

Feedback from Constituent Related to the Need for Additional Programs Across Texas

Board staff have received recent comments from constituents in some sections of Texas about problems related to the scarcity of clinical experiences for students and the decreasing job opportunities for graduates. These issues are viewed as a result of the continuing increase in new nursing education programs in their communities. Board staff requested assistance from the Texas Team (representing professional nursing education) and from the members of the Texas Association of Vocational Nursing Education (TAVNE) by seeking responses to three questions.

The three questions and the general responses follow:

1. Is there a need for another vocational/professional nursing program in the area?

The overall response from all regions was “no” for VN and RN programs. A sufficient number of graduates are graduating to meet the needs of the surrounding communities

Rationale for this negative response included:

- Texas has more than the national ratio of LVNs to population.
- there is a lack of sufficient faculty and clinical placement sites.
- the clinical sites in many areas are saturated with students.
- employment opportunities do not support the development of more programs.
- current programs meet the workforce needs in producing new nurses.
- some nursing programs are seeking clinical experiences in other cities, complicating the issue.
- many students are seeking online education and may not enroll in new face-to-face nursing education.
- specific areas identified as having no need for another program: Dallas-Ft. Worth

Most responses made an exception for rural areas where there seems to be a need for more nursing programs and more nurses for employment. South Texas was mentioned as a site where another nursing program would be welcomed. Respondent from Bexar County indicated a need for more RN programs. Nurses retiring will increase the need for more nurses.

One respondent stated that many programs are not operating at capacity and could take more students.

2. What is the job market for the type of nurse they wish to prepare?

New graduates are experiencing difficulties finding jobs. Comments:

- Some hospitals have stopped hiring LVNs and are hiring fewer RNs.
- The job market for LVNs in south Texas is primarily in long-term care hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, custodial nursing homes, some home health agencies, school nursing, prisons, clinics and physicians' offices.
- Hospitals are hiring fewer new RN grads but they may find employment in smaller hospitals or in areas where LVNs were previously hired.
- Some hospitals are seeking only BSN-prepared nurses.
- Jobs for LVNs in acute care are limited.
- Long-term care settings employ many of the LVNs.
- Other settings hiring LVNs are doctor offices, clinics, schools, psychiatric hospitals, state supported assisted living homes, jails, community health centers, Alzheimers, acute care in rehab and dialysis areas. (Many ads for LVNs in Bexar County.)

- Acute care hospitals are becoming more selective in hiring nurses.
- More ADN graduates are going directly into BSN programs or taking jobs previous held by LVNs, such as long term care.
- Some graduates are driving to a larger city to find employment.
- Some employment sites are laying off nurses.
- The job market has declined significantly in the last few years.

Responses indicate that the job market is more promising in rural areas for RNs and for VNs.

3. Would clinical sites be able to accommodate students from another program?

Responses indicate that clinical sites across the state are saturated with student placements.

Comments:

- All shifts are being used for clinical experiences.
- It is difficult to find faculty willing to supervise students during evenings, weekends, and nights.
- Clinical staff are growing weary of increasing numbers of students.
- More students in a setting will compromise the programs that are already there.
- Clinical sites for VN programs are especially difficult to find.
- Students from out-of-state programs and online programs are also present in the facilities.
- One hospital said they can no longer approve preceptored clinicals.
- There are safety concerns with students on the premises every day of the week.
- CMS regulatory issues place demands on staff that are compounded by the constant presence of students.
- Some hospitals no longer accept VN students.
- Often students from two schools share the same clinical unit.
- The quality of the learning experiences for all students may be compromised with additional students present.
- Many hospitals have decreased census.
- Programs are experiencing difficulty placing students in specialty areas: peds and women's health.
- Nursing programs are competing with other health care programs for clinical placements.
- Vocational nursing programs are losing sites to the professional programs.
- Many facilities are complaining about too many students in the clinical areas and are denying use of their facility as a clinical site.
- A reason for denying admission to students is because of lack of clinical spaces.
- Clinicals on weekends is one solution to the capacity issue.

The BON requires the program provide a rationale and a needs assessment in a proposal for a new program. The BON also relies upon the evaluation of need by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). The information in this report raises questions about whether the current methodologies are working.

This report is for information only. Discussion is welcome.