

Nursing Shortage Solutions Taskforce

Recommendation Report for the

Healthcare Sector Subcommittee

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**Introduction:** The Healthcare Sector Committee of the Workforce Development Board of Southeast Minnesota developed the Nursing Shortage Solutions Taskforce in the summer of 2015 to address the nursing shortage crisis. The Healthcare Sector Committee believed a special taskforce should be created to look into this specific issue and develop strategies to address the crisis for the region. The taskforce is made up of regional employers, higher education institutions, Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) staff and Workforce Development, Inc. (WDI) staff. The mission of the Nursing Shortage Solutions (NSS) taskforce is: “Working together to identify strategies to address the nursing shortage in southeastern Minnesota”.

The purpose of the taskforce is to work collaboratively with employers, higher education institutions and workforce development professionals to investigate this specific topic and develop strategies that could begin to address the crisis. The taskforce decided to create a recommendation report for the Healthcare Sector Committee of the Workforce Development board, to be presented in June of 2017.

**Challenges:**

The committee identified five challenges:

1. Awareness of Nursing Careers and Outreach to potential employees: The committee identified a need to educate students, parents and other adults on the career opportunities within nursing. Education outreach needs to address and dispel the negative stereotypes about nursing careers.
2. Education and Training: The committee identified a lack of available training for midlevel, and advanced level nursing (LPN and above). They also identified the financial burdens that

students face beyond tuition, such as background check and fingerprint fees, required equipment such as scrubs, shoes, stethoscopes, etc. The majority of these items are not covered by financial aid or grants.

3. Pipeline: The committee identified the strong potential for a stronger pipeline into the nursing profession that could begin during the K-12 education years. Additionally, once an individual enters the nursing field in an entry level position (CNA, TMA) there needs to be a way to encourage them to continue on in the career pathway.

4. Retention: It was identified that nurses leave the vocation when another area of interest might better meet their career needs and interests. As a result, the committee identified that it is necessary to focus on movement within the career pathway, and to expose nurses to different areas of nursing.

5. Rural nursing: With the expansion of employment opportunities in larger cities nurses are being pulled from rural areas. The same is true for larger employers pulling nurses from smaller employers because of higher wages, the potential of better benefits and expanded opportunities.

### **Recommendations:**

The committee worked for two years to identify solutions to the above listed challenges, and have come up with the following recommendations that can be utilized by the subcommittee or given to other partnering agencies.

1. Continue with Hot Jobs and Scrubs Camp events throughout the region, targeting individuals who are unemployed, under-employed or entering the employment world. Utilize best practices based on the demographics, resources and needs of the specific area.

2. Showcase individuals who are actually working in the field at Workforce events and in high school classrooms. Encourage them to present on their experiences and stories.

3. Develop a targeted media campaign leveraging local media to help cover stories about events, the shortage of nursing, the potential for success in the nursing field and the success

stories of individuals who have entered the nursing field. Utilize these opportunities to dispel stereotypes about nursing (i.e. female dominated field, etc.) and alter people's perceptions about the field.

4. Replicate identified best practices throughout the region:

a. Albert Lea High School and Rochester Public Schools CNA program that is offered for credit, during class time.

b. Replicate the "Bridges to Healthcare Model" that is a partnership between WDI, Rochester's Hawthorne Adult Basic Education program, RCTC and area employers.

c. Utilize financial and career navigators for all programs to support students and troubleshoot barriers.

5. Develop a mentoring program that can be utilized in long-term care and other nursing facilities to give tenured staff the opportunity to mentor new staff, assist them in solving work problems, deepen the training received and hopefully battle turnover. Reach out to organizations in the area who have established best practices to utilize their curriculum and structure.

6. Develop or solicit Best Practices for an Inclusive and Positive Work Environment, directed specifically at long-term care facilities. (i.e. how to create a positive workplace environment.)

7. Encourage the creation of a collaborative within higher education nursing programs and identify organizations aligned within the state system to create such a collaborative. The initiative should include the following components:

a. Create a common nursing application so students can apply to each school of interest through one application.

b. Create a referral program so students who are not granted admission to one program

can seek out another program with openings.

c. Develop a brand/logo for the collaborative so students know who is participating and have a common social media presence.

d. Develop an online presence with educational materials on types of nursing, resources for going applying to, and paying for school.

e. Develop an agreement amongst the colleges, and release of information paperwork for students so that referrals can be easily made.

8. Develop a partnership/agreement between long term care facilities and higher education institutions that would allow tenured, supervisory nursing staff to teach CNA classes as adjunct faculty.

9. Increase training opportunities in rural areas. Utilize online education for introductory coursework.

**Conclusion:** The aforementioned solution suggestions can be utilized by the Subcommittee of the Workforce Development Board and passed on to other agencies in the area for their contribution where appropriate. Collaboration amongst partners is more vital now than it ever has been. If we are to succeed as a region and provide the kind of medical care our communities have come to expect it will be through partnerships, early training and entry into the nursing pipeline for our youth, combination of resources, staff time, and referrals.