

Maine's Long Term Care Workforce

**A Special
Report**

*Examining The Implications
of a Growing Labor
Shortage On Access
to Long Term Care*

Prepared by the Maine Hospital Association

October 2001

Key Facts and Findings

- In the past year, the vacancy rate for nursing home Registered Nurses (RNs) has increased 71%. Today, 18.6% of nursing positions are unfilled. The incidence of these vacancies is widespread: 90% of respondents are coping with RN vacancies.
- Unfilled Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) positions rose 45% in this same time period to a current vacancy rate of 13.1%. 75% of the nursing homes reported having CNA vacancies.
- More than a third of respondents have had to resort to temporary staffing agencies, or travelers, to fill vacant RN and CNA positions in their nursing facilities. In 2000, the incidence of Maine's contract labor usage was nearly twice the national average for both RNs and CNAs.
- 50% of nurses in long term care are ages 50 or older.
- Maine's population is aging more rapidly than the rest of the nation; the population of those 85 and older is expected to grow 26% between 2000 and 2015.

- The shortage of direct care staff is having a direct impact on access to long term care: 15% have developed waiting lists for admissions and 55% report that the staff shortage is exacerbating the paperwork burden placed on direct care providers.

Executive Summary

Maine's non-profit community hospitals operate 19 free-standing nursing homes and 9 hospital based nursing homes representing 20% of the licensed beds in the state. These long term care affiliates play a vital role in the state's healthcare infrastructure and their affiliation with Maine's hospitals allows for an easy integration of a continuum of care.

Given an aging population, advances in technology and the ability of nursing homes' to provide higher levels of skilled restorative and rehabilitative care, Maine has seen an increase in the medical acuity and care needs of nursing home residents. Even while total discharges from hospitals to nursing homes have remained relatively unchanged, admissions to

skilled care have doubled in the last five years. And with the rising prevalence of dementia, in particular Alzheimer's disease, the care demands in intermediate care facilities have also increased. Now more than ever nursing homes play a vital role in our health care infrastructure.

But today's healthcare workforce shortage threatens the ongoing viability of Maine's nursing homes. In an effort to understand the severity of this shortage, the Maine Hospital Association surveyed its member long term care facilities. These survey results tell an important statewide story for our member nursing homes are geographically dispersed and paint a picture of the workforce challenges experienced throughout Maine. Our nursing homes are proud of the quality care they deliver to residents each and every day. To ensure that we may maintain our commitment to delivering the highest quality of care to our nursing home residents, steps must be taken now to address the current workforce shortage.

Caring For Maine People In The Years To Come

The practice of long term care has changed in recent years. In part due to medical and technological advances, and in part due to regulatory changes, today's direct care workers in nursing homes are now caring for a more medically acute population. The shifting trend of discharges from hospitals to nursing homes supports this picture of rising acuity: from 1995 to 2000, the number of patients discharged to skilled nursing facilities more than doubled.

In addition to the increasing complexity of care provided in our nursing homes, the number of individuals likely to need this level of care is rising. Over the next 15 years Maine will see a 26% increase in people 85 and older. And our workforce is also aging: half of our nursing facility RNs is older than fifty.

The combination of increasing medical complexity of our patients, an aging population, and an aging workforce make the increasing vacancy rates among direct caregivers an even more pressing concern.

A new survey completed by the Maine Hospital Association in October, 2001 documents that vacancy rates among direct care workers in

long term care have increased dramatically in the past year.

Wanted: Direct Care Staff

Results from the MHA survey show that the vacancy rate for RNs has increased by 71%, from 10.9% a year ago to its current level of 18.6%. The Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) vacancy rate tripled in this same time period, going from 5.0% to 15.1%. Vacancy rates for Certified Nursing Assistants also shot up from 9.0% to 13.1%, for a 45% increase in positions not filled. Nearly every respondent, 90%, reported a vacancy in direct care.

The majority of respondents identified that direct care staff shortages are having an immediate impact on access to care, either through a reduction in the numbers of beds staffed, the development of admissions' waiting lists, or because the shortages have in turn increased the burdens of regulatory compliance and documentation.

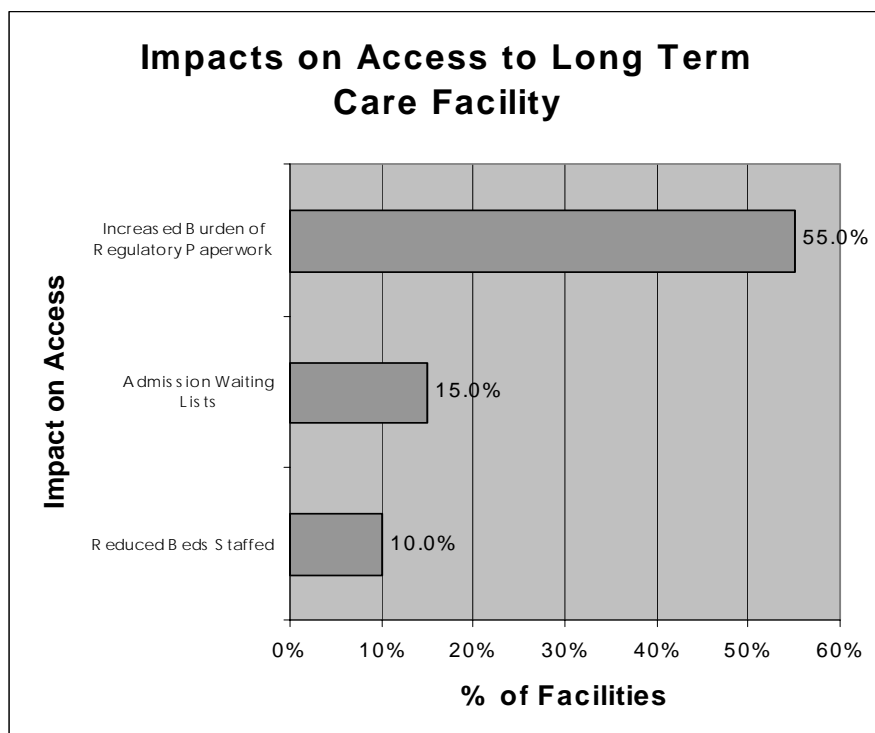
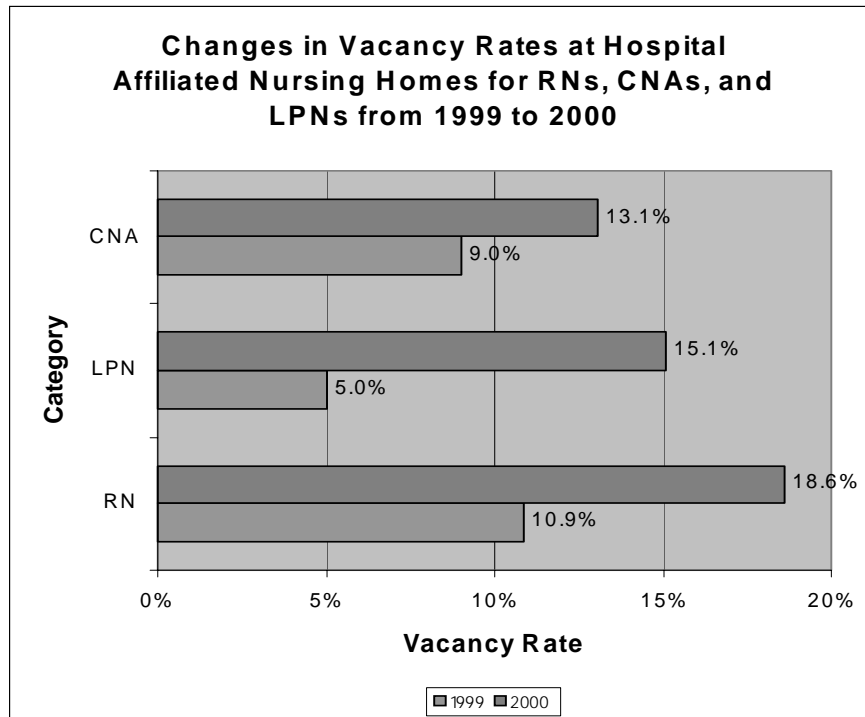
Challenges to Addressing the Workforce Shortage

Financial: Increased wages alone cannot reverse the shortage, but the inability to offer competitive compensation handicaps recruitment and retention. Two-thirds of

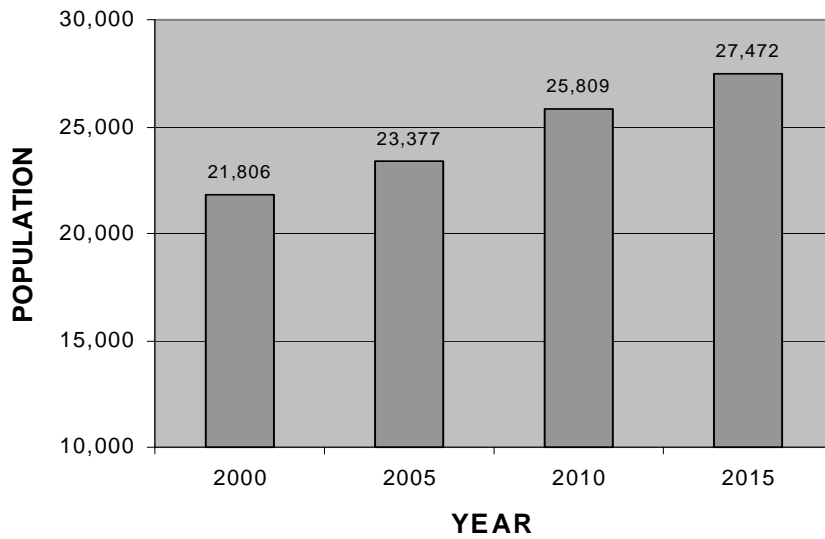
nursing home costs are labor costs and Medicaid pays for three out of four nursing home patient days in Maine. But because of caps on direct care reimbursement, payments fall far short of the costs of care. In 1999, \$9.3 million of allowable direct care costs for Medicaid patients went unfunded. Medicaid payments continue to erode over time even as direct care costs rise; the average rate of wage inflation for health care facilities was 7.3% last year which certainly outpaces the annual 3% adjustment in the Medicaid budget. This widening shortfall directly restricts wage rates.

Regulatory: With more than a half hour of paperwork necessary for every hour of direct care provided, it is no wonder that 55% of nursing homes link an increasing regulatory burden with the workforce shortage. And according to nursing educators, most nursing attrition from long term care is caused by these increasing paperwork demands. While appropriate care planning is essential to good care, the level of documentation now required for Medicaid and Medicare payments is driving good caregivers from the bedside.

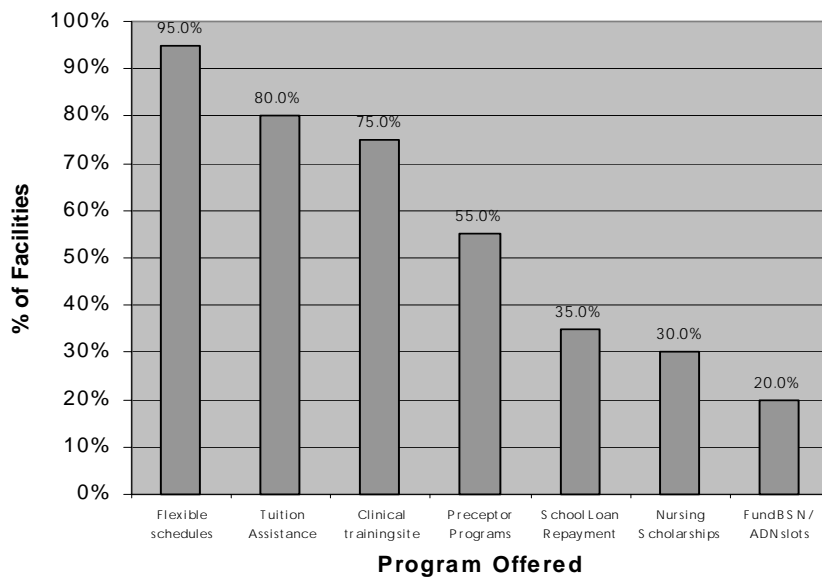
A Profile of Maine's Long Term Care Health Professions



Maine's Population Age 85 and Older Will Grow 26% by 2015



How Hospital Affiliated Nursing Homes Are Focusing Recruitment and Retention Efforts



Responding to the Shortage

Maine's community hospitals provide continuing care as part of an array of services designed to meet their communities' needs. From home health, to assisted living to nursing home care, these all comprise a vital part of our hospitals' missions and of our state's health care infrastructure. In addition, these affiliations provide an increased continuity of care, easing the transition across settings for appropriate patient care.

MHA member hospitals operate 28 hospital-affiliated nursing facilities including both hospital-based and freestanding homes. Dually certified for both Medicaid and Medicare, they provide both skilled nursing facility level care for short-term rehabilitation and long term nursing facility care. They have increasingly turned to serve the needs of those with dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Our member nursing facilities care for a more medically acute population than found in most other states. To meet these needs, our staffing levels have far exceeded national averages. To continue to meet these needs we are working to address the current workforce shortage.

MHA's Statewide Workforce Initiative

The Maine Hospital Association is working to address shortages of healthcare workers. MHA believes that a multi-year effort is necessary to adequately address a variety of issues related to education and practice. Based on survey findings and other supporting data, the Association is taking action in three key areas:

Education and Training

- Promoting dialog with nursing organizations and nurse educators on the role of the nurse now and in the future. Related discussions are underway concerning changes to nursing curriculum that may be necessary to prepare nurses for practice in a variety of settings.
- Developing a leadership series for managers to support them in their roles.
- Exploring opportunities for expanding clinical preceptorship programs, which are a highly valued learning experience.
- Developing an approach to improve access to nursing programs for qualified applicants.

Recruitment and Retention

- Identifying, assembling and distributing Information about best practices that contribute to loyalty, commitment and respect within organizations.
- Evaluating and addressing regulatory burdens that reduce satisfaction in the workplace.
- Developing materials that promote work and lifestyle opportunities in Maine to help attract healthcare workers to the state.

Health Careers Promotion

- Developing a multi-media program aimed at increasing the numbers of men and women considering health careers.
- Advocating for a reliable and sustainable healthcare workforce database to assist in workforce planning.
- Seeking support from educators and guidance counselors to assure that students considering health careers are adequately prepared in the sciences and math.

Maine's Continuing Care Operations

The Aroostook Medical Center
Aroostook Home Care Agency
Aroostook Health Center Division

Blue Hill Memorial Hospital
Hancock County HomeCare

Calais Regional Hospital
Calais Regional Hospital Home
Health
Hospital based long term care

Central Maine Medical Center
Bolster Heights Residential Care

**Charles A. Dean Memorial
Hospital & Nursing Home**
Hospital based long term care

Down East Comm. Hospital
Sunrise Care Facility

Eastern Maine Medical Center
Bangor Area Visiting Nurses
Colonial Health Care
Dexter Health Care
Ross Division Skilled Nursing
Ross Manor
Stillwater Health Care

Goodall Hospital
Newton Center for Rehabilitation
& Nursing Care
Hillcrest Gardens
Mountain View Acres
The Pavilion
Mayflower Place

Houlton Regional Hospital
Hospital based long term care

Inland Hospital
Inland HomeCare
Lakewood Continuing Care Ctr.

Maine Coast Mem. Hospital
Hospital based long term care

MaineGeneral Medical Center
HealthReach Home Care &
Hospice
MaineGeneral Rehab.& Nursing
Care at Glenridge
MaineGeneral Rehab. & Nursing
Care at Gray Birch
Jackman Regional Health Center
Alzheimer's Care Center
The Residence at Gray Birch
The Inn at City Hall
Granite Hill Estates

Maine Medical Center
Community Health Services

Mercy Hospital
VNA HomeHealth Care

Mid Coast Hospital
CHANS Home Health Care
Bodwell Subacute Rehab. Unit
Mere Point Center for Nursing
and Rehab.
Thornton Oaks

Miles Memorial Hospital
Miles Home Health and Hospice
Cove's Edge Nursing Facility
Chase Point at Riverside

Mount Desert Island Hospital
Birch Bay Village

**Northern Maine Medical
Center**
Forest Hill Manor

Penobscot Bay Medical Center
Kno-Wal-Lin Home Health Care
Camden Health Care Center
Knox Center for Long term Care
Camden HealthCare Center
Quarry Hill Retirement Community

Penobscot Valley Hospital
Hospital based long term care

Rumford Hospital
Rumford Community Home

St. Andrews Hospital
St. Andrews Home Health Agency
St. Andrews Healthcare Center,
Gregory Wing
Inn at St. Andrews Village
St. Andrews Village

St. Joseph Hospital
Home Health and Hospice of
St. Joseph

**St. Mary's Regional Medical
Center**
St. Marguerite d'Youville Pavilion

Sebasticook Valley Hospital
SVH Care @ Home

**Southern Maine Medical
Center**
Southern Maine Health and
Homecare Services

Stephens Memorial Hospital
·Stephens Memorial Home Care
Market Square Health Care Center

York Hospital
York Hospital Home Care
Hospital based long term care



Maine Hospital Association

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