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Supply of Florida's Registered and Advanced Practice Nurses is Growing, Licensed Practical Nurses Hold Steady

The number of Registered Nurses (RNs) working in Florida increased from 165,000 (in 2010-11) to 178,000 (in 2012-13), working Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs) increased by 2,000 people to 14,706, and the number of working Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) held steady at about 50,500, according to the Center's reports on the supply of nurses in Florida. The Center publishes reports on the supply of [LPNs](#), [RNs](#), and [APNs](#) every two years. When nurses renew their licenses online, they can participate in the optional Nurse Workforce Survey, and about 87% of nurses do complete the survey. The Center analyzes this data to get an accurate picture of Florida's nurse supply – including the number, demographics, education, employment status and specialization of nurses.

Of imminent concern is the aging nurse population. 45% of Florida's RNs are age 51 or older, and 16% of working RNs are age 61 or older. "Within the next 5-10 years, Florida's aging nurse workforce will begin to retire. Their retirement will result in the loss of highly skilled nurses who contribute years of organizational and experiential knowledge," said Mary Lou Brunell, RN, MSN, Executive Director of the Florida Center for Nursing. "The nursing profession must continue to encourage young people to enter the field. But it is critical that we also promote incumbent worker education and training, in order to meet employer needs for experienced and knowledgeable nurses."

Advanced Practice Nurses provide primary care and augment the state's supply of primary care providers, which helps to meet the demand associated with the Affordable Care Act. The societal factors of an aging population needing more care, and increased access to healthcare for the general population, will continue to increase Floridians' demand for healthcare. Consequently, the APNs' role as primary healthcare providers will continue to grow as their workforce size diminishes from an anticipated large number of retirements in 5-10 years. "Academic programs should evaluate their projected growth in assuring the number of APNs needed to meet the anticipated demand of consumers," said Ms. Brunell. "In addition, employers should engage in activities to extend the work life of the current aging RN and APN workforce, which may slow the retirement wave."

LPN employment is concentrated in the gerontology field, as 41% of LPNs work in long-term care settings and 17% work in home health. The skills needed in these fields are becoming increasingly technical, as the patients have increased acuity requiring specialized care and an increased length of stay in these settings. “Academic programs and industry should collaborate to ensure the LPN curriculum content is appropriate to meet the industry needs, and to ensure that students are trained in the appropriate technical skills to meet the needs of the patients,” said Ms. Brunell.

For more information on the Florida Center for Nursing, and to view a full copy of the reports, please visit 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.