

Nursing Workforce in Oklahoma

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The nursing workforce constitutes a large percentage of the health workforce in Oklahoma. According to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, Oklahoma has 56,000 Registered Nurses (RNs), 18,000 Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) and 3,572 Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs). However, with a ratio of 700 RNS per 100,000 populations, Oklahoma ranks well below the national average of 1,150 per 100,000¹.

There are multiple entry points into the nursing profession in Oklahoma. Nurses may seek practical nursing training from career technology centers or registered nursing education from institutions of higher learning. Career technology centers offer a one year certificate of completion for practical nursing while higher education institutions provide the opportunity to earn degrees that range from Associates, Bachelors, Master of Science in Nursing, Doctor of Nursing Practice and Doctorate of Philosophy Degrees in Nursing for registered nurses.

Depending on the type of education, nurses can also work in a variety of practice settings. While most nurses in the workforce provide direct patient care, a large percentage are employed as patient educators or serve in administrative roles such as a case manager, nurse manager, quality assurance, or nurse administrator. Nurses may serve in private or public sectors, including service in the National Public Health Service Corps.

Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) choose a specialty focus. Areas of focus include Certified Nursing Practitioner (CNP), Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS), Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) and/or a Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM). According to the Oklahoma Board of Nursing, Oklahoma currently has 2,517 Certified Nurse Practitioners (CNP), 713 Clinical Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNAs), 277 Certified Nurse Specialist (CNS), 65 Certified Nurse Midwives (CNMs). Of these, 2,169 CNPs, 443 CRNAs, 182 CNSs and 50 CNMs have prescriptive authority². Oklahoma is a restricted practice state for APRNs, thus, the impact of the APRN profession on Oklahoma's health system may be limited compared to other states with less restrictive practice environments.

The Health Care Workforce Subcommittee of the Governor's Council on Workforce and Economic Development has produced an initial report describing the Oklahoma nursing workforce, their competencies, scopes of practice, number of professional licenses and the workforce distribution. The Subcommittee is currently developing recommendations to address barriers to ensuring an adequate supply of nurses is available to meet the demands of Oklahoma's healthcare industry and the needs of the population. An issue brief detailing recommendations is currently on target for a 2018 release.

¹ National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2017). *Journal of Nursing Regulation: The 2017 Environmental Scan*. Retrieved from https://www.ncsbn.org/2017_Environmental_Scan.pdf

² Oklahoma Board of Nursing, 2017

