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Contact Mary Lou Brunell Executive Director 407-823-0980 MaryLou.Brunell@ucf.edu

As healthcare reform approaches, Florida expects to see more than 15,000 RN vacancies

Both an aging population and new requirements tied to healthcare reform implementation will leave Florida with over 15,000 RN vacancies, according to the newest report from the Florida Center for Nursing. The Center's report, *Demand for Nurses in Florida: The 2011 Survey of Florida's Nurse Employers*, surveyed employers across six nurse-intensive industries to evaluate the state's demand for registered nurses, advanced registered nurse practitioners, licensed practical nurses, and certified nursing assistants/home health aides. This survey has been conducted by the Center for Nursing biennially since 2007. The 2012 report underwent a significant makeover in an effort to make the report more relevant. "This report isn't just for academics or policymakers and we wanted the format to reflect that," said Executive Director, Mary Lou Brunell, RN. "This shortage impacts all Floridians and we want to make sure that the information is accessible to all stakeholders, including our healthcare consumers—Florida's public."

While the report, which monitors trends from prior years, found that there was some improvement in the number of nurse vacancies, researchers report that this is likely due to economic conditions causing existing nurses to remain in the workplace past retirement age as well as part-time nurses working increased hours. "We expect that this uptick in RN employment will even out as the economy improves and nurses of and past retirement age begin to leave the workforce," said Brunell. The report also found that though isolated pockets of recent RN graduates have been unable to find work, demand for RNs still far exceeds supply. The Center for Nursing collects and reports data at both a statewide and regional level.

The Center's mandate to collect and conduct analysis of data on nurse supply, demand, and education in Florida has resulted in a projection that the state's nurse shortage will exceed 56,000 Registered Nurses (RNs) by 2025—resulting in a possible reduction in healthcare services for Floridians. This does not include LPNs and ARNPs, both of which will likely see increased demand with implementation of health care reform and as the need for long-term care and home healthcare rises. Furthermore, experts fear that the recession may be causing patients to defer

treatment until the economy improves, which could lead to a spike in demand just as a large cohort of nurses is leaving Florida's workforce. "It is simply impossible for the state to produce enough new nurses to fill this gap," said Brunell. "We need a multi-pronged approach to this critical issue, which includes both producing new nurses and retaining nurses that are already in the workforce. Without both, we will not be able to keep up with the need for healthcare in our state."

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.