

**Information for
House Interim Committee on Health Care
May 22, 2020**

The Oregon Center for Nursing (OCN) is the state's nursing workforce research center, established in 2002 to address issues affecting Oregon's nursing workforce. OCN's mission is to facilitate research and collaboration for Oregon's nursing workforce to support informed, well-prepared, diverse and exceptional nursing professionals.

In March 2020, OCN began conducting weekly gatherings of nursing workforce leaders throughout Oregon to offer timely updates and share key insights from peers and stakeholders about how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the nursing workforce. The following themes emerged from these conversations:

Staffing

- As has been widely report, many facilities, especially in the rural areas of the state, reported low census numbers due to cancelled non-essential procedures causing layoffs and furloughed staff.
- According to data from the Oregon Employment Department, about six percent of unemployment claims were from individuals working in healthcare and social services.
- Many facilities put in place plans to reallocate existing nursing staff for the expected COVID-19 surge. This may have temporarily alleviated furloughs and lay-offs.
- Partners from all sectors, hospitals, long term care, nursing education have reported concerns about the availability of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Organization across the country are concerned about lasting mental health effects on the healthcare workforce in relation to COVID-19. This may have an impact on staff and workforce retention.
- Acute care facilities are reporting a decrease in the number of new nurse graduates they intend to hire. Many new graduate nurse residency programs have canceled or postponed summer and/or fall sessions or reduced the number of new graduates they plan to accept into these programs.

Nursing Education

- Nursing education programs report a shortage of sites for clinical placements due to staffing constraints at healthcare facilities.
- Nursing programs across Oregon have shifted to online didactic coursework and have begun offering virtual simulation to replace in-person clinical placement experiences ("internships").
- Nursing students are concerned about the effect of decreased clinical placements on their future employability.
- Many nursing programs plan to hold didactic classes online for the fall, while offering simulation and skills labs in-person as physical-distancing guidelines permit.

While some individuals in Oregon view the pandemic as subsiding, nursing leaders and stakeholders continue to view this as an active situation. It has impacted every level of the workforce from nursing student to bedside nurse to nurse administrator, from nurses on the frontlines to nurses who were sidelined. OCN plans to study the impact of this pandemic on our healthcare workforce for years to come.

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