



# Nursing Career Pathways Report

2021



West Virginia DEPARTMENT OF  
**EDUCATION**



WEST VIRGINIA  
**Community & Technical  
COLLEGE SYSTEM**

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# Introduction

The role of nurses in improving the health of individuals, families, and communities by addressing social determinants of health and providing effective, efficient, equitable, and accessible care for all people across the care continuum has been well documented. The need for nurses has continued to grow with an aging population in the US requiring more care, the retirement of the Baby Boomer generation of nurses, and the expanding roles for nurses in the health care system. The COVID-19 pandemic further stressed health care systems already dealing with a shortage of qualified nurses.

With a career horizon brimming with opportunities, young people should see nursing as a dynamic profession that brings great potential for career advancement. Beyond the high demand for nurses to provide direct care, nurses are also needed as researchers, healthcare administrators, educators, policy analysts, nurse executives, and independent practitioners like nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists, and nurse midwives. New nurses have virtually unlimited opportunities for progression to advanced degrees in nursing practice, as well as opportunities for teaching the next generation of nurses. With opportunities expanding and the demand for nursing care on the rise, a clear pathway to becoming a nurse is essential to bring young people into the profession. System facilitators must be enhanced, and barriers must be reduced to achieving this goal.

During the 2020 WV legislative session, SB 707 was passed to create a Nursing Career Pathway Workgroup. The legislation directed the WV Higher Education Policy Commission and the WV Community and Technical College System, along with the WV Department of Education to create a career pathway to meet the unmet need for nursing assistants, licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, and nurses with a bachelor's degree in nursing. The workgroup was directed to delineate a program of study that begins in high school and progresses through college, providing employment opportunity with industry partners. Additionally, the workgroup was to minimize, or if possible, eliminate tuition costs for students using any available financial assistance and through encouraging health care providers to establish scholarship programs to help cover tuition costs. The goal is to disseminate the career pathway to students statewide beginning with the cohort of students entering ninth grade during the 2021-2022 school year.

# What is a Nursing Career Pathway?

The past decade has seen a dramatic increase at the state, regional, and institutional levels in the development of career pathways, which are designed to bring greater efficiency and transparency to the routes from K-12 and adult education programs, non-credit training, or other starting points to credentials recognized by industry and postsecondary educational institutions. Built around integrated academic and technical education pathways, career pathways enable individuals to progress through a modular system of postsecondary credentials that build upon each other, leading to further credentials and improved employment prospects. According to the Perkins Collaborative Career Network (<https://cte.ed.gov/initiatives/career-pathways-systems>), the following are recognized as the Six Key Elements of Career Pathways and have served as a guide of this work.



In the Nursing Career Pathway Workgroup, cross agency partnerships were established. Employers of nurses were actively engaged in the development process. Education programs were designed using current models and implementing strategies to fill gaps and breakdown barriers. Funding needs and sources were identified. Policies and program building has occurred and is ongoing. After implementation of the pathway, system change and performance will be continuously evaluated and improved.

# Building Career Pathways in Nursing and Healthcare

During the past decade new and innovative pathways to prepare nurses for an increasingly complex healthcare environment have emerged. Nursing continues to offer multiple ways for students to enter the profession and has consistently advocated for creative and innovative opportunities for academic progression that meet the needs of a student population that is diverse along numerous dimensions. While it is certainly possible to change goals and directions, early consideration of the desired end point can provide helpful direction in selecting the most efficient and effective path to reaching career goals.

Kentucky and Georgia are two states that have developed innovative nursing career pathways. In these states, as well as in WV, health-care providers, colleges and local school systems, workforce agencies and elected officials came together to work out everything from credit transfers to job placement. The goal has always been to give students a clear picture of how to enter the profession and a shorter, more affordable way to progress through the education they need. The pathways include dual credit for high school students with community and technical colleges plus seamless transition to bachelor's degrees in nursing and employment as nursing assistants, licensed practical nurses, and registered nurses. Reports of the work by these states can be found at <https://www.sreb.org/nursing-career-pathways>.

# Labor Market Supply and Demand for Nurses

## Current supply of nurses

Among the 34,215 RNs licensed in West Virginia, 21,374 are actively working in the state as of calendar year 2020 (1). The data currently available does not include RNs who reside in other states and are working in West Virginia. Since the state has five bordering states, it is possible that the actual number of nurses working here is higher.

Of those registered nurses working in the state, 38% (6,904) of RNs are 50 years of age or older (2). As experienced nurses enter retirement, state workforce planners will be faced with the need to replace these experienced nurses to meet demand. One-quarter of all nurses working in the state have over 25 years of nursing experience (3). Loss of knowledge and its impact on quality of care will need to be considered as nurses begin to retire.

Over 86% of all licensed nurses in West Virginia are working full-time in nursing, with 7% working part-time and 6% working per diem or on an as-needed basis in nursing (4). Less than 0.5% of all nurses licensed in the state are employed in fields outside of nursing (5). Approximately 7% of nurses hold two or more nursing positions (6). As the nursing population ages, large numbers of nurses begin to retire, replacement of full-time workers will be essential.

Of those RNs who have indicated that they are unemployed (3.3% of all licensees), only 0.3% of nurses cite that they are unemployed because they have difficulty locating a nursing position or because of inadequate salary (7). These figures indicate that there is not a "reserve" workforce of unemployed nurses to fill demand.

Nearly 65% of all RNs working in West Virginia cite that their entry education level was an Associate Degree in Nursing program and about 28% cited a Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing as their entry education level (8). When comparing entry education levels with highest level of education, the data shows a trend for RNs who enter nursing with an Associate Degree in Nursing program are beginning to pursue Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing programs. Almost 56% of RNs indicate that their highest degree obtained is an Associate Degree in Nursing Program and nearly 35% cite a Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing program (9). This percentage shift shows RNs are pursuing ADN-BSN bridge programs, demonstrating the importance and value of these bridge programs furthering the nursing pathway.

# Labor Market Supply and Demand for Nurses

According to the WV LPN licensing board, in 2020 there are 7,876 LPNs licensed in the state of WV (10). Of those LPNs 34 percent hold a multistate license and 66 percent hold a single state license (11). In 2018 (the last year for which detailed data are available) 15% of LPNs were aged 56-65 and 3% were over the age of 65 (12). Ninety four percent of all LNs who are licensed in the state are working in nursing (13). Of those who are not working, only 3 percent indicate that they are unemployed and seeking a position in nursing (14).

## **Demand for Nurses in the Future**

The United States has a shortage of registered nurses due to an aging nursing workforce, an aging population, and the increased healthcare needs of our citizens. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), several factors contribute to the nursing shortage nationally. Factors include slow growth in nursing school enrollment as compared to the projected demand, a shortage of nursing school faculty restricting program enrollment, a significant segment of the nursing workforce nearing retirement age, changing demographics leading to a need for more nurses to care for our aging population, and high nurse retirement and turnover rates (15). These factors affect access to healthcare for Americans.

The demand for nurses is expected to continue to grow. The Bureau for Labor Statistics estimates a growth of 7% for RNs and 9% for LPNs through 2029 nationally, faster than the average for all occupations (16). According to EMSI data, RNs will see 6% growth in job demand in West Virginia through 2030 (17). LPNs will see 6% growth in WV through 2030 (18). Growth is expected due to increasing rates of chronic conditions and demand for healthcare services from the baby-boom population. In 2017, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that by 2030, the number of US residents who are 65 or older is projected to be 82 million (19). Innovation is essential to meet future needs. Innovative models of pipeline development and recruitment can help to ensure new nurses are entering the workforce to replace those who are retiring and to meet the growing needs of the WV population. The Nursing Career Pathway is just such an innovation.

# The Facilitators and Barriers to the Educational Pipeline in Nursing

## High School

Career and technical education programs in the K-12 system have recognized the needs in health care careers and have built high school pathways to address these needs. In WV for instance, the WV Department of Education Career and Technical Education Therapeutic Services sector offers high school students a pathway to a variety of health care industry credentials that are stackable and lead to entry level employment opportunities after graduation. However, these programs may not also be paired with college preparatory course work that in addition to entry level employment, sets up the student to enter a degree program.

In schools where students in these health pathways exist, students may have the opportunity to take not only the required high school courses for college preparation but may also have opportunity to take advanced placement or dual credit courses in high school. These courses, if successfully completed, allow students to enter college with advanced standing, sometimes with as many as 12-18 credits. However, several barriers to this coursework currently exist. First, the cost of these courses is often prohibitive. There is currently no funding to assist families to afford these courses. Many WV families need assistance with paying for advanced coursework for their students. In addition, in WV there is little consistency in how these courses are accepted by 2- and 4- year colleges and universities. Some are guided by transfer agreements, others by Memoranda of Understanding with specific colleges. WV students who complete this advanced coursework in preparation for entering college to become a nurse need consistency.

Another barrier is counseling. Educators lack clear guidance for students to not only complete the career and technical college pathway, but a sound plan for students to complete college preparatory high school requirements and advanced placement or dual credit courses that will be valuable to those students choosing to continue their education in nurses. Educators need that clear pathway. Finally, qualified faculty in the K-12 system to teach dual credit coursework are not evenly distributed across the state. In addition, federal requirements for teaching in a certified nursing assistant program are difficult to meet in many counties, causing many counties to be unable to offer certified nursing assistant curricula in the Therapeutic Services sector. Current federal regulations in Per CFR 483.152 state that:

# The Facilitators and Barriers to the Educational Pipeline in Nursing

*For a nurse aide training and competency evaluation program to be approved by the State, it must, at a minimum meet the following requirements for instructors who train nurse aides:*

- *The training of nurse aides must be performed by or under the general supervision of a registered nurse who possesses a minimum of 2 years of nursing experience, at least 1 year of which must be in the provision of long-term care facility services.*

These requirements are difficult to meet in many counties. We need a mechanism to allow development of qualified faculty and sharing of scarce resources across the state.

A facilitator to choosing a career in nursing is the availability of introductory or enrichment programs to nursing. Students who participate in these enrichment or pipeline programs often credit their experiences with their choice of career. The WV Center for Nursing funds Junior and Senior Nursing Academies across the state for this purpose. While other enrichment programs like volunteer opportunities, shadowing, summer camps exist, many have been impacted by COVID-19. No central database of enrichment programs currently exists. We need to support additional programs to identify a method where students as early as middle school can find enrichment activities.

## **Post-secondary education**

Navigating the admissions process is difficult for many students. Understanding the different pathways to a nursing career is essential. There currently exists no central guidance for students to make sound decisions about the choice of an entry level nursing program—from licensed practical nursing, to associate and bachelor's degree registered nursing programs. We need to do better in helping students who are interested in nursing to find the right pathway for them, and to understand that they can enter and exit at different points on the pathway throughout their career. To that end, a guide to articulation and admission across the various types of nursing programs is needed.

# The Facilitators and Barriers to the Educational Pipeline in Nursing

Financial concerns related to the cost of a nursing pathway are real. High school students and their parents need resources to understand how financial aid can minimize or eliminate tuition and fees if they chose a career in nursing. Currently, there is no financial aid guide that is specific to those students who choose nursing as a career that will assist them in taking advantage of the many ways to finance their education. Scholarships, grants, loans, employer-based assistance, and many other mechanisms exist to pay for a nursing education. A financial aid guide specific to nursing career pathways for students and their parents is sorely needed.

# Building West Virginia's Nursing Career Pathway

## Workgroup process

Consistent with SB 707 (Attachment 1), the WV Department of Education and the WV Higher Education Policy Commission convened a workgroup of stakeholders which included representatives from higher education, K-12 education, employers of nurses, and other stakeholders. The workgroup met for the first time on October 1, 2020 and were provided with the charge of the workgroup which included:

1. Develop a career pathway to address the unmet need for nursing assistants, licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, and nurses with a bachelor's degree in nursing.
2. Delineate a program of study that will begin in high school and progress through college, providing employment opportunity with industry partners and pathway re-entry at specified student attainment points:
  - a. Nursing assistant certification
  - b. Licensed Practical Nurse diploma and licensure
  - c. Registered Nurse associate degree and licensure
  - d. Bachelor of Science in nursing completion
3. Align affordable, effective, and sustainable secondary to post-secondary nursing programs to increase credential attainment for a broad and diverse student population.
4. Include participating high school students enrolling in a specified curriculum of college preparatory, career and technical health science courses or dual college-high school credit courses, as well as participating in career experiences through a health care provider or a work-based learning clinical experience.
5. Create opportunities for students to apply for admission to a licensed practical nursing (LPN) program at a community and technical college or career and technical education center.
6. Create opportunities for students who have completed an LPN program to apply for admission to a licensed practical nursing to registered nurse associate degree (LPN to ASN) program.
7. Create opportunities for students who have completed an LPN to ASN program to apply for admission to a registered nurse to Bachelor of Science in nursing (RN to BSN) program.

# Building West Virginia's Nursing Career Pathway

8. Include the use of any available financial assistance to minimize, or if possible, eliminate tuition costs for students and their families including:
  - a. Federal Pell Grant
  - b. Higher Education Grant Program
  - c. PROMISE Scholarship Program
  - d. WV Invests Grant Program
  - e. Any other scholarships and grants that may be available.
9. Encourage health care providers in need of nurses to establish scholarship programs to help cover tuition costs.
10. Disseminate the career pathway to students statewide beginning with the cohort of students entering ninth grade during the 2021-2022 school year.

After completion of an environmental scan, the group agreed to a schedule of work including monthly workgroup meetings, and subgroup meetings which focused on High School Preparation and Experiences, Financial Aid and Scholarships, and Admission and Articulation. Personnel from the WV Higher Education Policy Commission and the WV Center for Nursing staff these committees with workgroup members.

# Components of West Virginia's Nursing Career Pathway

The Nursing Career Pathway plan has several important components. The base for the pathway is a plan (Attachment 2) that allows students to progress from 9th grade through 12th grade in a career and technical education plan that includes Therapeutic Services credentials and college preparatory coursework that will allow those students to achieve at least 12 credits of coursework that is pre-requisite to any nursing program currently operating in West Virginia. The next component of the pathway is a directory of enrichment programs in nursing that can help introduce students as early as middle school to nursing careers. A career guide for use at any level of education is also a crucial resource included in the plan (Attachment 3). An additional component of the plan is an Admissions and Articulation Guide that allows students to explore the various levels of nursing education available, and to understand the components of an admissions application (Attachments 4 and 5). A Financial Aid Guide is an integral part of the pathway, helping students and their parents see how financial aid can be stacked throughout the nursing career pathway (Attachment 6). Each of these components are briefly described below along with an implementation plan and anticipated launch date. Each component is available as a stand-alone document to facilitate broad and targeted distribution.

# Components of West Virginia's Nursing Career Pathway

## **K-12 Nursing Career Pathway Plan**

The workgroup has developed a plan for students interested in a nursing career to progress through the Therapeutic Services Career and Technical Education curriculum, while simultaneously meeting all requirements for high school graduation included in WVBE Policy 2510 and completing pre-requisite courses for nursing programs while earning college credit for that coursework. Students will progress through the Therapeutic Services curricula completing a course each year in grades 9-12, including elective clinical experiences to prepare them for career certifications in a variety of fields of choice. Some of these fields include home health aide, certified nursing assistant, certified patient care technician and others. Students also earn certification in CPR, First Aid, AED, Stop the Bleed, HIPAA, and Oxygen Administration, among others. Dual credit or AP coursework occurs in the twelfth grade in includes a 4-course series of coursework that is required as pre-requisite for every nursing program currently operating in WV, including English, Statistics, Anatomy and Physiology, and Psychology. Students who successfully complete the pathway earn 12-13 college credits which are required to be transcribed by the college or university upon acceptance to a nursing program via changes in Series 59 Administrative Rules. The pathway will be released for all 9th grade students interested in nursing as a career in Fall 2021. An academic counseling document is currently in preparation to support advising for the pathway.

## **Directory of Enrichment Programs in Nursing**

To aid students interested in nursing at different levels within the nursing career pathway, the workgroup has created a directory of enrichment programs in nursing. This directory was created by administering a survey available to all education and healthcare facility stakeholders. The responses to this survey have been compiled into a directory that is available to students who are interested in enrichment programs. This directory will be made available to all K-12 institutions, higher education institutions, healthcare facilities, and online to ensure its wide dissemination and availability. The guide will be disseminated in August 2021 to all partners and online.

# Components of West Virginia's Nursing Career Pathway

## **Career Guide**

To aid students interested in nursing in learning about the different kinds of nursing careers available to them, the workgroup created a career guide. This career guide provides information on what nursing is, online assessments to help students make decisions about their suitability for a nursing career, job duties, salary, job demand, worksites and conditions, general program eligibility requirements, financial assistance and scholarships, program curriculum and classes, graduation, and licensure. The guide is to be made available to all K-12 institutions, higher education institutions, healthcare facilities, and online to ensure its wide dissemination and availability. The guide will be disseminated in July 2021 to all partners and online.

## **Admissions Guide**

To aid students interested in nursing learn more about the admission process for nursing programs, the workgroup created the admissions guide. This guide details the articulation of nursing programs in WV with details on the differences between nursing programs, general eligibility requirements, and program links and locations for each kind of program. The guide is to be made available to all K-12 institutions, higher education institutions, healthcare facilities, and online to ensure its wide dissemination and availability. The guide will be disseminated in July 2021 to all partners and online.

## **Articulation Guide**

To aid nursing education programs in constructing individual articulation agreements among different educational providers, the workgroup created an articulation guide. The guide details philosophy of articulation, goals, assumptions, expectations, the hierarchy of nursing program available, a nursing career matrix, and a directory of nursing education programs in West Virginia. The guide is to be made available to all K-12 institutions, higher education institutions, healthcare facilities, and online to ensure its wide dissemination and availability. The guide will be disseminated in July 2021 to all partners and online.

# Components of West Virginia's Nursing Career Pathway

## Financial Aid Guide

To aid students interested in nursing learn how to afford nursing education, the workgroup created a financial aid guide. This guide details the financial aid application process, student loans, scholarship programs and loan repayment programs available in WV to nursing students. The opportunities within the guide include both individual organizations with specific programs, state level, and federal level programs. The guide is to be made available to all K-12 institutions, higher education institutions, healthcare facilities, and online to ensure its wide dissemination and availability. The guide will be disseminated in July 2021 to all partners and online.

# Support of the West Virginia's Nursing Career Pathway

The following organizations have expressed support for the implementation of the Nursing Career Pathway as of May 27, 2021:

## **Conveners:**

- WV Higher Education Policy Commission
- WV Community and Technical College System
- WV Department of Education

## **Organizations:**

- WV Center for Nursing
- Future of Nursing WV Action Coalition
- WV LPN Board
- WV Rural Health Association

## **Healthcare Facilities:**

- West Virginia University Health System including:
  - J.W. Ruby Memorial Hospital in Morgantown (flagship), including Fairmont Medical Center in Fairmont and WVU Medicine Children's
  - United Hospital Center in Bridgeport
  - Camden Clark Medical Center in Parkersburg
  - Berkeley Medical Center in Martinsburg
  - Barnesville Hospital in Belmont County, Ohio
  - Braxton County Memorial Hospital in Gassaway
  - Harrison Community Hospital in Cadiz, Ohio
  - Jackson General Hospital in Ripley
  - Jefferson Medical Center in Ranson
  - Potomac Valley Hospital in Keyser
  - Reynolds Memorial Hospital in Glen Dale
  - St. Joseph's Hospital in Buckhannon
  - Summersville Regional Medical Center in Summersville
  - Uniontown Hospital in Uniontown, Pennsylvania
  - Wetzel County Hospital in New Martinsville
  - Wheeling Hospital in Wheeling

# Support of the West Virginia's Nursing Career Pathway

The following organizations have expressed support for the implementation of the Nursing Career Pathway as of June 28, 2021:

## **Healthcare Facilities (continued):**

- Charleston Area Medical Center
- Princeton Medical Center

## **Colleges and Universities:**

- Southern WV Community and Technical College
- University of Charleston
- West Virginia University
- West Virginia State University
- Shepherd University
- Concord University
- Fairmont State University
- New River Community and Technical College
- Bridge Valley Community and Technical College
- Mountwest Community and Technical College
- Pierpont Community and Technical College
- West Virginia University at Parkersburg
- Marshall University

# Reccomendations for Success

1. The West Virginia Legislature should create a dual credit nursing career pathway fund or mechanism to assist with student payment for dual credit coursework necessary to complete the pathway.
2. The WV HEPC and CTCS should create mechanisms for offering of dual credit courses via WV ROCKS to allow students in counties who do not have qualified faculty to teach the 4 dual credit courses in the Nursing Career Pathway to access the courses online. Legislative funding should address costs.
3. The WV Department of Education should explore the creation of a position at the WVDOE to oversee Certified Nursing Assistant Education across all counties in West Virginia consistent with federal requirements.
4. The WV Department of Education should develop a mechanism for including the successful completion of the Nursing Career Pathway on high school transcripts to allow for permanent recognition of the pathway and the ability of colleges and universities to recognize those courses upon admission to nursing programs.
5. The WV Legislature should adopt the Administrative Rules changes proposed by the WV Community and Technical College System and the WV Higher Education Policy Commission to facilitate guaranteed transfer of dual credit and advanced placement coursework included in the Nursing Career Pathway for any student who completes the pathway successfully.
6. WV Schools of Nursing should consider the use of a common application to nursing programs to streamline admissions to nursing programs while also providing data on qualified applicants and maximizing admissions of applicants to all programs across the state.
7. To reduce cost and complexity for applicants, WV colleges and universities should consider removing the requirement for original transcript submission with nursing program applications when those transcripts are already available at the college or university registrar. Accrediting and approval bodies have confirmed that official transcripts available in the registrar's office are sufficient for accreditation.
8. The WV Higher Education Policy Commission, the WV Community and Technical College System, and the WV Department of Education Nursing Career Pathway workgroup should continue to work together over the next five years to measure the success of first entrants to the nursing career pathway in ninth grade in Fall 2021, to continue to evaluate barriers to the plan, and to implement solutions to those barriers.

# Nursing Career Pathway Workgroup Membership

REPRESENTING	ORGANIZATION	NAME	TITLE
Health Care System	WVU Medicine	Mary Fanning	Assistant VP, Associate Chief Nursing Officer
Health Care System	CAMC	Anita Ferguson/Lauren Lane	Workforce Development and Planning
Health Care System	Thomas Health (invited)	Dan Lauffer	CEO
Health Care System	Princeton Medical Center	Winnie Newberry	HR Director
Health Care System	Cabell Huntington (invited)	Kevin Fowler	CEO
LTC System	Genesis (invited)	Bill Mason	Senior VP of Operations
LTC System	AM/FM	Todd Jones	President
LTC System	Stonerise (invited)	Larry Pack	CEO
Professional Organizations	WV Hospital Association	Jim Kranz	VP for Quality and Workforce
Professional Organizations	WV Health Care Association	Marty Wright	Executive Director
Professional Organizations	WV Health Care Association	Megan Roskovensky	Director of Government Relations
Professional Organizations	Future of Nursing WV (co-sponsored by the WV Nurses Association, the WV Organization of Nurse Executives, and the WV Hospital Association)	Aila Acaad	Executive Director
WV DOE	Office of Advanced Career Education	Tara Combs	Coordinator, Higher Education

# Nursing Career Pathway Workgroup Membership

REPRESENTING	ORGANIZATION	NAME	TITLE
WV DOE	Office of Career and Technical Education	Ashley Torres	Coordinator, Health Sciences Education
WVHEPC	Health Sciences Division	Cynthia Persily	Senior Director
WVHEPC	Financial Aid Division	Brian Weingart	Senior Director
WVHEPC	WV Center for Nursing	Jordyn Reed	Administrator
CTCS	Southern WV Community and Technical College	Pamela Alderman	President
Higher Education	West Virginia University	Tara Hulsey	Dean, School of Nursing
Higher Education	WV State University	Mary Sizemore	Director of Nursing
Higher Education	University of Charleston	Amy Bruce	Chair, Program Director, Nursing
Licensing Board	RN Board	Sue Painter	Executive Director
Licensing Board	LPN Board	Michelle Mayhew	Executive Director
Other	Association of Deans and Directors in Nursing Education	Kent Wilson	President

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