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### **Forecasts show healthcare reform will contribute to severe nursing shortage**

The economic recession has temporarily reduced the shortage of nurses in Florida, but new projections from the Florida Center for Nursing show that the implementation of healthcare reform – along with a slowly recovering economy – may cause the nursing shortage to grow to more than 50,300 full-time equivalent (FTE) Registered Nurses by the year 2025. Based on the average proportion of an FTE worked by RNs, this translates into an estimated 56,000 RNs that will be demanded but unavailable for employers in 2025.

The Center's report, "[RN and LPN Supply and Demand Forecasts, 2010-2025: Florida's Projected Nursing Shortage in View of the Recession and Healthcare Reform](#)," discusses the factors leading to this projection. The Center expects that aging of the nurse supply will lead to increased retirements. In addition, a reduction in the workforce participation of nurses – which is at historic highs due to the recession – is expected. Combined with stunted growth in our nursing education system due to lack of faculty and clinical space, the result will be very slow growth in the number of working RNs. At the same time, a recovering economy and increased access to care via healthcare reform are anticipated to increase the demand for RNs at a very rapid rate after 2014.

"We have been urging stakeholders all along not to be lulled into complacency by the temporary reduction in the nursing shortage," said Mary Lou Brunell, the Center's Executive Director. "With these new forecasts, we're now able to put a timeline on the reemergence of the nursing shortage and quantify its severity." The Center projects a continuing tight labor market for RNs over the next three years, owing to a sluggish economy. Once the major provisions expanding coverage within healthcare reform are enacted in 2014, the shortage is expected to increase rapidly. By 2015, the shortage may top 11,000 RN FTEs, and by 2020 it may reach more than 37,500 RN FTEs.

Ms. Brunell emphasized that these projections show what will happen without additional efforts to resolve the shortage. "This is what *could* happen, but we have the ability to keep the shortage from becoming this large through increased efforts to retain nurses and maximizing the capacity of our nursing education system," she said. The Center's report also includes a series of simulations showing how improving retention and increasing the number of new nurse graduates can work together to resolve the shortage. If approximately 3,000 full-time RNs who would normally leave the state or profession were retained each year, the shortage in 2025 may be only 13,000 RN FTEs. If on top of that, nursing education increased the number of new graduates by 5% per year for 6 years (30% total), the shortage could be resolved by 2022 and never grow larger than 10,000 RN FTEs.

The Center recognizes the need for the parallel approaches of retention and education expansion, but Brunell notes that rapid expansion of Florida's nursing education capacity is not likely. "We emphasize retention because of the large numbers of nurses leaving the state and profession, as well as the need to retain the experience and knowledge base of our seasoned nurses," she said. "However, we also emphasize retention because the state faces major barriers to expanding the education system." Limited clinical space and faculty shortages top the list of barriers to growth in nursing education.

The Center is leading an effort to promote the use of simulation as a mechanism for increasing education capacity, and it promotes retention through a small grants program (contingent on available funding). For more information about the Center's projects, and to view a full copy of our forecasting report, please visit [www.FLCenterforNursing.org](http://www.FLCenterforNursing.org).

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The Florida Center for Nursing is the definitive source for information, research, and strategies addressing the dynamic nurse workforce needs in Florida.