

Psychiatric Registered Nurses in Vermont

Summary of Board of Nursing Relicensure Survey, March 2005

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Background

In order to provide Vermonters with useful information on the status of Vermont's nursing workforce, the Office of Nursing Workforce Research, Planning, and Development, in collaboration with the Vermont Board of Nursing, conducted a Relicensure survey which was mailed to 9,784 Vermont registered nurses. The survey was included in relicensure materials and was not mandatory. The survey was completed in March, 2005 by 5,805 RNs (65% response rate). This report includes 201 RNs (<4 % of full VT RN sample) who described their type of service as Psychiatric/Mental Health (PMH).

Basic Demographics:

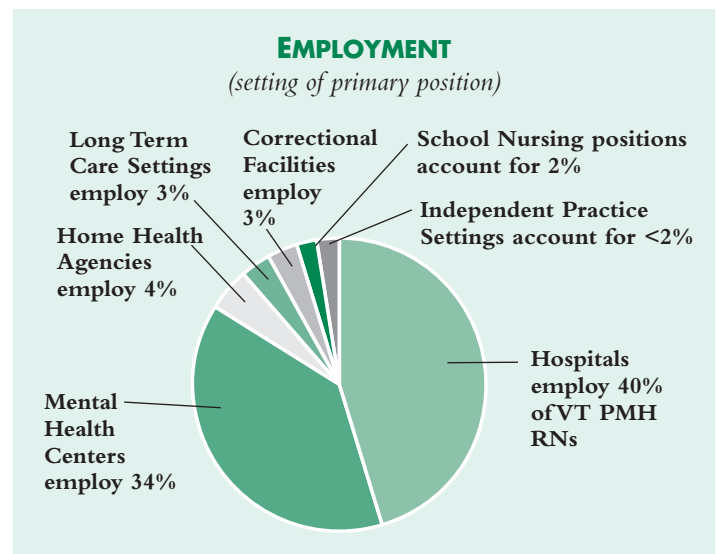
- 86% of PMH RNs are female; 13% are male
- 93% of Vermont PMH RNs are Caucasian
- Age range: 22-77 years
- Mean age: 50 years; 85% are 40 years or older

Basic Nursing Education:

- 23% completed a Diploma Program in nursing
- 53% completed an Associate's Degree in nursing
- 23% completed a Baccalaureate Degree in nursing
- 1% completed a Master's Degree in nursing (or higher)

Other Educational Information:

- 38% report other non-nursing degrees
- 3% are currently enrolled in a nursing program



- 71% report participation in continuing education in past year
- 35% received their basic nursing education in Vermont

Major Activity:

- 60% of VT PMH RNs identified patient care as their major activity
- 13% identified nurse manager/head nurse as major activity
- <4% described teaching/instruction as their major activity
- 3% identified nurse administrator as major activity
- <3% described Quality Assurance/Review as major activity
- <3% identified Public Health as their major activity
- 15% listed "other" as major activity

Current Position:

- 53% of VT PMH RNs have been in their current RN position for five (5) years or less.
- 11% were somewhat or very dissatisfied with their principal RN position
- 28% were somewhat or very likely to leave their principal RN job over the next year

Top Six Reasons Given For Leaving

(more than one reason could be chosen):

- Change Position 59%
- Job Stress. 38%
- Management. 34%
- Salary 29%
- Move 27%
- Other 27%

Comparison to Full Sample of Vermont RNs:

- VT PMH RNs include a higher percentage of men (13%) than the full VT RNs sample (<6%)
- Mean age of PMH RNs is older (50 years) than the full RN sample (48 years)
- A higher percentage of PMH RNs have their highest degree in nursing as Associates (53%) than the full sample (39%)
- A higher percentage of PMH RNs have degrees in fields other than nursing (38%) as compared to the full sample (24%)
- A lower percentage of PMH nurses received their basic nursing education in Vermont (35%) than the full sample (46%)
- A lower percentage of PMH RNs are currently enrolled in a Nursing Education Program (<4%) than the full sample (6%)
- A higher percentage of PMH RNs (11%) stated that they were somewhat or very dissatisfied with their principal RN position compared to the full sample (8%)
- A higher percentage of PMH RNs (28%) indicated that they were likely to leave their primary position in the next 12 months compared to 23% of the full sample.
- PMH RNs, like the full sample RNs, identified position change as being the major reason for leaving their current position; however, job stress ranked as the second most often cited reason to leave for the PMH RNs (38%) while job stress ranked third (31%) for the full RN sample.

Discussion:

This summary report adds to the limited amount of information available about Psychiatric Mental Health Nurses; although these nurses provide the majority of the mental health workforce in psychiatric hospitals, little is known about this group as compared to other groups of mental health providers.¹

A recent report on the status of mental health care in the United States identified a critical shortage of mental health care providers who are capable of providing evidence-based mental health services.² Psychiatric Mental Health RNs, a group of professional mental health care providers who have the potential to provide evidence-based mental health care, are getting older. In Vermont, as in national samples, Psychiatric Mental Health RNs are older than their colleagues in other areas of nursing.³ Subsequently, it is likely that PMH RNs in Vermont will age out of the nursing workforce faster than their non-psychiatric nursing colleagues.

Given this aging out of PMH nurses as well as the high percentage rate of dissatisfaction (11%) identified by PMH RNs in Vermont and the high percent of VT PMH RNs who said that they were likely to leave their principal position in the next 12 months (28%), more effort needs to go into both retaining and recruiting PMH nurses in Vermont.

References:

- ¹ Hanrahan, N., Stuart, G., Brown, P., Johnson, M., Drucker, C. & Delaney, K. (2003). The psychiatric nursing workforce: Large numbers, little data. *Journal of American Psychiatric Nurses Association*, 9, 1-4.
- ² President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. (2003). Achieving the promise: Transforming mental health care in America. Washington, DC: Retrieved from <http://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov/reports/reports.htm> on August 4, 2006.
- ³ Hanrahan, N. & Gerolamo, A. (2004). Profiling the hospital-based psychiatric registered nurse workforce. *Journal of American Psychiatric Nurses Association*, 10(6), 282-289.