

## HRSA Investments in the Nursing Workforce



*HHS Secretary Sebelius and Adriana Perez, National Association of Hispanic Nurses Phoenix Chapter President, before a teleconference with 500 nurse leaders on health insurance marketplace outreach efforts in January 2014.*

Nurses are central to America’s health system. There are more nurses in our country than any other type of health care provider. And they do it all, from delivering preventive care to our children to helping seniors manage chronic disease.

The health care law – the Affordable Care Act – has given nurses and other health professionals a historic opportunity to improve the health of millions of Americans.

With implementation of the law, we have new opportunities to move to a health care system that focuses on increased access to primary care, improved care coordination and an emphasis on prevention and wellness—efforts nurses have focused on from the beginning. This is what the future of health care looks like, and it makes the work and expertise of America’s nurses more important than ever.

### Nurse Education Loan Repayment and Scholarship Programs

Too many people—particularly in underserved rural and urban communities—go without checkups, preventive screenings, vaccines, and other health care simply because there is no one to provide care and treatment. The National Health Service Corps (NHSC) and the NURSE Corps play a vital role in providing access to quality health care in underserved areas throughout the U.S. and its territories, while providing funding support and opportunities for nurses to follow their passion for healing others.

The NHSC and NURSE Corps programs repay educational loans and provide scholarships to primary care providers and students in exchange for working in underserved communities experiencing critical shortages of health care providers.

These nurses impact the lives of millions by providing quality care at health centers, Indian Health Service and tribal facility sites, rural clinics, inpatient and outpatient facilities, hospitals and other critical access facilities located in health professional shortage areas.

*“Most of the providers here are NHSC members. Without the NHSC, we wouldn’t be able to operate our clinics. I can’t emphasize enough the difference that the NHSC has made for me. There’s not a day that goes by that I don’t learn from my patients as much, if not more, than they learn from me.”*

**Kay Southwell, Nurse Practitioner  
NHSC Loan Repayment Program  
Hamilton Community Health Network  
Flint, Michigan**

## National Health Service Corps

The National Health Service Corps consists of nearly 8,900 primary care clinicians—including nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives, and psychiatric nurse specialists—who build healthy communities by providing care to approximately 9.3 million medically underserved people at nearly 5,100 NHSC-approved sites in urban, rural, and frontier areas in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and U.S. territories. As a result of historic investments by Congress and the Administration, the number of providers serving in the NHSC has more than doubled since 2008, providing care for millions more patients than the Corps was able to serve just three years ago.

Approximately 18 percent of National Health Service Corps clinicians are nurses; 16 percent are nurse practitioners and 2 percent are certified nurse midwives or psychiatric nurse specialists. As of September 30, 2013, the NHSC field strength for nurse related disciplines is 1,591 (1,409 nurse practitioners, 153 certified nurse midwives, and 29 psychiatric nurse specialists). Among the NHSC practicing nurses serving through the Loan Repayment Program and Scholarship Program, 94 percent are supported by the Affordable Care Act.

For more information on the National Health Service Corps, visit [nhsc.hrsa.gov](http://nhsc.hrsa.gov).

## NURSE Corps

In addition to the NHSC, HRSA offers loan repayment and scholarships to nurses who work in health centers, rural health clinics, hospitals and other types of facilities currently experiencing a critical shortage of nurses. Through the NURSE Corps, more than 2,500 registered nurses, nurse practitioners, certified nurse-midwives, nurse specialists, nurse faculty and other advanced practice nurses are practicing where they are needed most.

NURSE Corps field strength as of September 30, 2013 includes 1,475 registered nurses, 480 nurse practitioners, 120 registered nurse anesthetists, 11 nurse midwives, 6 clinical nurse specialists, and 467 nurse faculty.

*“Puerto Rico is a challenging place to find a job in nursing. Hospitals are short on funds and when they do have funds to expand their staff, they tend to recruit more experienced health care providers, not recent graduates. The NURSE Corps Scholarship Program helped me secure a position directly out of school.”*

**Carlos Ortiz, Registered Nurse  
NURSE Corps Scholar  
Santa Rosa Hospital, Puerto Rico**

For more information on the NURSE Corps, visit [hrsa.gov/loanscholarships/nursecorps](http://hrsa.gov/loanscholarships/nursecorps).

## The Next Generation of Nurses

Through scholarships, the National Health Service Corps and NURSE Corps programs are helping train the next generation of nurses. Both programs offer scholarships to students attending accredited registered nurse training programs located in the U.S. in exchange for service at a variety of health care facilities currently experiencing a shortage of nurses. Currently, 50 nurse practitioner and certified nurse midwife students are supported through the NHSC and 721 nursing students supported through the NURSE Corps. Upon graduation and licensure, these nurses will join the ranks in underserved communities nationwide.

## **Nurse Education and Training**

### **The National Center for Health Workforce Analysis**

The National Center for Health Workforce Analysis provides a focal point for health workforce data collection, analysis, research, and information dissemination. In 2012, the center conducted a national survey of nurse practitioners (NPs) with the goals of providing nationally representative estimates on the licensure, education, clinical practice characteristics, and demographics of NPs. HRSA designed the survey in consultation with national nursing stakeholder groups and nursing workforce researchers. The full report will be posted to [hrsa.gov/nursesweek](http://hrsa.gov/nursesweek) in Spring 2014.

### **Advanced Nursing Education Programs**

The Affordable Care Act is supporting the training of new nurse practitioners and other advanced practice registered nurses, emphasizing the critically important role nurses play in delivering primary health care services. HRSA's Advanced Nursing Education Programs are helping to build the health care workforce through support for advanced nursing education students electing primary care practice disciplines. During the 2012-2013 academic year, the Advanced Nursing Education Program trained 10,600 nursing students and produced 1,865 graduates, and the Advanced Nursing Education Expansion Program provided financial support to 381 primary care NP students and produced 148 graduates. In addition, the Advanced Education in Nursing Traineeship and Nurse Anesthetist Traineeship programs support traineeships in primary care and encourage clinical training in community-based settings. Together, these programs provided direct financial support to more than 5,500 advanced nursing students during the 2012-2013 academic year, and produced 1,708 graduates.

For more information on Advanced Nursing Education programs, visit [bhpr.hrsa.gov/nursing/grants/ane.html](http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/nursing/grants/ane.html).

### **Nurse Faculty Loan Program**

The Nurse Faculty Loan Program increases the number and diversity of qualified nursing faculty to educate nurses needed to build strengthen the workforce. Acceptance of qualified students to nursing schools is often hindered by an insufficient number of qualified nursing faculty members, and acute lack of faculty diversity impacts efforts to diversify the nursing workforce. The annual survey of U.S. nursing schools by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing revealed that in 2012, baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs turned away more than 79,000 qualified applicants due to insufficient numbers of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, clinical preceptors, and budget constraints. Almost two-thirds of the nursing schools responding to the survey pointed to faculty vacancies as a reason for not accepting all qualified applicants into their programs. During the 2012-2013 academic year, more than 2,250 enrollees received support and 336 students graduated prepared to assume roles as nurse educators.

For more information on Nurse Faculty Loan Repayment programs, visit [bhpr.hrsa.gov/nursing/grants/nflp.html](http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/nursing/grants/nflp.html).

## **Nurse-Managed Health Clinics**

There are more than 250 nurse-managed health clinics across the nation. Run by advanced practice registered nurses, many of these clinics are the only access point to primary care for vulnerable populations in their communities. Nurse-managed health clinics also serve as clinical training sites for health professions students. In addition to 20 nurse-managed health clinics awarded grants by HRSA, 10 nurse-managed health clinics were funded under the Affordable Care Act to improve access to primary health care in medically underserved areas and increase the number of structured clinical teaching sites for undergraduate and graduate nursing students. Nurse-managed health clinics trained more than 2,200 students during the 2012-2013 academic year, 98 percent of these nurse-managed health clinics and associated training sites were located in medically underserved communities, and 66 percent of these sites served as a primary care setting for their local community. The majority of students training at nurse-managed health clinics were nursing students pursuing a graduate-level NP degree in family care. Nurse-managed health clinics are increasing innovative clinical training sites at nursing schools, and directly expanding the capacity of the schools to train more nurses in providing services to vulnerable populations.

For more information on Nurse-Managed Health Clinics, visit [bhpr.hrsa.gov/nursing/grants/nmhc.html](http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/nursing/grants/nmhc.html).

## **Nurses Supporting Primary Care through the Affordable Care Act**

Nurses contribute to every area of health care, including private practices, public health agencies, primary care clinics, home health care, nursing homes, outpatient surgical centers, nursing school-operated nursing centers, insurance and managed care companies, schools, mental health agencies, hospices, the military, industry, nursing education, and health care research. The Affordable Care Act expanded and created programs to support the nursing profession and improve care to Americans to build on existing work and create new opportunities.

## **Community Health Centers**

Community health centers deliver primary and preventive care – including oral and behavioral health care – to more than 21 million patients at nearly 9,000 sites. Nurses are an essential component of the health center workforce. Currently, more than 17,800 nurses – including 4,600 nurse practitioners and over 550 nurse midwives – work at health centers across the U.S. Since the Obama Administration's efforts to expand the health center program began in 2009, health centers have added over 4,500 nursing positions nationwide.

For more information on the Health Center Program, visit [bphc.hrsa.gov](http://bphc.hrsa.gov).

## **Home Visiting Family Support Programs**

Through the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (the Home Visiting Program), nurses, social workers, and other health professionals provide families with voluntary, evidence-based home visiting services during pregnancy and to parents with young children up to age five. In March 2014, through the Protecting Access to Medicare Act funding for the Home Visiting Program was extended through March 31, 2015. This built upon the \$1.5 billion for the Home Visiting Program provided for FY 2010 through 2014.

As of September 2013, states reported serving approximately 80,000 parents and children in 774 at-risk communities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, five jurisdictions, and 25 Tribes, Tribal organizations, and urban Indian organizations. The Home Visiting Program is available in 656 counties – approximately 20 percent of the total number of counties across the nation – and includes three-fourths of urban areas with populations over 500,000. The program also serves approximately 65 percent of at-risk communities as identified by the 2010 state needs assessments, and currently employs more than 500 nurses across the country.

For more information on Home Visiting, visit [mchb.hrsa.gov/programs/homevisiting](http://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs/homevisiting).

### **Increasing Diversity in the Nursing Workforce**

The nursing workforce should ideally reflect the cultural and social values and needs of the communities it serves. Workforce diversity grants open nursing education opportunities to individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, including racial and ethnic minorities who are under-represented in the registered nurse workforce. The Affordable Care Act expanded the program's authority to promote advanced nursing degrees by assisting registered nurses with diplomas or associate degrees to become baccalaureate-prepared registered nurses, as well as preparing registered nurses for advanced nursing education. Nursing Workforce Diversity Program grantees trained more than 5,000 nursing students during the 2012-2013 academic year and produced 1,234 graduates.

### **Veterans' Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing Program**

The Nurse Education, Practice, Quality and Retention Program's Veterans' Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing expands the nursing workforce while helping military veterans with health care experience or training—such as medics—pursue nursing careers. Part of HRSA's partnership with the military services to help veterans transition from military service to nursing school, this program funded nine cooperative agreements in 2013 for three-year projects that will increase veterans' enrollment in and completion of baccalaureate nursing programs.