

## Utah Nursing Consortium

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# UTAH NEEDS NURSES

### Healing Utah's Nursing Gap

It's no secret that Utah's population is growing, aging and become more chronically ill. Our need for nurses is particularly acute because we have the fastest-growing elderly population, the youngest population, and the lowest death rate in the country.<sup>1</sup> In other words, we live a long time, love our families and cherish being one of the healthiest states in the nation.<sup>2</sup>

And yet, Utah has one of the highest age-adjusted suicide rates in the U.S. and has the seventh-highest rate of alcohol poisoning deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Over 25 percent of the population has obesity or has been told they have high blood pressure. The number of people with diabetes continues to rise each year.<sup>3</sup>

This is a perfect storm to drive demand for nursing care.

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"Utah's experiencing some of the largest demographic growth for individuals over age 65, particularly in the arena of 85 plus. We have severe shortages to address the needs of declining health that come with the aging process. We will experience probably a greater degree of that in the state of Utah than almost anywhere in our country because of our demographic shift."

◆ **ROB ENCE**

*Executive Director, Utah Commission on Aging*

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## Why Should I Care?

**1,200**

Utah's health care employers report over 1,200 vacancies for RN positions.

**1,000**

Utah's public and nonprofit colleges and universities turn away over 1,000 qualified applicants to their programs every year.

**\$67,000**

The median annual income for a registered nurse is \$67,000 per year.

**48%**

Utah's nurses are aging—48% of the workforce is over the age of 45.<sup>4,5</sup>

Nurses have a major positive impact on the health of the general population. A recent study showed that counties with higher RN-to-population ratios are healthier, with lower reports of poor health, and higher participation in healthcare prevention activities.<sup>6</sup>

Utah cannot 'recruit' its way out of this workforce issue. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that there will be 1.2 million unfilled nursing positions nationwide by 2022. Several surrounding Intermountain states already are being impacted by these shortages.<sup>5</sup>

"If we do nothing and don't expand the number of nurses that are available for the roles that we need in healthcare, it could leave a big deficit in the community and we'll continue to be in a reactive mode and a disease management mode versus a health and wellness promotion mode."

◆ **KIM HENRICHSEN**

*Senior Vice President and Chief Nursing Executive, Intermountain Healthcare*

## What Can Be Done About It?

To start, we can educate more nurses each year. The Utah Nursing Consortium is a collaboration of 10 publicly funded and nonprofit nursing education programs, health care industry partners and concerned community members. These 10 schools educate over 80 percent of Utah's nursing workforce, graduating nearly 1,400 of the 1,600 registered nurses educated each year in our state. The mission of the Consortium is to increase the number of new RNs licensed in Utah each year to meet market demands and continue Utah's legacy of high-quality, cost-effective healthcare.

Your support of the Consortium's legislative request also will go a long way.

For every \$3 million invested in nursing education, 100 additional registered nurses will enter the workforce.

**That's a start. Tell your legislator you want to make sure a nurse is there to care for you, your family and your employees.**



**TERESA GARRETT**

*Project Director, Utah Nursing Consortium*  
teresa.garrett@nurs.utah.edu

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