Transforming Health Care Through Nursing Education, Practice Innovations

Massachusetts faces pressing health care challenges: an aging, more diverse population with more chronic conditions, rising costs, more people insured, and a shortage of providers. We can address these challenges now by maximizing the role of nurses, who are on the front-line of health care. More than 143,000 nurses are licensed in MA, the largest segment of the health care workforce.

The Massachusetts Action Coalition (MAAC) is a statewide coalition of nurse leaders representing practitioners, educators, and health care delivery organizations. The MAAC is providing leadership to improve outcomes and transform the health care system for every resident of the Commonwealth.

The Organization of Nurse Leaders of MA & RI and the MA Department of Higher Education (DHE) co-lead the coalition, one of 51 nationwide working to implement recommendations of the Institute of Medicine’s report: The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health (2010).

The MAAC builds on Massachusetts’ long-standing Nursing and Allied Health Initiative, launched in 2005 to address a looming shortage of registered nurses and nursing faculty.

Priorities: More Educated & Diverse Nursing Workforce

- Develop a more highly educated and diverse nursing workforce to address increasingly complex health care challenges, improve patient outcomes, and contain costs.
- Integrate nationally recognized set of core competencies into all nursing education and workplace settings.
- Increase the number of nursing faculty to ensure schools of nursing can educate enough nurses to meet future health care needs.
- Remove regulations and policies that prevent nurses from practicing to the full extent of their education and training, thereby addressing the increasing need for access to primary care.
- Increase participation of nurse leaders on governance boards so their clinical knowledge and experience can guide the transformation of our health care system.

Recent Accomplishments

- The MAAC continues to implement the MA Nursing Workforce Development Plan to increase the number of nurses with a BSN or higher degree from 55% (2010) to 66% by 2020 and to the national Campaign for Action target of 80% by 2025.
  - Developed an Employer Advisory Group to identify best practices that encourage and support academic progression of working nurses.
  - The total number of BSN graduates in Massachusetts increased 34% from 2010-2013. Within that group, the number of existing RNs who returned to school and earned their BSN increased by 81 percent.
  - Designed and implemented the Nursing Education Transfer policy to simplify and accelerate the progression of nurses with an associate’s degree into RN-to-BSN programs.
  - Developed and disseminated academic progression models to help RNs and LPNs pursue their BSN degrees.
Recent Accomplishments (continued)

- One of 9 state Action Coalitions recognized by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and awarded its Academic Progression in Nursing (APIN) grant in 2012 and a second two-year, $300,000 grant for 2014-2016.

- Sponsored the first annual statewide Healthcare Workforce Summit to share best practices and policies and to enhance partnerships among more than 150 representatives of private and public health care organizations. (October 2014)

- Published comprehensive reports: Faculty Challenges in Massachusetts, Employer Practices Survey Results, and the Advanced Practice Nurse in Massachusetts, with recommendations to inform and guide efforts statewide.

- Engaged more than 140 nurses to volunteer and dedicate their expertise, talents, and leadership skills to advance MAAC priorities.

Support Needed to Sustain Progress

The MAAC’s continued success in advancing its priorities depends on ongoing support from a range of public and private sources:

- Through State budget (line item 7066-0020) funding, DHE has provided grants since 2005 to institutions of higher education and their health care partners that continue to produce innovative models for nursing education redesign and academic progression. As new models find successful outcomes, they are shared and replicated. Continued funding for new grants will be vital to tackle future health care challenges and expand the scope and scale of successful projects.
  - Six grants, totaling over $243,000, from DHE in FY14 supported improved educational pathways for nurses’ academic progression.
  - Grants in FY15 will build on these successes by targeting initiatives such as employer best practices to support academic progression, nursing residencies, and faculty recruitment and development.

- RWJF grant support for the MAAC’s academic progression efforts will conclude in 2016, but our commitment to nursing workforce development challenges is ongoing.

- Private philanthropic funding for the MAAC’s efforts has demonstrated the commitment of health care groups.

- The Nursing and Allied Health Workforce Development Trust Fund enables funding to be received for multi-year use and future planning.

Learn More

The Campaign for Action: www.thefutureofnursing.org

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