COLORADO CENTER
for Nursing Excellence

A Snapshot of Colorado's Nursing Workforce

## A Nursing Workforce Survey of Major Colorado Healthcare Employers

May 2017

Colorado's Nursing Workforce
A Survey of Employers

Summary. From October 2015 to July 2016, the Center distributed and received nursing workforce survey responses from 19 employers, collectively employing 21,639 registered nurses. 97% of these RNs are employed by eight major employers/medical systems. Assuming that 85% of licensed nurses are working, this nursing population represents 40% of Colorado's employed 53,720 nurses.[1] Below is a summary of the responses.

1. Of the total 21,639 RNs described in the survey:
   a. Part-time: 34% (5,483)
   b. Full-time: 66% (16,156)
   c. Per Diem: 12% (2,556)
   d. Travel Nurses: 3% (554)

RNs by Education Level
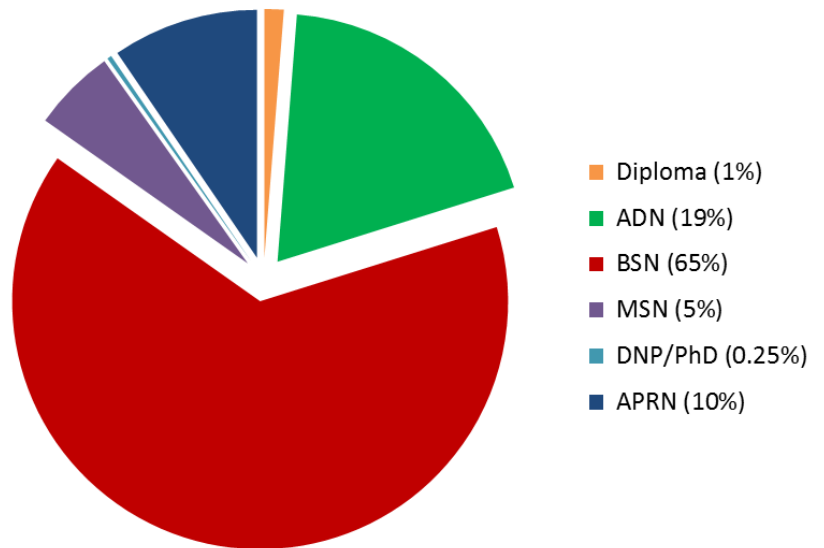
2. Education Levels for 16,575 RNs
   a. BSN 65% (10,710)
   b. ADN: 19% (3,315)
   c. MSN: 5% (896)
   d. Diploma: 1% (207)
   e. APRN: 10% (1,579)
   f. DNP/PhD: 48

- Diploma (1%)
- ADN (19%)
- BSN (65%)
- MSN (5%)
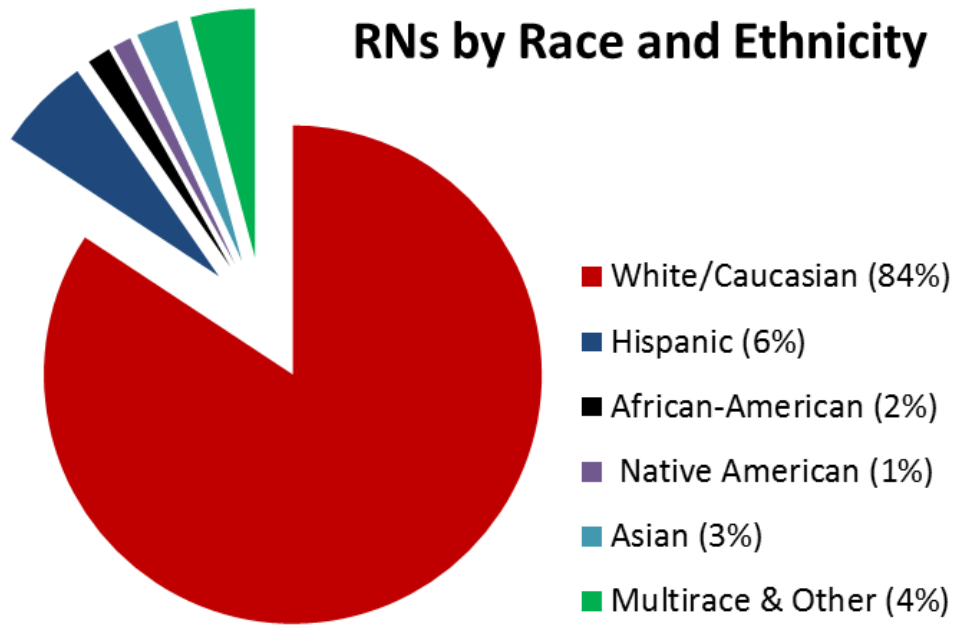- DNP/PhD (0.25%)
- APRN (10%)

3. New hiring and turnover
   a. Employers were recruiting for 2,047 new RN positions, of which 1,744 were full-time positions.
   b. Over the previous 12 months:
      i. 2,934 (14%) new RN positions were created.
      ii. 3,375 (16%) RNs separated from their organization
      iii. The average RN position vacancy rate was 12%
   c. Over the coming 12 months, respondents indicated that they would create 424 new RN positions (2%).

4. Race and Ethnicity data was received for 12,793 nurses
   a. 85% are white or Caucasian

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[1] HRSA estimates that historically 85% of licensed nurses are employed; license data does not indicate if nurses are employed or not. Total Colorado current RN licenses are 63,200; 85% of that suggests 53,720 working RNs.

b. 6% are Hispanic or Latino
c. 3% are Asian
d. 2% are African-American
e. 4% are multi-race and other
f. <1% (154) are Native American

RNs by Race and Ethnicity

- White/Caucasian (84%)
- Hispanic (6%)
- African-American (2%)
- Native American (1%)
- Asian (3%)
- Multirace & Other (4%)

Detailed Analysis

Workforce Diversity. There is no available information on the ethnic and racial diversity of Colorado's nursing workforce for the Board of Nursing has chosen to not collect that information. For that reason, this employer survey was particularly revealing. As the table below indicates, RN ethnic demographics are significantly out of step with that of the state.

	Colorado State Population[2]	Nursing Workforce[3]
White, non-Hispanic	69.0%	84%
Hispanic Origin	22.3%	6%
Black, non-Hispanic	4.1%	2%
Asian/PI, non-Hispanic	3.6%	3%
Am. Indian, non-Hispanic, other	1.0%	5%

Education. With the support of employers and schools of nursing, the education profile of Colorado's nursing workforce is slowly but steadily changing. Of the nurses covered by the survey respondents, a significant majority have BSN or greater degrees. It is likely that this is not representative of the state RN population, for the respondents are primarily urban and large medical systems in character. Anecdotal information indicates that nurses from rural communities and smaller institutions have a greater percent of ADN degrees.

Nursing Workforce Survey Respondents [4]	
BSN	65% (10,710)
ADN	19% (3,315)
MSN	5% (896)
Diploma	1% (207)
APRN	10% (1,579)
DNP/PhD	0.25% (48)

New Hiring and Turnover. With a vacancy rate of 12% and a separation rate of 16%, the data support the general perception that there is substantial turnover in the nursing workforce. New hiring continues to be very strong, with survey respondents indicating that as of the survey data they were recruiting for 2,047 new RN positions, of which 1,744 were full-time positions. This number is significantly less than the RN job online posting count of 5,392 in March 2017.

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[2] From the Colorado State Demography Office, 2015 estimated data.
[3] Data from this employer survey, based on data for 12,793 nurses.
[4] Data from this employer survey, based on data for 16,575 nurses.

Consistent with IOM recommendation #8 ("Build an infrastructure for the collection and analysis of interprofessional health care workforce data"), the purpose of this survey is to create baseline data against which to measure future RN workforce changes. Given the changes in healthcare, the lack of RN workforce data is an increasingly serious issue.

Despite the importance of Colorado's 60,000 registered nurses to healthcare delivery, we know relatively little about this workforce. The State discontinued in 2009 its survey of RN job openings. The last organized survey (of 1500 nurses) was by the Colorado Health Institute in 2008. While DORA has the potential to collect more data via the licensing process, many of their data fields are optional and so the response rate is often very low and even then key issues such as job openings or diversity are not covered.

Directly surveying RNs via mail-in surveys is prohibitively expensive and email addresses are not available. Our only effective option available is to contact nursing leaders (you!) and request information on your nursing workforce. To be useful, we need the largest number of responses. In short, we need your help!

There are three sections to this 11-question survey: (1) Overview and New Nurse Hiring Information; (2) Ethnic and Racial Diversity; (3) Career Development and Leadership. No individual responses will be shared; only summary data will be released. Rough estimates are OK if exact numbers are not known. If information is only available annually, use 12/31/2015 as the relevant point in time (or 12/31/2014 if 2015 data is not yet available). Thanks for your time and assistance!

1. Facility or Organization Information

Facility/organization name	
Are you part of larger network? If so, please describe.	
Please list entities covered by survey	

2. Current and Future RN Employment and Hiring Activity

Number of employed full-time nurses

Number of employed part-time positions

Number of positions being currently recruited for (full time)

Number of positions being currently recruited for (part-time)

Number of estimated new RN positions to be created over PAST 12 months

Number of estimated new RN positions to be created over NEXT 12 months

Number of separations (RNs leaving the facility) during last 12 months

Average RN vacancy rate over past 12 months

Number of per diem RNs currently utilized

Number of agency/travel RNs currently utilized

3. Any Additional Comments or Qualifications about Data Entered Above

4. RN Educational Profile: Highest Degree Completed

Number of nurses with Diploma

Number of nurses with ADN Degree

Number of nurses with BSN Degree

Number of nurses with MSN Degree

Number of nurses with APRN License

Number of nurses with DNP/PhD Degree

Other/Comment

5. What Policies Does Your Organization Have Related to Hiring New Nurses? (check all that apply)

- [ ] BS required
- [ ] BS preferred
- [ ] Must obtain BS within X years
- [ ] Only valid RN license required

Additional information

6. Full-time Employed RNs by Ethnic and Racial Characteristics (by Number)

White

[   ]

Hispanic / Latino

[   ]

African-American

[   ]

Native American

[   ]

Asian

[   ]

Multirace

[   ]

Other

[   ]

(Total N of full-time employed used, for reference)

[   ]

7. Full-time Employed RNs by Ethnic and Racial Characteristics (by Percent)

White

[ ]

Hispanic / Latino

[ ]

African-American

[ ]

Native American

[ ]

Asian

[ ]

Multirace

[ ]

(Total N of full-time employed used, for reference)

[ ]

Other

[ ]

8. Does your facility/system provide any of the following? Please check all that apply

	Yes	No
Financial/tuition support for ADN to BSN degree	○	○
Financial/tuition support for BSN to MSN degree	○	○
Financial/tuition support for Doctoral degree	○	○
Support for CE/Lifelong learning	○	○
Financial support for certification	○	○
Nurse residency program	○	○
New nurse orientation program (note length below)	○	○
Pay differential for advanced academic degrees	○	○

Additional comments/type of support details

[ ]

RN Position-Specific Questions

Your answer to the following question will route you to a distinct list of RN job descriptions, so that (for example) hospital respondents don't have to answer questions about long term care or public health RN positions.

9. Type of Employer/Healthcare Provider

☐ General Hospital - Acute Care

☐ Ambulatory Care/MD Office/Clinic/Rural Clinic/FQHC

☐ Longterm/Home Healthcare

☐ Public Health

☐ Critical Access Hospital

☐ Multiple Types of Healthcare (e.g. Acute Care plus Long Term Care)

General Hospital - Acute Care Hiring Information

10. Which RN Positions Were The Most Difficult To Fill In the Last 12 Months? (please rank most to least)

	No difficulty filling RN positions	☐ N/A
	Emergency Dept	☐ N/A
	General Med Surg	☐ N/A
	Education/Quality/Infection Control	☐ N/A
	ICU/CCU	☐ N/A
	Labor and Delivery	☐ N/A
	Operating Room	☐ N/A
	APRN	☐ N/A
	Other	☐ N/A

11. Additional information or comments

* 12. For followup purposes, please provide your contact information.

Name

Organization

Position/Title

City

County

Email Address

2015-2016 Nurse Employer Survey

Ambulatory Care Hiring Information

13. Which Ambulatory Care RN Positions Were Most Difficult To Fill In Last 12 Months? (please rank most to least)

[ ]	No difficulty hiring RNs	☐ N/A
[ ]	Administration	☐ N/A
[ ]	Case Manager	☐ N/A
[ ]	Education/Quality/Infection Control	☐ N/A
[ ]	Grant/program leader	☐ N/A
[ ]	Nurse Practitioner	☐ N/A
[ ]	RN/Staff Nurse	☐ N/A
[ ]	Team Leader/Manager	☐ N/A
[ ]	Triage	☐ N/A
[ ]	Other	☐ N/A

14. Additional information or comments

* 15. For followup purposes, please provide your contact information.

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County

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2015-2016 Nurse Employer Survey

Longterm Care and Home Healthcare Hiring Information

16. Which Long Term Care or Home Health Care RN Positions Were Most Difficult To Fill In Last 12 Months? (please rank most to least)

[ ]	No difficulty hiring RNs	☐ N/A
[ ]	Administration	☐ N/A
[ ]	Infection Control	☐ N/A
[ ]	Pediatrics	☐ N/A
[ ]	Staff RN	☐ N/A
[ ]	Team Manager/Supervisor	☐ N/A
[ ]	Telehealth	☐ N/A
[ ]	Wound Care	☐ N/A
[ ]	Other	☐ N/A

17. Additional information or comments

* 18. For followup purposes, please provide your contact information.

Name

Organization

Position/Title

City

County

Email Address

19. Which Public Health Positions Were Most Difficult To Fill In Last 12 Months? (please rank most to least)

	No difficulty hiring RNs	☐ N/A
	Public Health Nurse	☐ N/A
	Public Health Nurse: Mid-level manager	☐ N/A
	Public Health Nurse: Director level	☐ N/A
	Other	☐ N/A

20. Additional information or comments

* 21. For followup purposes, please provide your contact information.

Name

Organization

Position/Title

City

County

Email Address

2015-2016 Nurse Employer Survey

Critical Access Hospital

22. Which RN Positions Were The Most Difficult To Fill In the Last 12 Months? (please rank most to least)

	No difficulty filling RN positions	☐ N/A
	Emergency Room	☐ N/A
	Nurse Managers	☐ N/A
	General Med Surg	☐ N/A
	APRN	☐ N/A
	Other	☐ N/A

23. Do you feel there are practice benefits to having BSN nurses over those with associate degrees? If so, what are those benefits?

24. If you've tried to recruit BSNs how successful have you been?

◯ Yes, we've successfully recruited at least one BSN.

◯ No, we've posted for BSN's but have been unsuccessful in our recruitment leading to hiring an associate level RN.

◯ We have not shown preference for BSNs over associate's level RNs.

Other (please specify)

25. What are the current barriers in practice for RNs? Note that this excludes APRNs. Answer all that apply; please elaborate in the following text box.

☐ Yes, there are barriers for the practice of your nurses based on geographic factors? (i.e. lack of frequency of certain procedures due to few cases, difficulty providing time off)

☐ Yes, there are barriers for the practice of your nurses based on lack of diversity? (i.e. communication barriers)

☐ Yes, there are practice barriers for nurses based on limited scope of practice for associate level RNs?

☐ Yes, there are barriers for the scope of practice based on the education level of your nurses?

Other (please specify)

26. Additional information or comments for previous question.

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* 27. For followup purposes, please provide your contact information.

Name	
Organization	
Position/Title	
City	
County	
Email Address	

28. If you were able to eliminate a nursing barrier or challenge, what would that be?

What are the barriers to allowing your nurses to obtain advanced degrees?

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2015-2016 Nurse Employer Survey

Multi-sector Healthcare Providers

This section is for institutions or systems that are in multiple types of healthcare provision, e.g., an oganization/survey respondent that includes a hospital plus long term care plus clinics.

Given that this list of possible RN positions covers multiple types of healthcare organization, this is a long list of RN positions (sorry for the length!). Positions are listed by type of healthcare organization.

29. Which RN Positions Were The Most Difficult To Fill In the Last 12 Months? (please rank most to least)

	No difficulty filling RN positions	☐ N/A
	Next section is for Hospital Positions	☐ N/A
	Emergency Dept	☐ N/A

	General Med Surg	☐ N/A
	Education/Quality/Infection Control	☐ N/A
	ICU/CCU	☐ N/A
	Labor and Delivery	☐ N/A
	Operating Room	☐ N/A
	APRN	☐ N/A
	Other Acute Care	☐ N/A
	Next section is for Ambulatory Care positions	☐ N/A
	Administration	☐ N/A
	Case Manager	☐ N/A
	Education/Quality/Infection Control	☐ N/A
	Grant/program leader	☐ N/A
	Nurse Practitioner	☐ N/A
	RN/Staff Nurse	☐ N/A
	Team Leader/Manager	☐ N/A
	Triage	☐ N/A
	Other Ambulatory Care	☐ N/A
	Next section is for Long Term Care Or Home Healthcare Positions	☐ N/A
	Administration	☐ N/A
	Infection Control	☐ N/A
	Pediatrics	☐ N/A
	Staff RN	☐ N/A

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[____]	Team Manager/Supervisor	☐ N/A
[____]	Telehealth	☐ N/A
[____]	Wound Care	☐ N/A
[____]	Other LTC/HHC	☐ N/A
[____]	Next Section is for Public Health Positions	☐ N/A
[____]	Public Health Nurse	☐ N/A
[____]	Public Health Nurse: Midlevel	☐ N/A
[____]	manager	☐ N/A
[____]	Public Health Nurse: Director level	☐ N/A
[____]	Other Public Health	☐ N/A
[____]	Next section is for Critical Access Hospital Positions	☐ N/A
[____]	Emergency Room	☐ N/A
[____]	Nurse Managers	☐ N/A
[____]	General Med Surg	☐ N/A
[____]	APRN N/A	☐ N/A
[____]	Other Critical Access	☐ N/A

30. Additional information or comments for previous question.

[   ]

* 31. For followup purposes, please provide your contact information.

Name

Organization

Position/Title

City

County

Email Address