

## Survey of Educational Advancement Strategies for the Nursing Workforce

A group of nurse leaders within the PA Action Coalition (PA-AC) are employing strategies to achieve the IOM Future of Nursing 2020 goal to transition 80% of the nursing workforce to at least a baccalaureate in nursing (BSN) level of education. As part of this effort, the group partnered with the Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania to distribute a survey to 239 Chief Nursing Officers (CNOs) in Pennsylvania. The survey was available online through SurveyMonkey from February 25 to April 15, 2016.

A total of 57 CNOs submitted surveys in varying stages of completion. Responding CNOs hailed from many types of organizations: community hospitals (26), academic hospitals (11), and health systems (8), with the remaining (19) in various other types of organizations (community teaching hospital, long term care, critical access hospital, other, or no response provided).

The survey assessed current strategies used by the organizations to achieve the 80% BSN goal, successes and challenges experienced, and recommendations for future efforts. Below are some of the key findings:

- **89.5% of respondents do not require a BSN upon hire.**
  - Of those reporting that no BSN is required upon hire, 23.5% require employees to obtain a BSN within a specified time frame (ranging from 3 to 5 years) following hire.
- **Over half (53.1%) reported that their organizations will require new hires to have a BSN in the future.**
- A vast majority (85.7%) reported that **a shortage of BSN applicants creates a barrier to requiring a BSN.**
- **Nearly all respondents reported that their organizations offer tuition reimbursement (92.7%),** with nearly half (47.3%) offering a reimbursement dollar limit of \$2,001-\$4,000 per year. Only 18.2% offer loan forgiveness.
  - 40% (22) of respondents reported a yearly dollar limit of \$4,001 or more.
  - One respondent indicated that tuition is completely reimbursed.
- Most CNOs reported that **professional growth opportunities** are available to employees (74.5%), and for 34 respondents (61.8%), the BSN degree is part of the clinical ladder.
  - Most respondents provide **information and education on the value of the BSN** for patients (60%) and for professional development (63.6%), and reported that the job descriptions posted by their organization include a preference for BSN applicants (72.7%).
  - For 40% of respondents, nurses have a **pay differential** based on the BSN.

Nurse leaders within the PA-AC will be using these findings to strengthen existing efforts to achieve the IOM's 80% BSN goal and to develop new strategies that may be implemented and disseminated among health care organizations throughout the state.