive personnel.

The Center for Health Workforce Planning was created in the Iowa Department of Public Health, Bureau of Health Care Access, to assess and forecast health workforce supply and demand, address barriers to recruitment and retention, support strategies developed at the local level that prevent shortages, and engage in activities that assure a competent, diverse health workforce in Iowa. Funding for the center, fueled through the efforts of U.S. Senator Tom Harkin, is administered through the Bureau of Health Professions, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.